

LIONESSES

SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS

From Guildford to Goodwood,
Worcester to the Wild Atlantic Way

Plus Field Marshal Montgomery and
Prime Minister Rishi Sunak



Those fleeces look cosy-
one more brilliant idea from our
fabulous fundraising Lionesses

2024

£5.95 where sold. FREE to all WRAC Association members

No.1

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

(Incorporating the QMAAC & ATS Comrades Association)

Registered Charity No. 206184, founded in 1919



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Message from the Vice President



The last few months have gone so quickly. It was wonderful to see so many of you at our Worthy Down event in the summer, and as ever Remembrance was a highlight of the year where the ATS and WRAC were superbly represented by our large contingent at the Cenotaph, and a smaller ensemble in Guildford. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing a hardy few at the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey, and I have quietly reflected on the sacrifice of those ATS ladies who have been remembered throughout the year on Facebook. The year ended on a high as I represented the Association at the Royal Hospital Chelsea Carol Service in December. As we continue through 2024 we commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the WRAC, with photos of that service planned for the next edition of the Lioness. I do hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend our events throughout the year.

I would like to highlight the role of the Membership Council, chaired by Rowena Naile, which is attended by the Area Coordinators, Chair of the Benevolent Fund Grants Committee and Life Vice Presidents. The Council is your voice, helping the Trustees understand what is important to you, and playing a key role in the selection and planning of events. I also want to thank everyone who volunteers on behalf of the Association; that includes all those Area Coords, Branch Chairs, those who help run events and those who organise and participate in fundraising activities.

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The Etherton Report on the service and experience of LGBT veterans who served prior to 2000 was published in the summer and I know it was a difficult read for many. The Association fully supports the recommendations and a warm welcome awaits those veterans affected who wish to join us. Do read Ali Brown's article on page 11.

The Trustees had a successful meeting in November where we considered measures to ensure the financial sustainability of the Association and how we might better support our members. I will explain how we are going to do that at the AGM in March. The evening before the AGM is an event at the National Army Museum to commemorate our formation so there is an opportunity for groups to make a weekend of it. The Trustees have also conducted Phase 2 of our Strategic Review, ensuring that our staffing structure is as strong as it can be to deliver our future outputs. Again, you will hear more at the AGM.

The Female Veterans Transformation Project is now up and running. The Project Lead, Liza Jarvis, has made a terrific start and plans are well advanced to deliver a Toolkit that will assist all service providers to 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. We were successful in our bid for £60k from NHS England and the second member of the team, Hannah West, is now in post. This is an exciting time for female veterans, and the project is designed to deliver across all the Devolved Administrations. As yet it is early days but I will keep you updated, and you can read more about the progress on page 14.

Finally, I would like to thank two members of staff who have moved on to pastures new. Penny Muxworthy and Julia Doig have left us, and I want to thank them for all their work on behalf of the Association and wish them every success in their new ventures.

Fiona Gardner

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Cover:
WRAC Association contingent on Horse Guards Parade for Remembrance Sunday, November 2023

Chair of the Membership Council



Is it a sign of getting older that time seems to pass faster and faster? If so, I must be about 100 as it seems no time at all since we gathered at Worthy Down. I have been meeting up with members of the Association including WRAC Veterans' Cycle Group in Kent for a superb few days of cycling and camaraderie, despite the high winds which prevented our day of water-based activities. Thanks go to Liz King and Ali Steed for organising the week which you can read about on page 26.

September took me to the Scotland and Northern Ireland AGM in Perth where new Area Coordinator Janette Deans was voted in - a welcome addition to the Membership Council who you can read about on page 5. September also saw the WRAC Association Lionesses Annual Fundraising 10km, which took place in Worcester under the strong leadership of Wendy Hooton; please read about that on page 24. It is wonderful to see the Lionesses show their mettle and get around the 10km course - Sandy Crawley puts us all to shame the way she zips around - I only hope I am as quick as her when I get to her age. This year we are off to Bristol - new members as supporters or runners/walkers are always very welcome.

In October I visited Worthing Branch - a wonderful group of ladies who shared their plans for the Christmas Goody bag that each Branch member receives. It sounded more like a suitcase would be needed as so many items were going to be in the bag! November brought Remembrance and I was with members of the Association at both the Field of Remembrance and at the Cenotaph. We were delighted to have the new wheelchair blankets (see page 14) and next year I will be sure to (incorrectly!) leave a bigger gap between us and the QA Association so the TV cameras pick up our wonderful blankets. Hopefully you all received your Christmas card from the Association. We roped in Winchester Branch to help put all the cards into the envelopes! We spent a very enjoyable four hours chatting and putting the world to rights. It is the first of our volunteering projects so keep your eyes peeled for other opportunities to help us to support you.

Please remember to keep your Area Coordinators informed about your Branch or Group events, wishes and plans. 2024 will be a busy year as it is 75 years since the formation of the WRAC and 50 years since the Guildford bombing, and all the events will be advertised widely when details are confirmed. The NAM are hosting a panel discussion on 15th March (the night before the AGM) at 1800hrs to celebrate 75 years since the formation of the Corps and we hope that many of you will attend to hear the stories of four of our members. It would be great if you do stay on and attend the AGM at the Victory Services Club on the afternoon of 16 March.

I would like to thank Penny Muxworthy, who has moved onto a different military charity, for all the support she has given me and the membership during her tenure as Association Secretary; and Julia Doig for all her work as Finance Officer. On the members' behalf we wish them all the best in their new roles.

Rowena Naile MBE

The View from HQ



Welcome to another edition of the Lioness, the first of 2024 - a year which promises to be a very busy one for your Association. Our AGM will be held on the 16th March in London's Victory Services Club and we are looking forward to welcoming all those who have booked to attend in person. If you would like to join us online you can find the details on page 66.

We were pleased to receive a great response to the members' survey included in the last issue of the Lioness. Reading the feedback has really helped to understand what we get right and where we could be doing more. If you didn't manage to have your say, it's not too late. The online form is still available to be filled in, so please visit the website: wraca.org.uk to give us your views. We will publish the results in the next issue.

As the focus on veterans increases, we are invited to contribute to a growing number of events and forums aimed at celebrating and supporting veterans. Many of our members served under more than one cap badge, so our involvement with the Single Cap-badge Associations Network helps us to align with other associations and share good ideas. This year's OVA conference was held in York, and I travelled back to my home county to hear a series of talks on the subject of 'Evidence into Action' - a theme which involved many different veteran-facing organisations sharing how they use data and evidence to improve their services. Page 13 has more on this and other developments in the veteran arena.

On the return journey from York, I was invited to nip off the M1 and join the newly-formed Sheffield Branch for their Coffee-Cake-Chat meet-up. I am happy to report that I did a considerable amount of all three! The group photo shows a terrific group of ladies who it was a privilege to meet, with Sandy Warne seated front right. Sandy has restarted the Sheffield group with aplomb, and on page 10 shares how she found the process - a great read for anyone thinking of beginning a new group.



Those of you who follow our Facebook pages will have noticed that we have begun to let you regularly know how much we have granted in benevolence funding and some of the things this money is providing to our veterans who need a helping hand. More information on our Benevolent Fund can be found on page 32. We are privileged to be able to offer support in this way and hope this information shows our commitment to the provision of benevolence and the many ways we can make a difference.

Finally, you will see that our Association Secretary and Lioness editor Penny Muxworthy has left us page 7. We will introduce your new editor when they have been appointed, but for now Barb Johnson and I, along with the magazine team, have brought together what we hope is an interesting and enjoyable issue. Huge thanks to Penny for all that she has done for the Association over the years and very best wishes for the future.

Kettle on, happy reading

Paula Rogers CEO

Hailing Janette Deans Area Co-ordinator – Scotland and N.I.

Janette Deans is the new Scotland & Northern Ireland Area Co-ordinator. So, Lioness took the opportunity to catch up with her and learn more about her:

Where are you from?

I have lived in Edinburgh since 1997.

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Dumfries and brought up on a farm, near to the town. Technically I think that makes me a 'Doonhamer'.

Do you have a / what is your military pedigree?

No-one in my immediate family were military except for Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam served in the KOSB; survived Dunkirk and fought during the invasion in 1944, followed that with Korea and then went to Sandhurst as an instructor where he had a heart attack that nearly killed him!

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

After leaving school I went to college to train as a medical administrator. I am not convinced that I would have made a career out of working for the NHS. That said I have done some short contracts in various departments of our wonderful health service and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I suspect that I could have ended up teaching.

Why did you join the Army?

As a student I joined the OTC which was my introduction to the Army. After I finished college, I worked for three years as a secretary but wanted more from life. I had continued to serve in the OTC and realised my weekends were far more fun and rewarding than my work. Hence I submitted my application and the rest is history!

What did you do?

I served with RA as an Asst Adjt, Royal Signals as a Tp Comd, RCT Sqn Admin Officer, recruitment, as a staff officer in the Falkland Islands and as 2IC of Training Company.

What are the highlights of your career?

Sandhurst was an experience not to be forgotten; a challenge which I enjoyed but wow did we have to work hard there! I enjoyed many sailing trips in Europe, the Bahamas and USA. Serving in the Falklands was a highlight; for a variety of reasons and it was interesting. Where else could you use helicopters as taxis? Yes really!

The main highlight of my service was the people I met. Such a diverse group who often inspired and taught.

Tell us about something you would rather forget?

The discrimination, sexism and lack of equal opportunities. It makes me shudder when I think of what we tolerated during the 1980s and 1990s.

What do you bring to the role of Area Co-ordinator?

My organisational skills are not too shabby and I have lots of enthusiasm for the role. My conviction that the camaraderie, that the Association can provide, is important for all our members. As we get older friends and acquaintances become even more important. Along with many I would like to find the members that we do not hear from to include them with the Association. I know that this is something that many are working on.



What is your favourite Association event (local, area, national) of the year, and why?

This year I enjoyed the Great Yarmouth, 'We Will Remember Them, project. Clearly, I could only attend one event but working with other members in Scotland to ensure that each of the Scots killed on that day in 1943 were remembered, is a highlight. Visiting the branches is a highlight of my work with the Association. It is so good to catch up with everyone.



What do you see as your short- and long-term priorities?

I think my priorities are still to be established in terms of short and long term. Sometimes I find myself 'firefight' what has to be done and the long term planning somehow doesn't happen. This is dependent on what is happening in my day job!

Would you describe yourself as 'gentle in manner, resolute in deed'?

Gentle is not something people would associate with me! I try to be kind but know that my determination can lessen the gentleness. I do try to understand where people are coming from and my inspiration is Atticus Finch in 'To Kill a Mockingbird' when he said that you had to walk a mile in some else's shoes to understand them.

What would be your own motto if you had one?

I have just bought a print which has the caption of "dinnae call me princess". Princess Leia has Darth Vader in a headlock. I will go with that as my motto for today!

What would be your ideal day off?

Hill walking, then fish and chips for supper in good company.

Do you still work or volunteer, What do you do?

I work for an investment firm, Dundas Global Investors, as their Office Manager. We are a small team which means that my role is varied, from ordering supplies to working on our Net Zero project, organising our Christmas party and other events to administering HR and Finance processes.

Company's coming – what are you cooking?

I am big on Middle Eastern/North African food. My favourite cookbook for this is 'Persiana' by Sabrina Ghayour. Delicious recipe for pistachio and lamb patties would have to feature.

.... And which 3 famous people are you inviting over?

How about Princess Anne, Nelson Mandela and 'Ulysses Temper' or better still the parrot in Still Life by Sarah Winman? It is after all fantasy.

What are your top 5 singles?

Every time I listen to 1980s or 90s music I think that is my favourite. Elton John, Queen, Simply Red, OMD and Fleetwood Mac all feature but I can't decide on which single!

Which household gadget can you not live without?

Kenwood Chef

What would people be most surprised to learn about you?

I am direct about what I think, so there are few surprises!

Hailing

Hannah West - Communications and Engagement Officer for the Cobseo Female Veterans Transformation Programme

Hannah joins us as the Communications and Engagement Officer for the Cobseo Female Veterans Transformation Programme. Hannah will support Liza Jarvis to deliver this project which is fully funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and NHS England, and will increase support and generate better outcomes for female veterans of all ages, services and cap-badges.

Hannah shares a bit of her background:



A former Royal Navy Air Engineer, I joined aged 18 as a University Cadet Entrant at BRNC Dartmouth, subsequently working on Sea King Mk 7s at Royal Navy Air Station Culdrose; on Chinook helicopter trials at MOD Boscombe Down; and in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand on Op Herrick 10 where one of my responsibilities was working with local women's groups.

Having left the Royal Navy in 2015 I embarked on a career as a researcher, completing my PhD on women as combatants in the British counterinsurgency campaigns of Malaya, Northern Ireland and Afghanistan, interviewing many WRAC veterans and drawing on the archives of the Lioness magazine, so I am thrilled to now feature in it!. I have since extended my work exploring women's involvement in the Troubles in Northern Ireland during a postdoctoral fellowship at Cardiff University, and on a project using theatre-as-method with military partners at Newcastle University. I enjoy using creative research methods and have been working with a number of military museums to share my research in innovative ways, from zines and images to songs and documentary films. I'm really looking forward to bringing my creativity to this exciting new role.



Hailing

Monica Jones - Chair of ATS & WRAC Benevolent Funds Grants Committee

Monica Jones tell us about her new position as Chair of ATS & WRAC Benevolent Funds Grants Committee.

I joined the Regular Army in 1987 as a WRAC commissioned officer permanently employed in the Royal Army Educational Corps. Having toured Germany, The Falkland Islands and Belize, I returned to the UK to specialise in Training Support, and in particular Computer Based Training and eLearning. I served for 17 years in the Army until 2004 before starting a second career in the NHS working at local, regional and national level. The NHS is similar to the Army in that there is a strong sense of duty and esprit de corps.

I became a trustee of the WRAC Association in 2015, and for the past eight years I have sat as a member of the Benevolent Fund Major Grants Committee. With my first hand experience of health and social care systems, gained through front-line roles as well as leadership appointments, I can apply that knowledge to the charitable benefits of the Benevolent Fund.

All my skills and experience gained over my time in the Army and beyond help me to make a difference. I also intend to make better use of the data we have to provide business intelligence and actionable insights to our activities, improving the service we provide.



Association Secretary & Editor Lioness - Penny Muxworthy

Let me start with a huge THANK YOU – for everything that we have shared while I have been your Association Secretary:

Thank you for being willing to share your army knowledge, experiences and history, and for your patience with me when I might not have understood a common army acronym, practice, or have gotten something wrong - especially since I never served.

Thank you for the privilege and honour of being your Association (regimental) Secretary – I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and everything that has crossed my path, desk and email inboxes. To learn more about your Corps' and individual histories has been wonderful.

Thank you for allowing me to share in your highs (women-in-the-army centenary, including special exhibition and associated events at the National Army Museum, ATS 80th, Association centenary) and many events (AGMs, Grand Reunions, Summer Events, Founder's Day, etc, etc). I am sorry that I did not get to visit as many of you, your Branches/Groups or Areas as I may have liked – but I feel I know so many of you through the Lioness, emails, phone calls, Facebook friendships and Groups, etc, etc.

When I joined the Association in 2017 you had just celebrated your own celebration of 100 years of Women in the Army with a mini-Grand Reunion in Stratford upon Avon. At that time the Association had about 2,800 members. Over the past seven-plus years membership has grown to consistently around, or just above, 3,000 – but I am also aware there is a huge number of female army veterans out there that are not Association members. To use a marketing term, you have two (that I can think of) USPs (unique selling points) – you are all females, and you all served – rank, when, for how long, regular or TA, where / deployments, trade or specialism that you served in or alongside matters not one bit. You may feel your experiences of service life was not as good as some others, but the WRAC Association uniquely offers those that enlisted into and/or were cap-badged to the ATS and/or WRAC an understanding female to laugh, or cry, with. Extend your friendships to as many female veterans as possible so they, too, enjoy the benefits of someone to share past experiences and laughs with (and occasionally a shoulder to cry on) and to enjoy get-togethers, events and friendships.

I am going on to a job that is still connected to the armed forces and so all the things I have learnt from you will be transferable to my new role. I will miss the, at times, frenetic pace of the HQ office and putting the Lioness together (and my dog, Oboe, will miss all the friends she has made in the office and at Basepoint). I will miss the interaction with you all and, personally, I thank you for your friendships, all the laughs (and occasional tears). The Area Co-ordinators have been very kind with a gift – which will be used to purchase an apple tree with special connections to the Association, ie it is named Greensleeves, and so a permanent reminder of you all. The Association were kind enough to give me Honorary Membership a few years ago, and so I look forward to keeping in touch with what you are all up to and, hopefully, seeing a few of you at some event(s).

On my leaving day Rowena Naile, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and Association, kindly presented me with a Skimmia japonica shrub (very appropriately in Association colours) and an engraved Dartington crystal vase. I am overwhelmed by everyone's generosity and the wonderful messages I have received. Once more ... thank you.



Features

Lionesses and Jaguars



Karen "Radders" Radford recounts her Mission Motorsport adventure

Those of you who know me, will be aware that I have had a love of fast cars for most of my life, so when I saw

the Facebook posts from Pat Rosewell (Budgie) buttering up her experience at the famous Goodwood Racetrack last June I knew that I had to go. Within minutes I had emailed HQ asking for my name to be put down.

Mission Motorsport is a charity set up to support the recovery and rehabilitation of veterans through the motor industry. They had offered 6 free tickets to the Association for any eager Lioness wanting to attend a motorsport experience at Goodwood in September. When I received the email to say I was one of the lucky ones, my wife Annie and I were booking accommodation nearby and planning the trip. "Yes", a Racetrack, fast cars and an opportunity to break the speed limit legally, how exciting!

I soon found out that I would be spending the day with my equally car mad friends Heather Bradbury, Pauline Marr, Issy Hamilton-Conboy, Loraine Saunders and Wendy Brimicombe. It turned out there were five of us staying in the same hotel: Heather and Izzy having travelled "darn sarf" from near Wigan to share the experience.



Left to right Wendy, Pauline, Loraine, Radders, Heather, Izzy

The day arrived and we all met up at Goodwood ready to start the day. After a briefing we headed straight to the track to see what delightful, fast, and exciting cars we could get in. Oooooooooo how exciting! Beautiful Lotus', Porsche, Audis, the fastest Subaru I have ever seen with over 800 BHP, yes over 800, an Ariel Atom, Jaguars, Aston Martins, a tuned up Mini and vintage Morgan to name a few. Where do we start!



Left to right Wendy, Pauline, Radders, Heather, Loraine, Izzy

Pauline was in her element and so excited about being driven at speed around a track. She was helmet on and in the queue before we had even sized up our crash helmets. The next thing we knew, the flag was down and she was off, Vrrrrrooommmmm.



Pauline Marr

I had never been in a Lotus and was so excited to see that there were three of them in the line up. First up was a beautiful blue 2023 Lotus Emira V6. Wow what a car! But that was then beaten hands down by my spin around the track in a £192,000 Porsche GT3 RS. Crazy at 170 miles per hour however my helmet kept my hair on so all was well. The Ariel Atom was an incredible thrill. The pick up speed was exhilarating and after I pulled myself off the back of the seat to try and get out, the driver and I dissolved into fits of laughter at the unfolding debacle.



2023 Lotus Emira V6



Porsche GT3 RS



Ariel Atom



We had the chance to drive a Mazda MX5 around the skidpan which was hilarious fun. We tried our best to manage a few doughnuts and Pauline managed to stall it several times, probably something to do with her struggling to reach the peddles!



Pauline and Wendy

The racetrack is next to the Goodwood aerodrome and home to a small fleet of Spitfires. Our ticket gave us the opportunity to visit the hanger and listen to a guided tour about the history of the airfield and its role during WW2. It was fascinating to hear the stories of bravery and the strategic importance of the airfield and its involvement in helping to win the Battle of Britain. In the hanger was the record-breaking Silver Spitfire. During the war it flew 51 combat missions and on its last flight it was damaged beyond repair. Having been renovated and transformed into the shiny silver spitfire in 2019 it took on the round the world record breaking venture. If you want to know more about it then you can read the story at silverspitfire.com/about/spitfire-history. Now hereby hangs a tale. The day was to take an unexpected turn when an opportunity arose to fly in a taxi plane whilst being shadowed by the Silver Spitfire. Annie and I were up for the one off experience, well why wouldn't you! With three other members of the public we cruised the skies over West Sussex whilst being shadowed by this beautiful plane. To see such a stunning plane fly alongside us, drop down from above and rise out of the sky from below us was magical and something neither of us will ever forget.



Radders and Annie with Spitfire pilot Tim Granshaw



After a perfect day full of adventure, fun and laughs our thanks went out to the organisers from Mission Motorsport for a totally amazing day and the Association for giving us the opportunity.

We said goodbye to Loraine and Wendy and hotfooted it back to the bar to reminisce about our exciting day and what a day it was!



From the back left to right Radders, Annie, Pauline, Izzy and Heather.

We love it when a plan comes together! Thanks so much for this brilliant report Radders - we're so pleased you all had a great day, even if we are rather jealous! Huge thanks to Mission Motorsport who we are building a great relationship with. If anyone would like to put themselves on the mailing list for future events then get in touch with us in the HQ office and we'll let you know when we next get tickets.

Women of Steel



Thinking of setting up a new branch or group? Sandy Warne is happy to report – it is easier than you'd think

In late September I was contacted by a fellow Lioness to enquire if there was a Sheffield branch as one of her friends (Debi Wainwright) was moving to Sheffield and did not know

anyone. I asked for Debi's contact number and we decided that we should meet up and see what I could do to make her feel welcome in my hometown. The following day I spoke to the lovely Brenda Colley who was the point of contact for Sheffield. She told me that the Sheffield branch had closed due to low numbers and the current members getting to a stage where it wasn't so easy to get to meet-ups.

So I rang Paula at the WRAC Association office, who I got to know when I organised the We Will Remember Her service for Molly Carter. I asked what I needed to put past them to set up a new branch and after being told there are no barriers, decided to get Sheffield up and running.

I put a post on various WRAC Facebook sites, the local Veterans page and RBL branch - let's all come together to make new friendships. Word soon spread and within 2 weeks we met for our first Coffee-Cake-Chat meet at the local Dobbies Garden Centre. Not only ladies from Sheffield have joined our merry band - we have now expanded to incorporate surrounding areas, so this includes Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Worksop and Chesterfield.

A few of the ladies were apprehensive of meeting as it's been quite a while for some of them to walk into a venue and meet strangers for the first time, but within minutes everyone has said how brilliant it is and they should not have had any fears as we are all very normal, and let's face it, part of a very special group that served.

I personally have found it easy to set the branch up, I decided that our meet-ups are very informal, we do not charge subs or take minutes, I want it to be a social occasion and we all feel the same. We have quite a few visits planned next year such as to the National Arboretum, local museums, and city visits, and we're looking to do a trip over to Germany to the Christmas markets as many of us served there. We would be more than happy to meet up with any other groups that fancy a get together so please get in touch.

A Thank You from HQ

Sandy you are a power-house and we take our hats off to you! Whenever we hear that a branch has to close it is always hugely disappointing, but when a new one opens, or an old one springs back to life it is cause for celebration (which in this office means kettle on and hobnobs opened!).

If anyone else would like to start up a branch or group, please just get in touch – even if you're not sure and just want to explore some ideas. We can put you in touch with your area coordinator who is there to offer local support, and we will send out a pack with everything you need to know when starting up a new group.

Welcome back Sheffield Branch, here's to many more slices of cake!

All that glitters...

Everyone at HQ would like to say a huge thank you to all those members and branches who sent in Christmas cards last year. It was a bumper mailbag and the office was festooned with Christmassy cheer - making up for the solo piece of tinsel on the office

spider plant! It was wonderful to hear how much the Association is appreciated, and to know that the cards we sent out to you were well received. We need to say a HUGE thank you to Winchester Branch for stuffing all those envelopes - what a mammoth task!

Amongst the cards we received, we particularly noticed these three - gold stars to Plymouth Branch, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Branch, and Winchester Branch (second honorable mention of the day) for their creative artwork incorporating the cap badge into their designs. Some wonderful glitter work in there!



LGBT Veterans Independent Review



Ali Brown, WRAC Association Life VP and Fighting With Pride Trustee analyses the review for the Lioness

On 19th July 2023, the Independent Review into the service and experience of LGBT veterans who served prior to 2000 was published.

Commissioned by the Office of Veteran Affairs (OVA) and conducted by Lord Etherton PC KC, the review had been announced by the Defence Secretary as part of the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan and was accompanied by the following statement from the Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty:

"The historic ban was wrong and those who were thrown out of the military purely because of their sexuality suffered and we acknowledge that. This review will help us better understand the impact"

At the heart of the Review were the testimonies of veterans who had suffered under the Ban and for whom the process of dismissal had been intolerable. Lord Etherton writes in his preface to the Review:

"Those statements give shocking evidence of a culture of homophobia, and of bullying, blackmail and sexual assaults, abusive investigations into sexual orientation and sexual preference, disgraceful medical examinations including conversion therapy, peremptory discharges, and appalling consequences in terms of mental health and wellbeing, homelessness, employment, personal relationships and financial hardship."

A call for evidence was launched on 15th July and ended on 1st December 2022. There were 1,128 submissions with 69% of these from women. This was remarked upon as being notably high given the much lower percentage of women serving in the Armed Forces during those years (approx. 13%). Also remarked upon was the fact that in 2010 instructions had been given for the destruction of Service Police investigation records relating to homosexual service personnel or those perceived to be such.

The Review made 49 recommendations including the making of a National Apology, restoration of status and medals, the need for memorialisation, disregards and pardons to be considered for those convicted of a criminal offence, and due consideration to making a financial award to affected veterans with the recommendation of a financial cap.

On 19th July in a packed House of Commons, Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak made a long awaited apology to LGBT+ veterans affected by the ban upon their service. In his statement the Prime Minister said that the ban was:

"...an appalling failure of the British State, decades behind the law of this land. In that period many endured the most horrific sexual abuse and violence, homophobic bullying and harassment, all while bravely serving this country. Today on behalf of the British State, I apologise."

In his speech and in a later speech by the Rt Hon Ben Wallace, then Secretary of State for Defence, commitments were made to implement all 49 recommendations, that the Government's response would be swift and that there would be the opportunity of a full debate in Parliament.

Veteran Charities were quick to pledge their support. Amongst these Fighting With Pride, along with their partners, RBL, SSAFA and Help For Heroes, have been consistently engaged with Government to request that the promised swift response is received. However, as at 4th December 2023, no response has been received. It is hoped that this will be received before the end of the year followed by a debate in the New Year.

At the heart of this work is the opportunity to recognise those who were lost from our Armed Forces, isolated from the military family and thus from the WRAC Association. So many have faced decades of issues with health, housing, families, loneliness and isolation. It must be hoped that the Review can bring comfort to those most affected and help wash away the decades of shame so many have felt, replacing it with the Pride we share in their service. There must always be the reassurance that for those who lost so much and been affected so greatly, there is a warm welcome and the offer of support both in the military family and in the WRAC Association.



Remember Remember the 5th of November...

... forget Catherine Wheels - here's Mary's Canaries

After the excitement of the Lionesses' performance in the World Cup this summer, the colder November weather brought one of our own Lionesses back out onto the pitch.

On Sunday November 5th Mary 'Rusty' Blake was chosen as the Community Hero for Norwich City's match against Blackburn Rovers at the Carrow Road Stadium.

Rusty played in the 1969 unofficial England Lionesses Team, getting to the semi-finals of the Women's European Cup held in Italy for the first time. Rusty cherishes her bronze medal earned just one year before joining the WRAC.



Back to 2023, Rusty, who was accompanied on matchday by Lyn Hatch, said "We had such a lovely day. We watched the match from the Directors Box, and I saw Delia sitting just a few rows in front of me!

"I met the players before the match and chatted with the captain. They were very kind and joking around with me. I was holding the ball and one player said "you'll be heading that in a minute", I replied "You'd be in for a real shock if I did!" Then the announcer over the loud speakers told everyone in the stadium about my time in the WRAC as well as being a football player, and I walked out onto the pitch to a big cheer and placed the ball on the plinth. Then the referee picked it up and the first half got going.

"We had lunch in the Directors Lounge with delicious cream cakes, and I was presented with a souvenir programme of my day - it really was a great experience."

From playing at the stadium of Juventus to appearing at the homeground of the Canaries. Mary - you may not be on the England team anymore, but we're very proud to have you representing these Lionesses.



Mary representing her country, front row, second from left.

OVA conference 2023

CEO Paula Rogers reports from November's event.

With the annual OVA conference being held in York, I happily travelled back to my home county to hear a series of talks on the subject of 'Evidence into Action' – a theme which involved many different veteran-facing areas sharing how they use data and evidence to improve their services.

Veterans, government ministers, charities, funders, researchers, NHS and commercial organisations all came together to discuss the vital role of evidence-based decision-making in providing the best possible support for veterans across the UK.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP, opened the conference by sharing how important solid research was within the development of veterans' services, and how vital ongoing research into the lived experiences of veterans is part of the ongoing development of government policy.

The day contained a wide variety of fascinating presentations and Q&A sessions, for example the role of evidence in developing veterans' healthcare, and how services available to veterans are shaped by developing research. Matthew Seward, the Interim Director of the Office for Veterans' Affairs discussed the role of evidence in the development of policy, and Janet Woolford of the Office of National Statistics looked at

A session looking at the role of evidence in senior decision making was introduced by Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, who was followed by Sarah Atherton MP, Chair of the Women Veterans' Strategy Advisory Group (pictured), addressing the progress made and lessons learned through the ongoing work looking at the experience of women in the Armed Forces. Naturally this was the presentation I had been most keen to hear, as Sarah Atherton shared some detail of the Women Veterans' Strategy currently in development. WRAC Association Life Vice President Ali Brown OBE and I have sat on the advisory group for this, and look forward to writing about it in the Lioness when the strategy is published later this year.



It was pleasing to see that, when the Interim Director of the Office for Veterans' Affairs spoke of the organisations they work closely with, the WRAC Association logo featured on screen alongside organisations including Royal British Legion, Help For Heroes and SSAFA. We will continue to work hard to ensure the voices of female veterans, particularly those aged over 50, are heard and prioritised. The Office of Veterans' Affairs and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs know who we are, and we intend to keep it that way.

the newly available data available following the introduction of the veterans' question in the 2021 Census. Other topics included the importance of building evaluation into an evidence base to enable proper analysis, and how demonstrating need is vital when looking at the development of new projects and services for beneficiaries. Evidence from lived experience, the importance of listening to real-life voices, and the difficulties often faced when looking at supporting underrepresented groups were all discussed by panels of experts and academics pulled together from across the UK and beyond our shores..



Female Veterans Transformation Programme Update



The Cobseo Female Veterans Transformation Programme went live on the 4th September and in the last 3 months we have made great progress. We now have a full team, with Liza Jarvis as Project Lead and Hannah West as Communication and Engagement Officer. We have been establishing relationships with key colleagues across the UK, including the NHS and the OVA, and are engaged in the OVA's work to develop the Women Veterans Strategy that will be published in 2024.

The key aim of the project is to develop a resource/toolkit that can support those that deliver services to veterans across the charity, statutory and public sector, in order that everyone is much more aware of the needs of female veterans.

We have also nearly completed the first stage of the project by producing a Literature Review of everything that has been published on female veterans in the UK, from 2009 through to present day. This will provide us with a robust evidence base for the next stage of the work, identifying the key issues and barriers, and the practical support needs that must be implemented to make positive change for female veterans. Our next step is to consult with female veterans themselves and those in veteran facing services to identify what specific practical changes are needed and how the toolkit can both give advice, guidance and signposting to those services that engage with female veterans on a day-to-day basis.

As we move forward, we hope to ensure that female veterans voices and views are at the heart of the project to really drive forward positive transformational change.

Your Association is trying to fleece you!

...but in a very good way, as Wendy Hooton explains

I was thinking of new ideas for using the money the WRAC Lionesses raise. We have the Statuette in the Museum at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and we raised funds towards the Statue at the National Memorial Arboretum as well as the maintenance of our plot. So what else could we do? Having seen our ladies in wheelchairs at the Cenotaph with various types of blankets to keep them warm I had an idea... What if we had a blanket with a large Association badge on the front for our ladies to use on such occasions? It would be prominent for the public to see and for when television crews were filming us marching past the Cenotaph, whilst keeping out the November chills. So I put my idea forward and HQ got to work.

I was delighted to see the blankets on show at the 2023 Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph in London. Our proud veterans looked wonderful. Rosie Garrison (pictured) said, "It was lovely and warm on the knees and I got many compliments from other members - I think they were pretty jealous! I'd like to buy one to use all the time - even to pop down to the shops. They were absolutely wonderful and I loved it"

I will take this opportunity to thank all our WRAC Lionesses for their incredible fundraising and to all those who make donations. We really are extremely grateful.



And we are extremely grateful to you too Wendy, for your amazing fundraising and brilliant ideas! We ordered the cosiest fleece we could find and commissioned fabric WRAC Association logos, and then tasked a local seamstress to bring the pieces together for us. She did a great job and was so pleased to be supporting veterans she offered a much appreciated discount, so sincere thanks to Debbie. We're looking into stocking them in the Association shop soon Rosie, so keep a look out!



Rosie Garrison, Janet Brodie-Murphy, Lynda Croft and Dorothy Mitchelmore all toasty warm under the new blankets

Can I help you sell poppies?

Yes, Prime Minister

Lyn Hatch goes right to the top to recruit poppy sellers, as she explains

As the Poppy Appeal Manager for Norfolk, a big part of my job is to support the volunteers that do an amazing job running their local appeals. On Wednesday 1st November on my way home from working at Fakenham Races I got a frantic phone call wanting to know if I had read my emails. I had not and was sure I was about to find out what I needed to know in a hurry.

The Prime Minister's office had contacted the head of the Poppy Appeal to say that he would like to collect at Norwich Train Station on Monday 6th November, and I was to be there with four volunteers, collection trays and pots. We were all to be there for 1030hrs and expect to stay until 1230hrs. Most importantly I was not to tell anyone he was going to be there. By 1000hrs the next day I needed to have the names of the volunteers and write a short paragraph on each of them as to why they volunteer. Sounds easy, but it was one of the hardest things I have done for a while, though I managed to get them there on time and once we all arrived at the station, I told them who was going to be collecting with us.

Rishi Sunak arrived with his press team, and I introduced him to the volunteers. He took his time, listened to what they had to say and was genuinely interested. Then we handed him the tray of poppies and he collected with one of the veterans. The public waiting to catch trains were truly amused and Rishi Sunak was happy to have a few selfies. His team were constantly trying to hurry him along as he was catching the next train back to London, only when he was ready did he hand us back the tray.

The next morning at 0700hrs my phone started ringing. The local media had just found out about it after WRAC Association HQ put it out on social media and from the reporter I had spoken with on the phone the night before. Interviews on the radio followed.



Eastern Area Co-ordinator Lyn Hatch and Norfolk branch member Ann Rogerson with the Prime Minister



"What a wonderful time we all had, it was certainly a talking point for a few hours the next day."



Remembrance



Guildford

Colonel (Retd) Audrey Smith reports from Guildford where we enjoy the freedom of the borough.

The small contingent arrived at Holy Trinity Church to find we had been allocated the row of seats immediately behind the VIPs but sadly only four of us were there due to illness and one member having an unexpected family commitment.

During the service it was mentioned that next year would be the 50th Anniversary of the terrible bombing in Guildford when five people were blown up by a bomb hidden under seats in the Horse and Groom Public House. Sadly, two were Recruits from the WRAC Centre and so the anniversary is particularly important to the WRAC Association. As in 2022 the Remembrance in Guildford will be centred around the WRAC and this tragic act.

Following the Service, the parade formed up outside led for the second time by the female Parade Commander Lt Lily Forward. Only three people were able to march but it was extraordinary that we had all served together in Aldershot in 1970 including Ilona Mathie who joined us for the first time and hopes to be with us again next year.

The wreath laying to both the World War One and World War Two memorials was led by the current Mayor, Councillor Masuk Miah. Our wreath was laid by Major Rowena Patrick MBE, who has been a resident in the Borough for 47 years. Unusually there is a second modern memorial for those who lost their lives in subsequent conflicts which of course includes Pte Ann Hamilton 19 and Pte Caroline Slater 18, and it was here that I laid the wreath.

Finally, we returned to the Guildhall for refreshments and to meet the Mayor of Guildford and other local dignitaries.

Next year will be a special year for the WRAC again

as we remember the two WRAC Recruits whose young lives were cut short on 5th October 1974 and it is hoped that the Service in October and the Remembrance weekend will be well attended by the WRAC Association. Guildford Borough will make sure that our recruits are remembered properly and we must be there to support them.



Tenerife

Stopping to remember wherever we are, Wendy Hooton shares her experience of being overseas at this important time

As I was going to be in Tenerife for Remembrance this year with friends I thought I would do our own Remembrance Service whilst there. I bought a WRAC wreath from Cheryl Jones at the WRAC Dinner Club and took this with me along with a WRAC flag and a few crosses.



We had a short service in the sunshine on our villa terrace. I'd asked Pat Rosewell to recite the Exhortation and after the Last Post, two minutes silence and Reveille, Kath Kay recited the Kohima Epitaph. Catharine Prewer and I read two prayers. It was a very moving service for us all and, as is tradition, we then did a toast to "Absent Friends".

LEST WE FORGET

London Cenotaph



Amongst the first time contingent members in 2023 was Caroline McEwan-Smith who tells us her experience of the day

This was to be my first march past with the Association though I had previously formed part of the 'Hollow Square' at the Cenotaph as part of the

Civilian Services Contingent (CSC) in 2005 and 2008 as I was then a serving Police Officer. The CSC marched past the Cenotaph near the end of the Veterans parade.



So, 15 years after my last march past I felt honoured to be taking part again. My family is a military one and have served through the generations in all 3 services. This year I had my paternal Grandfather's WW2 medals court mounted and was so proud to wear them and honour his memory: Private E.S.G. Smith, Essex Regt, Killed in Action 07/10/44 at Monte Petra, Italy.

As I met up with old comrades and met new ones on Horse Guards, the sense of camaraderie was palpable. Smiles and hugs abounded. Ladies who had marched past before gave newcomers Sandy, Trudi, Penny and me the 'rundown'. This was much appreciated.

Formed up in Whitehall, I readied myself for the 2 minute silence. I thought of my Grandfather whose medals I proudly wore, and all those killed, injured and affected by war. After the silence we clapped other veterans as they marched off. Scotty's Little Soldiers (a charity for Children who have lost a parent in service) seemed really appreciative of our tribute.

Our turn to march off duly came. The crowds were applauding loudly and I was beyond proud to be marching with my Corps and honouring our fallen. The Cenotaph loomed large, framed by a pale sky. A silent 'thank you' from me as eyes left was commanded.

The short march round Whitehall, an "eyes right" was commanded, The Princess Royal gave the salute on the dias. We were back on Horse Guards. After more banter, Sandy, Penny and I were filmed being interviewed by ITN for the evening news, we spoke about what the day meant to us, being a Female Veteran, and our Association. In the end we were usurped by Scotty's Little Soldiers for the TV slot. Absolutely fine by us - Respect to them!

I met Alec Penstone a 99 year old Royal Navy veteran with his grandson. He told me of his service on the Arctic Convoys in WW2, battles he was involved in, shipmates he lost. I'll admit it I teared up. I asked if I could give him a hug, he agreed. I thanked him for his service. I said he was a hero. He replied "No, I'm no hero, the lads who didn't come back are the heroes". More hugs.



Alec Penstone and his Grandson

I then made my way to the Field of Remembrance to lay a cross for my Grandfather in the Essex Regt section. A memorable day, I hope to march again next year.



L-R Caroline, Trudi McLeod, Sandy Warne, Penny Stopps



Have you always wanted to march at the Cenotaph? What's holding you back?

Here are the answers to some frequently asked questions and comments.

It's very expensive to travel to London

Many rail companies offer veterans attending the Cenotaph free return travel to London on the Saturday and Sunday so check with your local train company. For those travelling by bus both Stagecoach and First Bus have offered similar schemes in the past.

Do I need to pay for my place?

No, it is free of charge and available to all members of the WRAC Association.

I'd need to stay overnight as well, can I get help with those costs?

The WRAC Association may be able to assist you with a Membership Support Grant which is available to help members to attend events and would be considered to cover reasonable costs including travel and accommodation (see page 35). Try to book well ahead as this will be cheaper.

I was only with the WRAC for a short time and served most of my Army career with a different cap badge.

You are welcome to march with any cap badge you served with, and we would be delighted to have you join the WRAC Association contingent.

I'm very proud of my Army career, but it wasn't very long - can I still march?

Of course. If you served a day in the regulars or the reserves, you are a veteran. The length of time you served is not important, your pride as a veteran is.

I was in the TA - does that count?

Absolutely - all who served have contributed in the same way so please join us.

Can I wear my medals or those of a family member?

Yes, please wear your medals with pride. Remember to wear your own medals on your left side (over your heart) and any medals of a close family member or loved one are worn on your right-hand side.

I use a wheelchair - can I be accommodated?

Yes. As long as you inform the Association, a pusher will be allocated to you, along with a blanket to keep you warm. The wheelchairs always lead the contingent and are given pride of place.

It looks like a lot of waiting around - can I get a cup of tea there?

There are two snack wagons on Horse Guards with hot drinks and food, or grab a brew on your way in from the nearest coffee shop.





I can't really stand around for long, can I sit down?

There are very limited places to sit down - just a few seats in the St John's tent. The standing time on Horse Guards is two hours followed by about an hour on Whitehall so if you would like HQ to look at hiring a wheelchair for you, please get in touch.

Will I be able to use the loo?

Yes, there are plenty of loos on Horse Guards and plenty of time to join the queues and return to the Contingent.

Does everyone who asks to go get a place?

We will be allocated a good number of places. It's always worth getting your name on the list early, but if you leave it to the deadline, please call the office because you never know.

What do I have to do to register for a place this November?

Email or write to Association HQ with your name and address before July 31st.

Is it an early start?

If you can arrive on Horse Guards by 0930 that gives lots of time to meet friends old and new before lining up.

Most of the women in your photos are in WRAC Association clothing - do I need to wear anything special?

No, smart dark clothing is perfect and many of those marching choose to do this.

I don't have anyone to go with and I wouldn't feel confident going on my own

Look on Facebook groups to see who is going - you're bound to find someone from your area, or contact the nearest branch organiser - you'll find their details in the Branch News section of this issue. You can meet up on trains or once you get to London - there is the whole contingent to be with.

What if I don't request a place in the contingent on time?

We have a very healthy number who support our marchers by lining the route on Remembrance Sunday. They often take the best photos and video and offer real support to our contingent. The more the merrier with this group, so if you find yourself unexpectedly able to get into London, please come down.

Did this help? If you have more questions, please call the HQ office - we would love to give you some friendly advice and see more new faces this November.

Plus, don't forget that although London hosts the UK's principal service, there are services taking place across the breadth of the UK and beyond our shores, so please help us to ensure the WRAC is represented as widely as we can be by attending your local service with veteran pride.







Huge thanks once again to the wonderful Heather Gaughran who takes such brilliant photos of our events - your camera work is very much appreciated. It's not often that Heather manages to get into the shot but we spotted her popping up in this one, third from the right so wanted to give her a special mention. Thanks Heather!

Field of Remembrance



*Sharry Martin
travelled from Norfolk
and sent this report*

The 95th Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey, was attended, and officially opened on Thursday 9th November 2023, by Her Majesty The Queen (formerly HRH The Duchess of Cornwall).

Our beloved Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC), Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), and the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC), held a plot there, with many other numerous civilian and military Corps and Associations. The event was organised by The Poppy Factory, of which Her Majesty The Queen is patron. Within each plot, crosses, laden with a poppy, represented comrades, who lost their lives, for Country and the Crown, in any war. The west side of Westminster Abbey, where the event was held, was brightened with an array of the colour red, like a field of poppies.

I represented, and attended the 95th Field of Remembrance, in memory of my Auntie Helen. Helen Martin served in the Second World War in the ATS. When the Bugler, the lone soldier from the Scots Guards, sounded the 'Last Post,' I, like many others, stood in silence, in Remembrance, for my family members, who have given their lives in service.

WRAC Association plot



Rowena Naile MBE and Fiona Gardner CBE



Bank of England

Elaine 'Ozzy' Osborne bore our standard and reports on an emotional day

I was especially proud to be invited back to the Bank of England as the standard bearer for this Remembrance service as I had attended the We Will Remember Her service in the summer to commemorate Corporal Enid Line. Enid had worked at the Bank before joining the ATS in WWII, and lost her life along with 25 other servicewomen in Great Yarmouth 80 years ago.

As a person of colour it was incredibly significant for me because of the history of the Bank of England and its connections to slavery. For someone of the Windrush generation to be standard bearer for the WRAC Association and proudly wearing a British Army uniform I experienced many emotions on the day. It was wonderful to see a large number of Gurkhas who work for the Bank in attendance, and to reflect on the changing culture there since the dark days of slavery.



Elaine lowers the standard

It was a very windy day but the weather did nothing to detract from the warm welcome and hospitality that was extended to both me and Carol Curtis who expressed how honoured she felt to be a part of this Remembrance event. The service itself was extremely well organised by Bank representative, Faisal Choudhry and also on parade on this special day was a female Major still serving in the TA and who works for the Bank.

It was a hard but wonderful day and extremely worth it, not least because of the great connections and burgeoning relationship between the WRAC Association and the Bank of England.



*Above Far left: Elaine Osborne and Carol Curtis
Top photo: Carol presents our wreath*



Maids in Chelsea

Trustees Rowena Naile and Helen Merrington-Rust, and Grants Officer Julie Winks were invited to the Royal Hospital Chelsea to present Christmas gifts to the in-pensioners of the WRAC. Monica Parrott gave them a very warm welcome, and describes their visit

The Lionesses of the Royal Hospital Chelsea were delighted to host visitors from the WRAC Association HQ for our annual Christmas visit on Monday 11th December 2023.



Julie Winks, Majorie Cole, Monica Parrott, Helen Merrington-Rust, Helen Lloyd, Rowena Naile, Charmaine Coleman

This annual visit involves all Regiments and Corps of all the Chelsea Pensioners, and it is an amazing time for us all, both Pensioners and guests.

Our visitors were greeted in the Social Club, and as many Lionesses as were able to attend were present. Unfortunately, some of our older Lionesses were unable to be with us, but they were not forgotten. We had a lovely time chatting and catching up on past, present, and future events with the Association. Every one of us was given a generous gift from our guests, for which we are very grateful. Afterwards we went to the Great Hall for a 3-course lunch, more chat and memories, and of course photos. It was a lovely get together, one that both the Lionesses and the Association look forward to at Christmas.



L-R (Back) Monica Parrott, Janet Brodie-Murphy, (Front) Charmaine Coleman, Mary Guidera, Helen Lloyd, Anne Phipps



Monica Parrott and Helen Merrington-Rust

Thank you for inviting us once again, and for making our visit so special Monica. It's always a real treat to be with you all ahead of Christmas and we look forward to the next occasion to be with you all on Founder's Day. Very best wishes from Helen, Julie and Rowena.

.....

Would you like to attend Chelsea this summer?

Every year the Association is fortunate to be invited to Founder's Day. Held in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea and also known as Oak Apple Day, it is always held on a date close to 29th May – the birthday of Charles II and the date of his restoration as King in 1660. It is the highlight of the Hospital calendar and a true honour to attend.

This year the event will be held on Thursday 6th June. Places will be very limited, however if you would like to be considered for an invitation, or would like to nominate another member to attend, please email info@wraca.org.uk.



WRAC Lionesses 10k - Worcester

After once again organising the annual Lioness 10k entry, and valiantly participating in it, Wendy Hooton shares with us an event dedicated to fundraising and fitness

It was a long wait to find a suitable 10k for us this year. The 2023 dates were not being released as the event organisers were still being cautious after Covid and the many cancellations the previous year. I finally decided on the Worcester 10k in September. It was much later than normal, the Manchester 10k last year having been in May. However, the troops rallied round, and we had 32 "dedicated" runners/walkers plus our amazing supporters.

I did a recce in April with Helen Davies, and we met up with Jane Griffin-Ash who lives in the city and has a wealth of knowledge. Jane was kind enough to show us around and even took us to The Commandery Museum where she volunteers. We hadn't been to Worcester before and thoroughly enjoyed what this wonderful city had to offer.

With the finer details sorted we looked forward to sharing this with the WRAC Lionesses. September soon arrived, the countdown began and the excitement was building up. Our run numbers arrived through our letterboxes; it was nearly time!

Our Lionesses (& Lions) began arriving on the Friday and Saturday and the noise levels heightened! The Premier Inn and Worcester knew we had arrived. I gave my usual briefing on Saturday early evening and the T-shirts provided by the WRAC Association were distributed. Thank you to Tanya Park at HQ for sorting out the design and ordering them. Raffle tickets were on sale for some great prizes, and tickets were separately on sale for a beautiful Christmas cake made by Lynda Armstrong, and a First Day Cover signed by Dame Kelly Holmes, donated by Babs Anderson and raffled by Marg Davies.

We were up early on the Sunday and met at The Hive for a pre-run photograph. Our loyal photographers Heather Gaughran and Rosie Garrison met us there. After another briefing we remembered the late Jean Simmons, former In Pensioner at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Jean had donated Chelsea Bear, our Supporters' Bear and I have had her name embroidered on its jacket in her memory.



It was soon time for us to line up, everyone chatting nervously. Pip Flegel was in a new lighter wheelchair kindly lent to her by Dawn Hay, a friend of Marg Davies. We all prayed her amazing team of "pushers" would get her round the 10k with no disasters! We needn't have worried; well, they may have nearly gone in the river once! They were absolutely brilliant as always and stole the show, cheered over the finish line and announced over the tannoy. Well done to Ali Brown, Mary Woollard, Heather Bradbury, Pat Rosewell, Jan TC Rees and Jennie Thomas, an awesome team effort with a chip time of 1hr 28 mins.



Our fastest runner this year was Helen Davies in 55 minutes and she was 8th in her category, just brilliant. Octogenarian Sandy Cawley never ceases to amaze me, Sandy ran last year with her arm in plaster and this year after heart treatment! Her time was an incredible 1hr 41 minutes and she received an extra medal for being over 80! Sandy also carried our mascot this year, Mo Bear, and bagged a medal for her.



Rowena Naile, having suffered an Achilles heel problem, was under strict orders not to run this year and still managed to walk it in a respectable 1hr 12 mins, very well done.



My thanks to our wonderful volunteers who helped distribute the finishers' goody bags and provide water around the course. Well done Lynda Armstrong and Dawn Major.



Babs Anderson did a PB 1hr 38 mins, all her training paid off, well done the pain was worth it! There was one last thing, a post run photograph with medals which we had taken by a beautiful willow tree next to the River Severn.



Everyone completed the 10k with no injuries for which I'm always grateful! With lots of smiling faces it was time to go for refreshments. The post run supper was at Worcester Whitehouse Hotel, formerly The Star Hotel where Worcestershire County Cricket Club was formed. The staff at the hotel were excellent from my initial enquiry through to serving a 2-course meal. Ahmad and his team provided excellent service with our meals arriving promptly and the tables looking fabulous.

Time for the raffle, an Afternoon Tea for two donated by the Whitehouse Hotel was won by Ali Brown. Lynda Armstrong's cake was won by Dawn Major, and the First Day Cover won by Jill Martin, her granddaughter Maisie is a philatelist and collects first day covers so a perfect winner. We raised a grand total of £408.72 for the Association. Thank you so very much everyone, including all those who provided raffle prizes, Audrey Pearce, Lyn Hatch, Kate Prewer, Julie Ayre, Sue Westlake, Nell Frary, Spire & Loft Bury St Edmunds, and The Whitehouse Hotel.



Huge thanks to my long-suffering helpers, Helen Davies, Pat Rosewell, Nan Bulman, Gina Spacey, Nell Frary, Dawn Mackender and to our fabulous photographers, Heather Gaughran and Rosie Garrison. We did it! Thank you all for your continuing support especially after our 2 years of lockdown. I also thank you for having the courage and determination to get out there again. I must also mention your outstanding fundraising, I am blown away by your generosity and tremendous effort in sharing the fundraising page. We have raised £8074.03 so far and there will be some more Gift Aid to add from the sponsor forms. Fantastic everyone!

I look forward to seeing you next year for our 12th WRAC Lionesses 10k in BRISTOL on Sunday 19th May 2024. SUAVITER IN MODO FORTITER IN RE



CycleFest 2023

Hosted by Liz King and Ali Steed at their home in Kent, Liz sends this report on CycleFest's fourth year of laughter and lycra.

CycleFest has become a regular event on the calendar for our cycling and sporting enthusiasts and this year's event saw new ladies attend, Jill Martin and Wendy Jones, which is always great to see, as people turn up ready to ride and have an absolute blast with so much laughter.

This year, we also had England's very own Lionesses to cheer on, as they progressed through the World Cup to reach the finals. As the Lionesses were in the thick of the World Cup, we changed the rides around to fit the football matches, we have never seen so many people crammed into our sitting room for the final! Accommodation is varied, from beds in the house, to some arriving with their own camping equipment, campervans and motorhomes parked up on the lawn, plus our safari lodge, sleeping six.

Friday evening is the time trial, when the ladies have to ride around a set route in the fastest time. Healthy competition is always great to fire everyone up, even though the nerves beforehand bring an amusing plethora of excuses as to why they may not perform as well as they should. Coming in with the win this year was Rowena Naile, in a cracking time of 12.57. Followed by Tilly in 2nd, 14.34 which surprised us all and especially Tilly to be fair, as she hadn't been on the bike since the previous year's CycleFest.

Over the next few days, the rides were split into three groups, with some groups covering a little more mileage. We visited a local military museum at Brenzett, Rye Harbour Nature reserve, and Headcorn Aerodrome for the obligatory sausage roll for some!

Saturday's ride saw some groups gatecrash the local church fete in Woodchurch. This nearly ended up with a 'Budgie in the belfry' from bell ringing, and Julie White rocking out some tunes on the microphone, especially Sweet Caroline, which got the whole church rocking! All washed down with tea and scones, or something a little stronger from the pubs opposite the church - well, it would be rude not to! The church was great and has invited us all back next year for a re-run.

Heather Bradbury was the birthday gal this year celebrating her 70th with the meal on Saturday evening at the Chequers on the Green and we had a fantastic meal hosted by Diane, the landlady. We liked it so much we went back on the Monday evening. We are booked again for 2024 and have our own private space within the pub.

Most evenings involved singing and laughter in the garden, which always works to lift the spirits, and we all had the most incredible time as always. The week is a holiday for many of the ladies and Ali and I so enjoy organising CycleFest. We are also incredibly grateful for our lovely cycling statue that the ladies presented to us – which takes pride of place in our sitting room.

Thanks also go to Jane Pendered for stepping up and being a ride leader, so the ladies were safe when riding out. Even though she delayed a start on one morning, having managed to lock her key in her van after getting up super early to go for a morning swim in a local river! As you can imagine, there was plenty of good-natured ribbing about that.

CycleFest 2024 will again be a week-long event, although due to the popularity of the event, there is only camping or campervan space left. So, if you want to come along and you haven't booked yet, be quick! Or if you fancy a cycle trip further afield, you can join us in Mallorca for a holiday – with or without cycling. Contact Liz King liz@trispiritevents.com.





Liz and Ali with their cycling statue, and a Budgie in the belfry



Contact Liz King liz@trispiritevents.com
Or visit the
WRAC Veterans Cycle Club Facebook page

The Wild Atlantic Way

Jackie Clark tells us about the Motor Home Experience she shared with Linda Clark, Corinne Abrahams, and Mary Blake last July, travelling the Irish coastline.

We set off on the 21st of July from Fishguard, disembarking at Rosslare. Our first overnight stop was in a nearby pub carpark and our first night of genuine Irish hospitality. Mary hadn't brought any bread with her, the landlord overhearing the conversation volunteered to get some as he was off out anyway. Not only did he pick the right loaf but would not accept any money. We of course had a few glasses of Guinness to thank him.

The actual Wild Atlantic Way starts in County Cork at Kinsale not too far away, it would be 2000 miles before we reached the end at a little place called Muff. Just before Kinsale we popped into the pretty seaport town of Cobh, previously called Queenstown. The Titanic called in here to pick up passengers going to America. There is a very impressive museum well worth visiting.

On the way to Skibbereen we passed the birthplace of Michael Collins, a hero of the Irish. Once there, the Heritage Museum informed us of the Great Potato Famine of the 1840's. Then onto Mizen Head - the most south westerly point in Ireland, a beautiful place with great views across the Atlantic and the gales to go with them! The Signal Station there gives a nod to Marconi's early Transatlantic Radio Transmissions. Onwards to Kenmare to visit Mary's brother for a very pleasant evening drinking Guinness and allowing the siblings to catch up.

County Clare came next, passing Spanish point where the San Marcos from the Spanish Armada was sunk. The driving and wild camping were not as onerous as we thought they might be, although near this point we lost our wing mirror to 'white van man'! Three people stopped to help us tape the remainder of the mirror back on - genuine kindness.

Galway is such a lively, friendly place, buzzing all the time. We couldn't stay here long but will be back for at least a long weekend in the future, for the music if nothing else. Lin and Mary found a couple of places in Dingle and Dungloe where live music carried on long after we left at 1am. We stopped on the pier at Downpatrick Head - another beautiful place within a

short walk of a Blowhole. Unfortunately, it wasn't playing ball, no action at all! We did see 'EIRE 64' etched into the ground though. Many of these signs can still be seen all along the coast, put there to let WWII Pilots know they were entering neutral territory. Just down the road we stopped at Ceide viewpoint and visitor's centre. It has been proven there were farms here at least 5000 years ago, as hundreds of Kilometres of dry-stone walling were found by a teacher out walking in 1937. The techniques used were amazing and this was a huge community but we don't know why they had to leave.

Donegal next, again a place to go back to and where you can find good Irish music. We are very nearly on the last leg of our journey now, stopping at Buncrana where John Newton wrote the masterpiece Amazing Grace. Then on to Malin Head, the most northerly point and probably the windiest place on earth! Corinne and Mary were wise enough to sleep further down the hill. Lin and I toughed it out but were up and away early as the loud wind was quite worrying. Beautiful but wild.

For the next couple of days, we made our way south not forgetting to take a photo at Muff, which signalled the end of the Wild Atlantic Way. We learned that a number of people who went to America due to the famine and poverty in the 1800's have descendants who went onto greater things. Joe Biden, Ronald Reagan, the Kennedy's, Barack Obama, Woodrow Wilson, and Henry Ford, to name but a few. I wonder how America would have fared without the Irish Settlers?

There should have been a fifth traveller with us on our adventure, Di Taylor, who was very much looking forward to the road trip. Sadly, Di passed away in December 2022 and so our journey was carried out in her honour. If you've done the Scottish North Coast 500, have a think about driving along The Wild Atlantic Way, I can't recommend it highly enough. We had a wonderful time, met some lovely people, drank proper Irish Guinness and have taken away some great memories.



Events

Visit to Guildford Museum 14 November 2023

A new exhibition was opened at the Guildford Museum by the Mayor of Guildford, Councillor Masuk Miah. Colonel Audrey Smith and Major Rowena Patrick were honoured to represent the WRAC Association at the opening and send this report.

The new exhibition highlights the work of the agents of the Special Operations Executive – the SOE, during World War 2. Agents were trained at Wanborough Manor (just off the A31 on the Hog's Back) and Winterfold outside Cranleigh. Well known agents such as Violette Szabo ('Carve Her Name With Pride' the book and film starring Virginia Madsen) and Odette Halloway amongst others.

Violette Szabo was originally in the ATS before being trained as a wireless operator and parachuted into occupied France. She returned to England completing 1 mission, but sadly was betrayed and captured on her second mission and was shot at Ravensbrück concentration camp just before the war ended. We were fascinated to find that both ATS and WRAF personnel were recruited into the secret world, and that they are not forgotten. Research is ongoing.

We were delighted to meet many attendees including both children and grandchildren of various agents, who were present at the opening. The exhibition was curated in conjunction with the Secret WW2 Learning Network and the Intelligence Corps and Guildford Museum.

The Exhibition is open until 13th April 2024 and entry is free. Guildford Museum is close to the Castle in Guildford, address Castle Arch, Quarry Street Guildford GU1 3SX.



Image © Newnham Collection

Secret Guildford

Locations and secret agents of the
Special Operations Executive in World War Two

11 November 2023 to 13 April 2024 at Guildford Museum

Free entry

Guildford Museum, Quarry Street, GU1 3SX
Wed - Sat 12noon - 4.30pm
(last entry 4pm)



 guildford.gov.uk/whatsonatguildfordmuseum

 Guildford's Heritage

 @Gfdheritage

 @guildfordsheritageservices



GUILDFORD
BOROUGH

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

www.greatrun.org

Search for AJ Bell Great Bristol Run

**Please let Wendy know when you have entered (Individual Entry).
Where it says choose a charity leave it blank.**

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





VOLUNTEER FOR THE 2024 EAST ANGLIAN BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL

21st - 26th AUGUST 2024

Lots of beer, music, fun and laughter just ask those who have been. It also includes a Gin & Pimms Bar.

4 hour shifts, you choose how many shifts you would like to work. The more hours we work the more money we receive for the WRAC Association who are a beneficiary of this event.

VISIT AS A GUEST (If you don't want to volunteer) - The more money you spend the more profit is distributed to the charities.

All those who work will be given a wristband which gets you FREE ENTRY for the whole of the Festival :)

There is plenty of accommodation around Bury St Edmunds, hotels, B&B's and campsites.

**CONTACT: Wendy Hooton 07775505326 Messenger/Facebook/WhatsApp
wendyhootonski@aol.com**



CHARITY CRICKET MATCH (Friendly!)

CHATSWORTH LADIES V WRAC LIONESSES

DATE: SATURDAY 29th JUNE 2024

ARE YOU A CRICKET PLAYER? COME ALONG AND JOIN US AS A PLAYER OR SUPPORTER, WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU

VENUE: CHATSWORTH HOUSE CRICKET GROUND, DERBYSHIRE

START TIME: 1200hrs

EVENING MEAL: Cavendish Hall (Chatsworth Estate Office), Edensor - 1900hrs Cost TBC (no more than £40 per head). This is limited to 20 pers from our team including supporters. Should we have lots of interest there is a Plan B!

ACCM: Chatsworth Park Caravan and Camping, Baslow DE45 1PN / Premier Inn Chesterfield West Hotel S42 7DA. Bakewell is the nearest town and has several hotels and B&Bs.

POC - Lynn Hines, 07885168229 - Messenger or WhatsApp or Wendy Hooton 07775505326 - Messenger or WhatsApp

HUGE THANKS TO LYNN HINES FOR ORGANISING THIS EVENT.

Solo in South Pembrokeshire



Marg Davies has news on her next fundraiser

Not long now before I'll be embarking on my 2024 charity walk. It'll be my 11th year and I'll be doing my walk in Wales, returning to my home-county, to walk around & between the castles & fortifications of South Pembrokeshire. I'm provisionally planning to complete my 100 miles sometime between Thursday 25th April and Friday 3rd May.

Each year my supporters amaze and humble me with their generosity and again I'm raising funds for two charities. The first is our Women's Royal Army Corps Association and the second is a local Pembrokeshire charity, the VC Gallery. CEO Barry John MBE served 20 years as a soldier and set up the charity to combat loneliness and social isolation for veterans & the community. As a veteran myself I am only too aware of how fortunate I am and how difficult and lonely it can be to transition from military to civilian life.

In 2007, I was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer and underwent 5 years of treatment. During some of the darker days of my recovery, the camaraderie and support of the WRAC Association, friends and colleagues proved invaluable and still helps me to fight the demons a life-threatening illness can produce. I became more sedentary during my treatment, weight had crept on and I needed a new outlet. I had always loved walking, so decided to challenge myself and plan 'A Long Distance Walk'. After being given the all-clear, I realised life is too precious to waste, or to put things off. Being out in the fresh air helped keep me fit, but more crucially it supported my mental wellbeing. Walking alone is really cathartic. I can enjoy the moment, enjoy life and be thankful for everything I have. I pause sometimes to enjoy a view, and if my mood is a little more fractious, I can swear out loud!

In 2017, I was once again diagnosed with breast cancer. This time, the treatment after surgery was 20 consecutive days of radiotherapy. Walking became my solace during this time. Each day of treatment I walked several miles to the hospital, accompanied by my wife Denise, and walked home again afterwards. That daily walk supported me in my treatment, though thankfully the return journey was downhill!

Through that second recovery from breast cancer, I continued to plan my expeditions, exploring a different part of the country each time and planning the itinerary with the military precision you would expect. So far I have explored North Wales, Norfolk, south & central England, Scotland and Ireland raising over £40K for my causes along the way. I have always been lucky with the weather, setting off in Norfolk in 2018 on the hottest May Bank holiday in history.

This year I plan to start near Amroth Castle and finish 9 days later at Lawrenny Quay. My father, T.W.(Tom) Davies was a great walker and, growing up in Pembroke Dock, we were 'pioneers' walking the first, newly carved routes which became the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. In deference to my aging knees I'll be choosing the flattest routes I can find - not an easy task given South Pembrokeshire's rolling hills and rugged coastline!

I am very self-reliant, even a "control freak", but it's the backing of all my friends that keeps me motivated. The generosity of the WRAC Association community in particular, is astounding. In the past, they have even opened their homes and hosted me overnight, and the majority of the funds I have raised have been through members of the WRAC Association.



If you would like to donate, I've already set up my GiveAsYouLive page: donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/margs-pembrokeshire-100-mile-2024,

and you can follow my progress on the WRAC Association Facebook page or at margdaviesswalks.blogspot.co.uk.

ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund

Grants Officer Julie Winks updates us on how we have supported beneficiaries since the last edition.



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.

REGULAR CHARITABLE PAYMENTS:

- **Princess Royal Memorial Fund Annual Maintenance Grants (AMG)** – a grant to help with day-to-day living expenses. Applicants will be of State Retirement Age, living on a low income.
- **Overseas Princess Royal Memorial Fund Annual Maintenance Grant (Overseas PRMF AMG)** – these have the same criteria as the AMG but for those ex service women living overseas.
- **Ben Fund Annual Maintenance Grant (AMG)** – this grant is for applicants below state pension age where there is a long term need for support. It would apply to those who are unable to find employment through no fault of their own due to being persistently in poor health or caring for family members.
- **Ben Fund Support Supplement (SS)** – a short term grant of variable duration for those applicants below State Retirement Age. It can be used to cover income shortfalls arising from delays in receiving state benefits or short term loss of salary due to medical treatment.
- **Care Enhancement Grant (CEG)** – weekly assistance for beneficiaries of state pensionable age to cover nursing/care home fees top up, care at home or a personal expense allowance for those resident in a nursing/care home.
- All Regular Charitable Payments are reviewed on an annual basis.

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



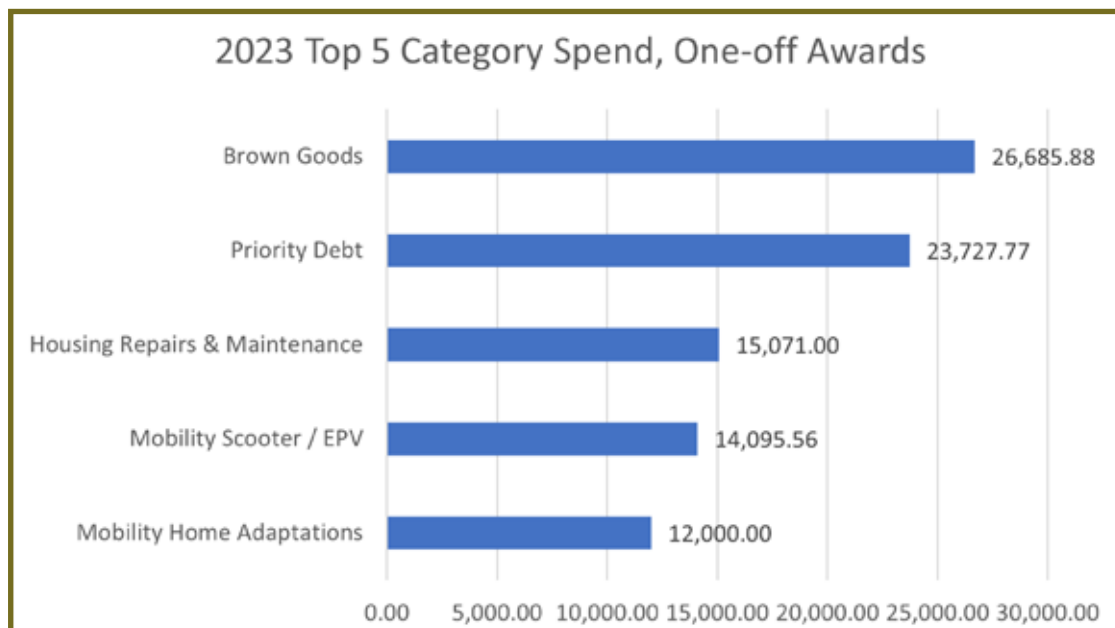
Applications for the above grants cannot be accepted direct by the Benevolent Fund Secretary.

BENEVOLENT FUND EXPENDITURE

Key Facts 2023

- 178 applications for assistance were received during 2023 with 145 awards granted.
- 9 beneficiaries were assisted during 2023 with a Ben Fund Support Supplement.
- 17 beneficiaries have been awarded one of our Annual Maintenance Grants for the next year.
- 4 beneficiaries are supported with Nursing Home Top Up Fees and 1 beneficiary with Care at Home.

The top 5 one-off grant categories during 2023 are listed below.

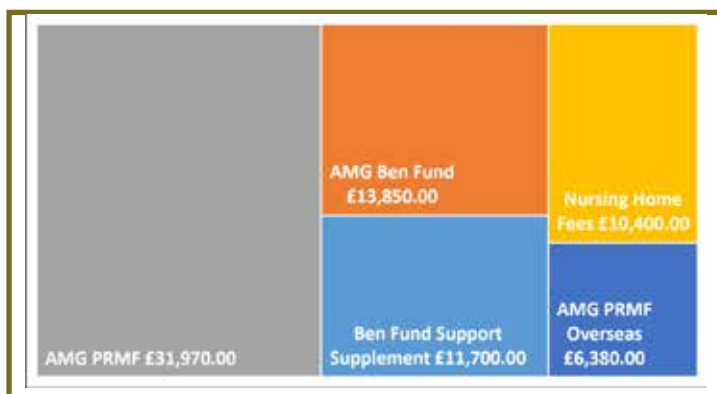


Awards are also made for the following categories:

Bathroom adaptations	House repairs	Furniture	Electric beds
Riser-recliner chairs	Central heating/boilers	White goods	Clothing
Stair-lifts	Funeral costs	Removal expenses	Food vouchers
Disability aids	Carpets and flooring	Rent, deposits and bonds	And many more

Recurring Grants

As well as awarding one-off grants for specific items or goods the Ben Fund also assists with several recurring grants. These grants are awarded for a period of one year, except for the Support Supplement, and are reviewed annually. These grants are to assist those beneficiaries that are on low income with daily living costs, assist with Nursing Home Fees and Care at Home. Please see the section entitled How Can the Ben Fund Help above for more details of the grants available.



**Making A
Difference**

CASE STUDY

Francine Moody

During 2023, following a change in circumstances, Francine Moody found herself in need of assistance from the Benevolent Fund who were able to help with an award, along with the RLC, to clear priority debts and assist with a Ben Fund Support Supplement (a regular charitable payment for 6 months) whilst Francine gets back on her feet.

On receiving the award Francine wrote a letter of thanks stating

“Words cannot express how much gratitude I have. With the help from yourselves and SSAFA I am able to apply to get a new home. From worthless to hopeful, I have a future now”.

She is hoping that our assistance will enable her to move nearer to her brother and continue to enjoy her love of gardening.

Whilst writing Francine recalled some of the exciting events from her time serving with the WRAC such as getting the Madam Prunier Challenge Cup at Hotelympia, attending to Royal dignitaries and being part of the first female platoon to join the 1st Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers (1 KOSB), see photo. She served from 1989 until 1994 with the ACC and the RLC.



CASE STUDY

Deborah R

The Benevolent Fund was approached by The Royal British Legion to assist Deborah following a change in circumstances. We were able to help with brown goods, white goods, digital phone and general needs totalling £2,903.11. Deborah was also awarded a Ben Fund Support Supplement of £50 pw for a period of 3 months to help her settle into her new circumstances.

Deborah served in the WRAC from 1980 until the Corp disbanded and went on to serve in the AGC until 1994. She has shared her story and how the Benevolent Fund was able to help:

“In May 2022 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. In September of that year after surgery and upon starting chemotherapy, I was driven from my home by my alcoholic husband, who told me in no uncertain terms that he could not deal with me and my illness, after 32 years. I also had to leave my job. But the saddest of all I had to leave my 22-year-old son in the family home. Because his life, girlfriend, job and friends were in that area. Plus, because I had to go to a charity almshouse in the middle of nowhere. I slept on an inherited sofa all through chemotherapy and was alone through this. It was very tough.

In around the November or December 2022 I felt very desperate with the situation and financially. I knew I needed help and support and phoned The Royal British Legion. Very quickly I was given support. Firstly, I was sent a phone and despite a bad signal and my bad technical skills, I was given so much help and support from a wonderful and caring lady called Caroline Quinn. I eventually got a bed to sleep in and food vouchers and help and advice with benefits etc... I have only just got back on my feet health wise as it's been a long road and still uncertain.

Caroline contacted the ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund who very kindly made contributions to me. I am very very grateful to you for that, and I would like to express, what a great help you have been in relieving the stress and the happiness that you cared enough to help in a time of need.

Please accept my deepest thanks for your help and kindness”.

CASE STUDY

Jayne Rowlands

Jayne Rowlands joined the WRAC in June 1980 and after training was stationed at Chertsey. She married a soldier in 1981 and fell pregnant, meaning she was discharged from the army. Her character upon discharge was exemplary. The Benevolent Fund was able to help get things back on track when Jayne found herself in difficulties.

Jayne tells us: *"Up until 12 years ago I used to work 2 jobs, one was a 7pm to 7am as a care worker for the elderly that had dementia and then straight on at 7am until just after till 12pm as a taxi radio controller. When I finished at 12pm I would visit my children and grandchildren at their houses then, after a couple of hours sleep, I would head back to work. This continued for several years.*

Unfortunately, during my care work a colleague accidentally rammed a metal bed into my knee which smashed the kneecap. I had physio but it didn't work and as I couldn't walk without a stick, I lost my job and received no compensation. Shortly after this the taxi firm sold out to another company and I was then jobless.

I suffered from depression and relationships with my friends suffered as I didn't like leaving the house and no longer had any money to join them for dinners movies etc. Then 3 years ago I developed diabetes which is now insulin controlled. Money is really tight sometimes and it's a case of food or gas". This is where the Ben Fund has helped, they awarded a Ben Fund Support Supplement to help Jayne get back on her feet. "The money I get from the funding is a godsend as each week when the £50 goes in my daughter goes out and gets my shopping".

During 2023 the Ben Fund assisted clearing some priority debt which enabled Jayne to have a fresh start. Then she encountered a further problem; *"I had just completed a mutual council swap to a bungalow which is more suitable for my needs and mobility. Unfortunately, the previous tenant did not make me aware of a mould problem. The council have rectified the issue, but the mould had infested the carpets and my sofa. Again, the Ben Fund were able to assist, and I will shortly be able to replace these items.*

So, I very much appreciate with all my heart what the WRAC have done for me and cannot say thank you enough. Living on the breadline is tough and I don't like to ask my children as they have their hands full. My Son has 2 boys that are visually impaired and one of them has autism. My Daughter has 5 children, 1 has ADHD and 2 are autistic so thank you so much".

Additionally, as Jayne was in receipt of a Support Supplement, she was eligible for the Cost of Living Grant awarded by the Ben Fund in August 2023 to those in receipt of a recurring grant. She informed the WRAC that this has been a lifesaver and enabled her to stock up on essentials.

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



BRANCH NEWS

- **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) 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.**

South & South West

Area Co-ordinator:

Amanda Foster

southwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Tel: 07788 316596

Alas, due to work commitments, I haven't been able to do any visits. We are suffering with some of our Ladies that quite rightly want to step back from running the groups as numbers are reduced. The latest is Bournemouth, and big thanks must go out to Val Wright and her merry band who have been meeting on a regular basis for many years. We are currently finding this at a few of our Branches and Groups, and are looking at this and how we can encourage and rebuild some of our Branches. I am hoping that 2024 can allow us to try to regroup and encourage some branches to reopen.

As we hunker down for the winter months I hope that I can visit the few branches that we have and maybe encourage others to rebuild!

Bath

Contact: Sylvia Musgrave

Tel: 01225 339904

Bournemouth

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

Bristol

When: 1200hrs 1st Thurs of the month

Where: Contact for details

Contact: Judith Stinchcombe

Tel: 07837 455352

Email: wracbristolbranch@mail.com

Plymouth

When: 1215hrs 4th Tues of the month

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

Contact: Ann Williams (Chair),

Tel: 01752364481 or 07714216592

Email: m_ann1@blueyonder.co.uk

Evon Roberts (Treasurer) 07737892077

Facebook: WRAC Association Plymouth Branch

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

When: 1030hrs 1st Sat of the month

Where: The Maritime Club, Queen's

Street, Portsmouth

Contact: Sally Watson

Tel: 023 9279 9028

Salisbury

When: 4th Wednesday of the month

plus, 'coffee meet-ups' during the day

and Saturdays

Contact: Amanda Foster

email: SalisburyWRACVets@gmail.com;

Facebook: WRAC Salisbury Branch;

Twitter: @SalisburyWRACVets.

Southampton

When: 1st Wednesday of the month.

1100 - 1300hrs

Where: Eastleigh WMC

Contact: Jean Doe

Tel: 01794 523146 or

Stephanie Caws

Tel: 07599919762

Email: stephaniecaws@sky.com

Swindon

Contact Amanda Foster

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: 1300hrs 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

Contact: Herme Emary

winchester18.wrac.sec@gmail.com

Bristol

Judith Stinchcombe

It's been a slow summer here in Bristol, illness and family have prevented some events, but we have enjoyed time together.

Our summer garden party at Margaret's, enjoying homemade cake and quintessential scones with jam and strawberries. They were delicious, the sun came out and it was good just to sit and catch up with each other's news. This is turning into an annual event, long may it continue.



On the hottest day of the year in June we visited with the Right Honourable, the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Councillor Paul Goggin. Paul has an interesting story to tell, and promised to "recognise the unrecognised" during his term of office, a concept we all found enlightening.

He spoke of his own PTSD struggles and how he learned not to be ashamed or embarrassed – own it, and normalise it. Following a short ceremony to commemorate the ladies who served and gave their lives during WWII he served tea and biscuits and listened to our stories.



I spent some time with the Armed Forces Covenant Van. The van travels round the Southwest at county events, contacting veterans who need help without filling in pages of personal information, something we do not seem to have understood yet!

We travelled to Liverpool for the annual WRAC Dinner Club celebrations. We had not been in this part of the world before, so we had to see all the sights, "Liver Birds" for the weekend, listening to endless Beatles music, posing with statues and lots of giggling. Annie and co from the "Not Forgotten Association" kicked the weekend off in style. It was well organised and lots of fun.



Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

Val Duke

Our AGM was held at the beginning of July and officers were duly elected.

The branch was represented at the D-Day service and there will, of course, be representation at the Remembrance service with standard & wreath laying.

We welcomed a new member, Chris Kennedy to the branch, who was able to join members on the 19th September, for a day trip to Quarr Abbey on the IOW. Quarr Abbey is a male Benedictine monastery located in Ryde.

Founded in 1132, it became a Cistercian monastery in 1147. It was suppressed at the Reformation in 1536. New Quarr Abbey was built in 1907 by the French Benedictine monks of Solesmes, who were exiled to the Isle of Wight from 1901 to 1922. The present community, which became independent in 1937, is heir to nearly 900 years of monastic influence at Quarr and more than 1000 years of monastic life at Solesmes.

The group had a lovely luncheon in the abbey cafe, did a walkabout, visited both main church & pilgrims chapel, lit a candle, visited the visitors centre & watched a short film about the abbey. This was followed by a visit to the book shop, the gift shop selling home grown abbey & IW products; honey, chutney, candles, fruit & veg etc. Then a visit to the Piggery to complete the day.



We continue to meet on a regular basis at the Maritime Club and the habit has evolved amongst a number of members to take the short walk round to the Lady Hamilton's for mid-day luncheon.

Plymouth

Evon Roberts

We took a look back on the activities of Plymouth Branch since the spring.

Aprils meeting. Looks like it was a happy one.



In June we went to Jolly Jacks with our invited guests



We had a fabulous Armed Forces Day and raised some funds.



In September we went to St Elizabeths House...



... and in October, we went to the House of Marbles where, although not many went we had a lovely time with interesting and fascinating things to see. We will be going again in the future.



Our October meeting was lovely with a returning to the fold of a member and a guest from Stood in Kent. A total of twelve around the table for us is a good number! We discussed our recent visit to the House of Marbles and made plans for Christmas and next year.

Sadly we have lost Pat Fox along the way, however, thanks to Armed Forces Day and networking from the Chair we have gained a few new faces.

Some of our group attend Armed Forces Breakfast both in Plymouth and Saltash where we have been able to improve the profile of the WRAC locally. If you are on holiday in the area please pop in and have a cuppa we'd love to see you.

Salisbury

Amanda Foster

Thanks must go to Jackie and Linda Clark who have been doing most of the admin and sending out the emails to keep members updated – much appreciated. Where did the year go?

Since our June adventures and the amazing gathering at Worthy Down, the brave ladies of Salisbury were ready with more activities to keep us all out of trouble.

We had Summer Games in July but nobody told the weather so lots of table top games including a large connect four,

but we felt the oversize Jenga might not be so sensible. The chatter was loud, the giggles were plentiful.



In August a number of ladies tested a local restaurant in Amesbury – the restaurant I am pleased to say did survive.

September saw a boat trip - a great idea from Chris H but the weather didn't play ball. There were a few green faces but generally we had a good time. It was a great way to explore the Hamble and see some of the great cruise ships as well. We also had an intro to bowls – this was a hoot and a return trip is planned for next year.



October saw a rather fun Bingo evening with Janice supplying not just the gear but some great calling, having never played I was surprised what fun it was.



A number of our Branch will be helping the local RBL and Breakfast Club as well as helping with the Poppy Collections.

Southampton

Jean Doe

I'm trying to pick up from where Jean left off. Jean was admitted to hospital in early July with a suspected stroke and was kept in for quite a number of weeks. I'm pleased to say Jean is now recovering at home. We are hoping she will be able to join us all for our November meeting. Pauline Keane another of our members has also been in hospital and is now recovering at home. The article in the last Lioness about WRAC Spec Ops included Pauline. It was really interesting, quite coincidentally when I visited Pauline on her return home from hospital, she spoke of her time as a Spec Ops.

Three of us attended the summer event at Worthy Down and enjoyed our day. Both Jean and Pauline were looking forward to the visit, but unfortunately on this occasion it wasn't to be. It was a shame the rose garden was past its best, but it's great to know it was brought from Guildford.

It is with much sadness we have lost a long-standing branch member, Jean Houghton. Jean held a number of positions within the branch. She was vice-chair, standard bearer and treasurer before I took over that position. She then took over as welfare officer. She was quite a remarkable lady, always busy supporting a number of groups. Mary MacDonald and Rose Timms, along with their husbands and I attended Jean's funeral. The beautiful village church in Durley, was packed to capacity.

On a happier note in July, our member Marlene Beale invited the Branch to a picnic lunch in her garden. It was along the lines of an American supper, so everyone took something to help out. Apparently, and I say that, because unfortunately, I was away so missed what turned out to be a most enjoyable lunch with some really tasty sweets.

We are a friendly bunch of like-minded ladies and would welcome visitors at any time. Our meetings are quite informal with the occasional speaker. Join us for coffee and a chat.

Want to start your own branch or group?

Contact HQ today!

Torbay & Area

Pauline Marr

This photo was taken just before going on parade in Torquay to lay the wreath the association sent me.



Helen Hill, Terri Laws, Pauline Marr
June (Crocker) Bourn ATS

Winchester

Herme Emary

I have to start this report with the sad news that one of our members Janice Little sadly passed away on 25 Sept 2023 after a short battle with cancer. Lesley and Patsy who knew her best, as they often travelled from Basingstoke to Winchester together to attend lunches, represented the Branch at her funeral.

On the 13th July, 10 of us gathered once again at the Porterhouse, where we were looked after very well.



L-R Lesley, Chris (Janet's Husband), Janet, Lynn, Herme, Sandy, JJ, Daphne, Kim, Emma

On 14th Sept nine of us got together at the Porterhouse, although numbers were disappointing, it's always a bad month for attendance.

Our next get together should have been November, but because of Remembrance Sunday the lunch was brought forward to 25 Oct.. Once again a bad day but in the end we had 8 attending. Poor Sandy was due to join us but failed to appear. She unfortunately, had to go home her train having failed to turn up (and it wasn't even a strike day).

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

Perth (Australia)

Contact: Ann Page

ann.page3@bigpond.com

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 and give you more information about the Association 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

(IP) Madge Cole

(IP) Jan Brodie-Murphy

Wales & The West

Area Co-ordinator:

Ann Stack

Area Secretary:

Elaine Simpson

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

It doesn't seem two minutes since our last report to you and we've all been very busy in a variety of ways, resulting in a lot of smiles.

As always, our main focus is how we can get the word out about The WRAC Association and The Benevolent Fund, into which we all paid a day's salary, each and every year we served. There must be many ATS & WRAC Veterans who might benefit from it and the more we wave the flag, post the posters, promote and shout out on all forms of media, the greater the chance that somebody will hear and hopefully receive the hand up they deserve. Our Posters have made their way to Breakfast Clubs, Hubs, Doctors Surgeries, Libraries, Military Camps, Hospitals and Museums to name a few places and is ongoing. Many thanks to those of you who have helped to spread the word and continue to do so.

Linking up with other organisations has spread the word about The WRAC Association and one in particular has been very generous towards us. The Not Forgotten have extended invitations to some wonderful events and many in our Area have benefitted from majestic Garden Parties to Afternoon Funfests. Long may this relationship continue. I've been very lucky to visit some of our Branches this year and will endeavour to visit ALL in Wales & The West Area in time. Walking into a branch to meet, greet, chat and enjoy some wonderful hospitality is always a pleasure and of course, there is so much common ground between us all with many a tale to tell. Sssshh... I can say no more about the stories I've heard!

Each Branch operates in the way that best meets the personalities and needs of their Membership. A big thank you to those of you who organise and run events and to those of you who support your Branches and Groups with your attendance either in person or virtually. And don't forget, we welcome ALL Women who have served to our Branches whilst ALWAYS promoting The

Women's Royal Army Corps Association. I was fortunate to attend a Conference in Cardiff, hosted by Hugh James, a Law Firm who specialise in supporting claims for bullying, PTSD, harassment, discrimination and medical complaints by those in The Armed Services. The Conference was dedicated to the challenges faced by female serving personnel, veterans and their families and championed their achievements during service and in civilian life.

There were some truly inspiring speakers who have set up support services, campaigned for those discriminated against whilst also overcoming adversity themselves. A piece of advice from a Guest Speaker and Female Veteran who has overcome PTSD was simply:

'Always ask twice how somebody is feeling; be kind and reach out for help.'

Woody's Lodge in particular is a fantastic support service and available to all who live in Wales and beyond. They provide an inviting meeting space and support for members of the Armed Forces, Emergency Services and Reservists to re-engage with life and their families.

If you wish to find out more about the services they provide for yourself or somebody you know, they can be found at this link: www.woodyslodge.org So now it's time to hear about your interesting news. Don't forget, a warm welcome awaits anybody wishing to join us, whenever they wish. We WRAC Veterans offer the hand of friendship, camaraderie, kindness and are certainly a lot of fun!

Birmingham

When: 1100hrs 1st Weds of the month
Where: Solomon Cutler (Wetherspoons), Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2DS
Contact: Babs Anderson
Tel: 07921 832094
Email: babs.blay@gmail.com
Facebook: Birmingham Branch WRAC Association

South Wales (previously Cardiff)

When: 2nd Tues of the month 1800hrs
Where: The Fox & Hounds, Old Church Rd, Whitchurch, Cardiff, CF14 1AD (Please double check before attending in case of changes)
Contact: Deserie Mansfield
Tel: 07940 001866
Email: WRACSWales@outlook.com
Facebook: WRAC Cardiff Branch
Twitter: @WRACCardiff

Gloucestershire

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

Hereford

When: 1900hrs last Tues of the month
Where: The Herdsman, 54 Widemarsh, Hereford, HR4 9HG
Contact: Lynda Armstrong
Tel: 01443 837592
Facebook: WRAC Association-Hereford Branch

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, 1230hrs for lunch
Where: Littlebury Hotel, Bicester
Contact: Karen Smith
Tel: 07923 693656 / 01869 321393
Facebook: Oxfordshire and Area Branch WRAC

Shropshire

When: 1900hrs 1st Weds 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
Facebook: WRAC Shropshire Branch

Tamworth

Contact: Ann Gwynne (Chairman)
ann.gwynne@yahoo.co.uk
or Chris Whitehead (Secretary)
chris_wo1@hotmail.com
Facebook: Tamworth and District WRAC Association

Worcester

Contact: Jane Griffin-Ash
Tel: 07880 732245
Email: janebash@hotmail.co.uk
Facebook: Worcestershire WRAC Group

Birmingham

Babs Anderson

Chris Fretwell

The crazy world of Birmingham Branch currently has a membership of 107, though sadly, we have lost one of our older members, Ida Harris ATS recently. She was an incredible 102-year-old when she took up her final posting in the Pearly Gates Platoon.

We are fortunate in Brum Branch that we have several centenarian ATS members; Margaret Rivett, Betty Webb MBE, Nora Claridge and now Betty Wood. There must be something in the water. At the end of August, Nora Claridge was presented with a bunch of flowers from the WRAC Association in celebration of her 100th birthday. She was also given membership and assigned to Birmingham Branch. She was very happy to talk about her service as a plotter in an Ack Ack battery and her family were really interested to hear her recount a few tales that they had never heard before.



Betty Wood of Birmingham Branch celebrated her 100th birthday on the 18th October 2023 with family and friends at Housing 21 where she lives.

She served during WW2 1942-1946 as a clerk, and toward the end of her service she was the Staff Controller, dealing with the drafts at COD Donnington.

She has been a stalwart member of both Woverhampton branch and Birmingham Branch for many years. She has also been a member of the Royal British Legion. Betty had a special surprise at her party with two visitors, Elaine Butler County President Warwickshire & Birmingham County and Capt Alan O'Brian of the RLC. Betty had a wonderful day.



Apart from our monthly meetings, we have been as busy as ever, making memories and laughing – a lot.

The incredible Not Forgotten Association invited us to join them for Christmas Lunch again and we were happy to accept. One thing Brum Branch does well is having an absolute ball, wherever they go. We have also been invited to join Hereford, Shropshire, and Worcester Branches for some of their get togethers and have enjoyed ourselves very much. The joy of spending time with fellow veterans cannot be underestimated.

The Worcester 10k run was yet another massive success, with everyone getting round in good order and raising stacks of cash for the Association. Our Branch was well represented, as usual. Next year the WRAC Lionesses will take to the streets of Bristol. Join us if you can.



Many of our members were able to join in with the singing, dancing, and laughing at the WRAC Dinner Club in Liverpool in October. It was a rip-roaring success yet again. No doubt there is an application form somewhere in Lioness if you fancy joining the happy revellers in Liverpool in October 2024.

Birmingham Branch is looking forward to the coming months with their usual enthusiasm and determination to have a good time. Please feel free to join us if you are in and around Birmingham on the first Wednesday of any month.



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

South Wales

Deserie Mansfield

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Croeso (welcome) to our latest update from South Wales.

Before we start the update please note (cough) ...Important announcement Cardiff Branch has changed its name and is now WRAC Association (South Wales Branch)! Email: WRACSWales@outlook.com. This, following some research and input from some of our members and with our ladies living in Torfaen, Bridgend, Newport, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Port Talbot, Pembroke and Powys. We are reflecting our geographical reach.

We continue to build our membership in South Wales and currently have 146 members from WRAF/WRAC/WRENS/QA's (and growing by the day).

For admin purposes and in line with our WRAC Association policies, which supports female veterans, we continue to build on the work of two of our members (Kath Smith and Debbie Amphlett) who set up South Wales Ex Service Women group in 2018.

In line with our inclusive developments we continue to pilot our roving meet ups at various venues across S Wales with the first in Newport in September 2023 with 8 in attendance – including our Wales and the West Coordinator, as we had one enquiry from a lady in the pub who recognised our Veteran Flags and has since joined our group. She didn't know our group existed, so advertising does work.



Our latest meetup continued to Swansea on 28 th October with 14 veterans from Navy, Army and RAF veterans. It was a great lunch and fantastic to see all interacting. The chat never stopped, and some continued on after lunch. That's dedication ladies.

Looking to the Future. On June 8th, 2024 we will be hosting the Wales Area and the West AGM at the Clayton Hotel, St Mary's Street, Cardiff, CF10 1GD. We look forward to welcoming our sister branches to the Capital.

We are an informal self funded group, but have been awarded some funding from Adferiad V4P (which is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust). It will go some way towards helping us develop marketing materials and supporting our ladies.

Deserie has been engaged in forming closer liaisons with Public, Forces Champions (Gwent), The Vale of Glamorgan Armed Forces Liaison Officer, Charitable and Armed Forces organisations in "Getting the Word" out about female veterans.

Gloucestershire

Ann Stack

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Autumn is upon us but our news begins back in June and Armed Forces Day in Gloucester. It certainly wasn't a given that it was going to happen. Initially cancelled and then hastily reinstated, minus marching through the City. We managed to get a stall together in the glorious sunshine of Gloucester Docks. Despite it all being a last minute affair, we had a great day promoting the WRAC Association and our Branch whilst meeting with The Lord Lieutenant of Gloucester, The Sheriff of Gloucester and his Consort and our local MP, Richard Graham, whose niece is currently serving with The Royal Artillery.

He was very familiar with the history of Women who have Served and we educated those who were not! We have heard through the grapevine that Gloucester 2024 Armed Forces Day will return to the full pomp and ceremony of previous years which will see local residents out in their droves paying their respects to our Armed Forces and Veterans as they march through the City from The Cathedral. We remain hopeful.

Our next outing was courtesy of The Not Forgotten. We were invited to an Afternoon Funfest at Gatcombe Park, home of Princess Anne. We are lucky to

have a few members of The Royal Family living in Gloucestershire and it makes our journey a pretty easy and quick one although despite having FOUR navigators in the car, we took the scenic white knuckle route and traversed a track we renamed Goat Road, with much hilarity! What a fabulous day we had amongst so many Veterans. We were very well looked after with bacon 'butties', a delicious lunch and then a cream tea and in between we were entertained with singing by Annie Riley and competed in various garden games. The obvious choice for us was to form a Team with our Sisters from the Navy and RAF. A great deal of laughter ensued alongside cheekiness and smiling competitiveness. Safe to say, we voted ourselves THE WINNERS and we'll leave it at that! As the day came to a close, a Land Rover casually appeared and Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, husband of Princess Anne joined us for a very relaxed and informal meet and greet and chat. What a great day out we had amongst the very best.

Carriage Riding was our next adventure courtesy of the fabulous and very well behaved Pepper and Sue Johnson, one of our Gloucestershire WRAC Girls. Sue very kindly opened up her home to us in The Forest of Dean and we met her slightly naughty Alpacas who love a good roll in the dust, Timmy the gentlest little dog you could wish to meet and Pepper, her charismatic horse. They regularly compete and ride out and it was a joy to accompany them along the roads and back lanes of The Forest. A new experience for us and a day that finished in Sue's garden with tea and homemade cakes made by Claire. Perfect!

And so as Autumn began, we decided a session of Pistol Shooting was in order. Charlie's Angels have got nothing on us Gloucestershire WRAC Gals! Two of our ladies, Val and Lisa, are qualified Pistol Shooting Instructors for The Girl Guiding Association, so it was an obvious choice that this should be our next adventure. We joined them at Deer Park in Cowley to take aim and fire our best shots. Suffice to say, we all did very well and Gloucestershire is safe in our hands! Our finale? Lunch of course!

Our door is always open to those wishing to join in with our activities and meet ups and a warm welcome awaits you. We are spreading the word to encourage all Women who have Served to join us and are pleased to say a Veteran WREN and WAAF have decided to join us at Gloucestershire Branch. The WREN's have promised us a tot of rum at the next Armed Forces Day.

Hereford

Lynda Armstrong

I'll begin by saying how sad we were to have to say a final farewell to Vi Brown on 21st June 2023. Vi had served 26 years with The WRAC and was very much a huge part of Hereford Branch and will be missed by us all. Vi's funeral was attended by many members of The Branch and also with Standards and a Bugler.

Sharon Baker-Joyce amongst other duties, paraded at The Armed Forces Day in Worcester on the 19th June, so very smart as always.



We have once again managed to make welcome a couple of new members over the past six months. Bobby Hooker from Hay on Wye, Jo Savoury who has served from June 6th 1985 and was attached to The Royal Engineers and Royal Signals and Belinda Matthewman, who served from 1990 to 2007. We have been lucky enough to welcome some of them to our meetings and hope to meet with others really soon.

Joyce Nicholls has been enormously busy with so many different activities. She has organised a trip in July to The NMA for some of her RBL members and a few of our ladies. Her mini bus was full and everyone had a wonderful day. She has also sold books with Debbie Sissons and Liz Starbuck, to raise funds for our Branch and The RBL, organised our annual Picnic, and was even asked to present The Mayor of Hereford's grand-daughter with a certificate for her 7 years of selling poppies. All this plus once again selling in this year's Poppy Appeal. Miriam Unwin helped out on one occasion too. Thank you ladies.



On the 9th July, Alison Brown, Joyce Nicholls, Debbie Sissons and I attended the Annual Service of Memorial for SOE Agent Violette Szabo GC. As always it was a really lovely service, but this time, there was a gentleman guest speaker, by the name of Professor Peter Lantos. He told us of his life during WW2. Peter was just 5 years old when he was taken away on train number 2 with his mother to Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. His memories were as if it had all happened last week. The stories he told us all were heartbreaking. He started by telling us the number he was given when entering Bergen-Belsen and how sadly his father had died from starvation and how his auntie and cousin were on train number 1 which took its passengers straight to Auschwitz and straight into the gas chambers and how his mother and he tried to join his auntie and cousin on that train but there was no room for them. Fate had a hand in this I'm sure. At the end of speaking to us all, the gentleman was finding it very hard to speak as he himself was getting upset and crying. Everyone present was listening attentively to Peter talk, and all quite emotional by the end. Peter has written a book and it's available on Amazon titled 'The Boy Who Didn't Want To Die'.

Barbara Davies kindly organised a trip to Weston's Cider Mill in Much Marcle, Ledbury in July. Fifteen of us took up the offer for a lunch, tour and taster session and what a great day we had. It was all so very interesting listening to the history of the Mill and sampling some of its lovely ciders. We even had a freebie bottle to bring home.



I think we may do this trip again another time, watch this space. Many thanks for organising this Barbara.

July always brings our Veterans BBQ which is held as always at The Green Man in Fownhope. Sadly we had heavy rain so the food was cooked outside and we ate indoors. Even though it was raining, it didn't put a dampener on things for us. The food was gorgeous, and the company perfect. Thanks to Mary Woollard for organising the day. The weather didn't put a dampener on our annual picnic at the start of August either. Joyce, as always, works tirelessly throughout the year to ensure our picnic runs like clockwork. There was a really good turnout despite the weather.

One of our ATS ladies Mrs Jo Anscombe, was lucky enough to win a raffle gift at the Picnic, so Joyce kindly took it home to her. Jo was one of our Branch founder members and also our first Branch secretary. Jo will be celebrating her 100th birthday in August 2024.



A few of us headed to Liverpool for the annual WRAC Dinner Club in October. What an amazing time we all had and I for one am already looking forward to going again next year.



Our October meeting was held at The Hereford Town Hall in The Mayor's Parlour. The Hereford Mayor is none other than Jacquie Carwardine, ex WRAC and member of Hereford Branch and she kindly invited us all to come and look around and have tea and nibbles with her. Sixteen of us took up the offer and we all had an amazing time. A lovely gentleman called John gave us all a fabulous talk on the silverware, swords and other amazing artefacts.



We will be having a small change of events in November. Instead of having our last evening meeting of the year, Miriam Unwin has once again managed to book us all in for another afternoon tea at The First Light café, Hereford. Last year's tea was such a success, that we asked Miriam if we can do it again this year. Miriam has been inundated with interest such that she has had to keep a reserve list.

I've sadly been informed that Sharon Baker-Joyce will be standing down as our Association and Branch Standard Bearer. Sharon has been our dedicated, loyal Standard bearer for the past 15 years, taking over in 2008 from Rosemary Jones. Sharon will be sorely missed, as we could always depend on her when required. Her successor will have a very hard act to follow. Thank you so much Sharon from all at our Branch. You did the job of Standard Bearer with excellence.

Oxfordshire

Karen Smith

Since the printing of the last Lioness, we have been very busy out and about. As mentioned in the last Lioness, on 1st of July we had our Joint Lunch with the RAOC Association. This event was enjoyed so much by both Associations, that we have now organised a Christmas get together for the 9th of December.



On the 22nd of July, 7 of us braved a very wet day, and attended Woodstock Museum to see the exhibition, Women at War, which we all found very interesting and plan to go back. The visit was Organised by Jean Mills. Before going round the Museum we had a lovely lunch in the local café.



On 29th July a group of us attended the event at Worthy Down to see the Memorial Rose Garden. What a wonderful and informative day we had looking round. The cook house and rooms have changed a lot since most of us joined up.

On Saturday, 12 August, we arrived at Annie's Tea Rooms at Thrupp near Kidlington, it is a lovely little café down by the canal. They had laid on a special area for us to have our meeting, 8 members attended. We also had 2 WRAF and 1 WREN join us. The food and service we received at the tearoom was exceptional, so thank you to our member Jan Dytor for organising this event.



On the 14th of October, 8 members attended WRAC Dinner Club. Old friends were reunited, and new friends made. Walking round Liverpool and seeing the sights, going on the ferry across the Mersey was enjoyed by all, and even getting caught in the rain did not spoil the weekend, thank you to the committee for a lovely weekend.



On Saturday the 28th of October, we had Ann Stack (Area Co-Ordinator for Wales and the West) join us for lunch. We had a lovely turn out of members to surprise our very own Jean Mills with a certificate of appreciation. This was for all her help since our section first started. Thank you to Ann for presenting the certificate.



On 12th November, Angie Bostock and I will be attending the parade at the Cenotaph on Saturday the 11th November. Jeans Mills will be attending the event at Christ Church, Oxford and other members will be attending the service at Bicester. Our member Christine Townsend will be singing with the Military Wives Service. In December Midge Holmes and Flo McGregor will be decorating our Christmas Tree at Bicester church.

Remembrance Day

Two of our members attended the Remembrance Parade at London. Angie Bostock and I this was our first Cenotaph Parade and hopefully not our last. On Saturday 11th of November our member Jean Mills attended the service at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford and on Sunday 12th November 5 of our

members attended the Bicester Parade; Christine Townsend (who also sang with the Military Wives), Jan Dytor, Midge Holmes, Jean Mills (who laid our wreath) and Helen McKay who attended in her Salvation Army Uniform and laid the wreath for them

After the ceremony everyone went back to the Littlebury Hotel for a meal.



Shropshire

Sandra Davies

Hello one and all. It hardly seems like five minutes since I wrote the last report up. So in the last five months, we haven't really been too active, but here is what we have done.

10/06/2023 - Area AGM at Tamworth. All came back with good things to say about their day out. Mainly the food! A very BIG thank you to the Tamworth branch for hosting such a wonderful day. Francis, Gladders, Steph, Debbie, Sheila, Ali, and Chris represented the branch.

14/06/2023 - RSA Quiz at the Beaconsfield Club in Shrewsbury. We had enough members to field two teams. We didn't come last and we had a lot of laughs. We had a lovely hot buffet and some of us even went back for seconds. We had 11 members for this one. What a night!!!

24/06/2023 - Armed Forces Day at Broadoaks Playing Fields, Donnington. It was a hot day but it was really wonderful. Sue, Gladders, Denise, Chris, Michelle, Maggie and Sandra were in attendance. Thank you all for giving up your Saturday for this event.



R/L Gladders, Maggie, Chris and Sandra the others had gone for a wander!

29/07/2023 - WRAC Summer Tea at Worthy Down. Michelle, Kim, Sheila and Jewels flew the flag for the branch. It was an excellent day, well organised, excellent hosting, food and tour amazing. August was a quiet month, but this gave the members a chance to re-charge their batteries ready to go again!

02/09/2023 Oktoberfest Garden Party, held at the home of Debbie and Andrew. Yes, I know it was September, but since when did the Shropshire branch do anything normal and by the book? A

good day was had by all, judging by the photos that I saw! Good food, drinks but most of all good company. Thank you to Debbie and Andrew for such a good day.

09/09/2023 Branch Annual Cream Tea at the Beaconsfield club in Shrewsbury. Another wonderful afternoon tasting the delights of Chris from the club. Fantastic food and company, as always.



L/R backrow Debbie, Sheila, Kim, Gladders, Julie, Chris, Maggie, Ali, Pauline. L/R frontrow Denise, Sheila, Jacko, Michelle and Sue.

23/09/2023 - NMA Alrewas. The branch went to cheer on the cyclists who rode nearly 400 miles in five days in support of the NFA.



L/R Edith, Chris, Pauline, Gladders, Ali, Sheila and Debbie

04/10/2023 - Mallorca invite from the NFA. Jan Foster and Chris Powell were hosted by the NFA and Sheila at Can Xenet. They met some wonderful people, had a real good laugh and were thoroughly spoilt. They made their return journey to the UK on the 11.10.2023 with their batteries fully recharged.

11/10/2023 - Parliament Garden Terrace, London. Our Michelle Patterson attended the above to receive her award in the Unsung Heroines Category. She does so much for the branch along with all her other commitments. Michelle, from us all at the branch, we are so very proud of you. You deserve this award. Well that's me done for this visit. We wish you all the very best and hope that our paths will cross some time very soon. God bless.

Tamworth

Chris Whitehead

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We have met up every month but there have only been a few at each meeting, We've had holidays preventing attendance (What a cheek ay? imagine arranging holidays when we could be meeting. That'll be me amongst them) We have also had a number of transport issues for a few of us as well. Costly but fixable thankfully.

Unfortunately, and without naming names or going into details, we also have had a number of our members suffering illness or injury. so being unable to come along. Between us we have kept in touch and the other members of the branch send their very best wishes to all who are still not at their best. Here's hoping you are all feeling better soon.

Some of us will be busy manning Poppy stalls in early November, then our Branch will be parading in Tamworth. With any luck the weather will be ok and we may even have some photos?

Then on 1st December was our Christmas Lunch, again in Tamworth, Hope many will be improved enough to join us.
That's all for now folks!

Although this won't appear until next year, I hope you all had a great Christmas and Happy new year to all.

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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: 1300hrs 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: 1400hrs 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)
Tel: 07702 651045
email: radders67@gmail.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: 1100hrs last Tuesday of the month (except December)
Where: Lancing Parish Hall, 96 South St, Lancing, BN15 8AJ
Contact: Carolyn Hill
Tel: 07790-922110

Greater London

Christine Hayman

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A transcript of a radio interview given by a member who recently celebrated her 100th birthday, Mary Costello.

IT ALL STARTED WITH CHAMBERLAIN!

Mary Costello (Now Mary Rutton), ATS
– Member of the Greater London North Branch

BBC Radio interview December 2005

This all started with Mr Chamberlain. He was supposed to have gone over to Germany to talk peace and when he came back, he spoke war. He wasn't back five minutes before we declared war. On Sunday the 3rd of September (1939) my father was outside doing the vegetables for the Sunday lunch, and at eleven o'clock we were all playing around when everything went quiet, and Chamberlain said, "We are now at war." They were dreaded words. Everybody went quiet, then some people cried, some screamed, and sadly, some people committed suicide because they were so frightened. Anyway things went on from there. As soon as the eleven o'clock war statement was made, we had an air raid warning. Nothing happened really but it was a warning, and then as time went on the boys were called up. I had a brother who was older than me, eighteen and still young, and he was killed at Dunkirk. Although he joined the army in 1938, he didn't do two years. Anyway, after that, things started getting bad in Poplar. My mother started being ill and my father was all over the place. My mother suffered through my brother being killed – she wasn't herself.

When it came to the point I joined up because my brother got killed. I joined

the army, the ATS, and I did have some happy days but I also had some sad days. I was in Ack-ack. I was at Portsmouth one time and we had two brothers who were limber gunners. On a Saturday morning a raid started and the chaps all went on their guns. We went on our posts, and one of the chaps started elevating the gun up. A limber gunner has his fingers in the cog and as he held his hand up, all the fingers were missing. That was another sad day. When it was peacetime, there were still sad times then, because people weren't coming back. But we were happy to think we had no more air raids, and people just started getting on with their lives. I was too sad to be really happy because my mother had just died.

Three days before the end of the war, which was on the 15th of August 1945, my mother died (on 12th August). She went all through the war and wouldn't go down the shelter, and then she got run over by a bus, of all things. We just went to pieces after that. I came out of the army, married, set up my own family and that was my time during the war.

In recent years Mary has been housebound and unable to attend the Greater London Branch meetings for many years, so Wendy Whale, our Branch welfare officer telephones her every month to check that she is okay and if there is anything she needs and sometimes Mary will call Wendy. On 19th May we celebrated her 100th Birthday with a card and flowers and she had a party at her flat. Unfortunately, Wendy wasn't able to attend the party. However, Wendy did take some photos of her with her birthday cards when she visited Mary on 2nd August. Mary gave Wendy her uniform as she thought Wendy might like it, but as it is only a size 12 it was suggested that it be sold to raise money for the branch.



Mary Rutton and Wendy Whale





From left : Shirley, Chrissie, Marjorie, Wendy, Andie, Christine, Lin and Val

Greater London Branch before their AGM on 16th September 2023 in the cafeteria of the National Army Museum.



Area Co-ordinator:

Lyn Hatch

Email: eastern.area@wraca.org.uk



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)

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

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



Unfortunately, I must start with the sad news that Pam Oliver, wife of Kerry Warnes, lost her brave battle against ill health and passed away on 1st August 2023. A celebration of her life took place on 16th September where she was remembered with great affection. At her request lots of bright colours were on display and she was toasted by all with a glass of port (or two).



Our annual Seaside Havoc was arranged by Kerry and took place on 23rd July. If you cast your mind back to the "glorious summer" we were very lucky that the sun came out and we were able to enjoy sitting outside the beach hut and not needing to shelter inside it from any rain. A good deal of catching up took place and we had some delicious cakes provided by Dawn Amey which included jam and clotted cream.



Unfortunately, we were not able to enjoy our usual tug of war fun due to the fact that we had no rope but that did not dampen our enjoyment of the day. There will be another one to look forward to in 2024.

We held a Summer Barbecue on 13th August. It was a joint gathering with the Colchester Branch of the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club. Dawn was the organiser for this event and an amazing spread was laid on. Have to say that my husband and I have never grilled so many burgers before!! We held a raffle with the proceeds being donated to The Not Forgotten Association. Unfortunately, I was too busy cooking so there are no photos available but I hope you enjoy the ones included of other occasions.

Kerry and Vinnie represented the Branch at the WRAC Dinner Club in Liverpool and it appears that they made a new friend (see photo). I am reliably informed that no bushes were harmed on this occasion (if you know, you know)



Going forward we will be holding a Christmas Party on 1st December, another joint gathering with the Breakfast Club, with Dawn organising again. There will be a buffet and a disco for everyone to enjoy. Plus a festive raffle, fun and games, with fancy dress being optional.

As we head towards 2024 we are hoping to have more events to keep our branch active. One idea is to meet at a weekend for lunch or an afternoon tea whilst keeping our regular events in the diary.

Leicestershire & Nottinghamshire

Gillian Welch

June 20th: Members met for lunch at Buttercup Farm but were disappointed to find that the "Aladdin's Cave" shop had closed.

On 24th 4 members attended the Flag raising ceremony in Leicester.



Rose Friend, Ann Gurney, Lynda Pollard, Debbie Kenney

July 11th: Members met for a cake and catchup session. A surprise visitor from Bristol arrived and it was lovely to welcome Belle Jenkinson. A card was sent to Lily Salmon for 102nd birthday.

July 18th: Members were invited to a Garden Party in Great Glen courtesy of Branch supporters, Graham and Angela, and we spent the time in their beautiful garden and had a wonderful lunch.



Sadly in July we lost two stalwart members of the branch. In-Pensioner Pam Richards at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and Vi Rawlins. You will be sorely missed ladies.

August 8th. Finally, we managed a game of Bingo which was so hilarious, I cannot begin to describe how much we laughed. 15th saw the annual visit to the Fosse Way Bowls Club in Syston. A lovely buffet lunch was enjoyed by all.

It was with great sadness that we learnt that two more of our members had passed away this month. The wonderful Agnes Doig on 27th and Vera Waddington at 101 years old on 30th August. It has been a very sad couple of months for the branch.

September 12th: There were a few members away on holiday this month. Sue and Carol had attended the 10 Para Regt Anniversary Parade at Somerby on the very hot Sunday the 10th. Names were taken for those able to attend the funerals of Agnes and Vera. We then held a mini Harvest Festival with lots of goodies for sale.

September 18th. Members joined family and friends of Vera Waddington at Gilroes Crematorium. Where the amazing life of this centurion was remembered and celebrated.



September 26th. Agnes Doig's family and friends were joined by members of the branch for a service at Loughborough Crematorium. Dot Ryder told the congregation of Agnes's career in the WRAC which surprised some of her family. She was a generous and loving Aunt and Great Aunt to nieces and nephews. We will miss you so very much Agnes.

October 10th: Branch meeting covered the AGM when all members of the committee were re-elected with the exception of myself. Thank you to Ann Montgomery for taking on the role of Media Officer with the help of Debbie Kenney and Liz Holmes until June next year. Sandra Smith then produced a quiz which had us all really thinking as it was about the Royal Family and we realised how little we knew!
Chris Corker

Just a reminder that we meet every second Tuesday (apart from May when it is the third) at Devonshire Place, London Road, Leicester LE2 0RA at 13.30. If you are local or visiting the area please come along and see us. Contact Sue Slattery on 0116 2592743.

August 2023 - Nottinghamshire County Council's first Boots and Berets Employee Forces Hero Award 2023 – Ashfield District Council's Armed Forces Lead Officer, Gillian Welch (also from left to right) with: Chairman Councillor Dale Grounds, Nottinghamshire Police's PC Luke Bettridge and PCSO Steven Timperley receiving their Partnership Award (both organisations also hold the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award).

Armed Forces Day June 2023 – first time attendance for our local Standard Bearer, Lyn Wenham, Janine Soyer (left) and Gillian Welch (right), all WRAC veterans.

Veteran Walks led by Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's Age UK, Elaine Hopkins (not pictured) held at Kingsmill Reservoir in Sutton in Ashfield with Mansfield's Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Richard Tempest-Mitchell (left), Walk Leaders, veterans Sam Mitchell (second left), Aidy Garner (centre), and Cliff Meredith (not pictured) supporting.



Norfolk

Lyn Hatch

It has been a busy summer with lots going on. It was July before we had our first meal this year. We welcomed our newest member, Janice Middleton who, in her RBL role joined us at Great Yarmouth in May.

Norwich City FC offered us six tickets for the 20th August Armed Forces Day match which I returned, as unfortunately it clashed with the final of the Women's World Cup.

In August a few of us volunteered with Wendy Hooton at the East Anglian Beer and Cider Festival over the Bank Holiday weekend.

A small number of us from both Norfolk and Suffolk Branch enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at Euston Hall Estate as guests of the Not Forgotten at their Summer Garden Drive-in. It was a beautiful sunny day, hog roast for lunch, and fabulous musical entertainment.



Left to right Leslie Scott, Lyn Hatch, Nell Frary, Mary Stearn, Wendy Hooton and Nikki Young.



Norfolk Summer Lunch: Left side front to rear Liz Winter, Sheila Crowe, Carol Larkins, Lyn Hatch and Janice Middleton Right side front to rear Mary Rezlik, Linda Graver, Rebecca Bailey and Dee Jackson.

With September already upon us, another meal was arranged but unfortunately the date clashed with holidays and other appointments. Five of us enjoyed a quiet lunch out at a pub on the Broads.

Throughout the summer the walking group have continued to meet once a month, enjoying short walks locally, ending with coffee and lunch.

Suffolk

Lyn Hatch

The Suffolk Lionesses are a small, friendly group, who keep in touch and support each other through a Messenger group. I met with a few of them for lunch at Martlesham in September. It was also the first lunch attended by Sally Hunt, who had recognised our cap badge on the shirts worn whilst volunteering at the Beer and cider festival in Bury St Edmunds. Lunch in between chatting and laughing seemed to be over in minutes, but it was great to catch up with everyone and I look forward to the next time.

It has been proposed that early next year the Lionesses of Suffolk and members of the Norfolk Branch meet for lunch.



Georgie Harvey, Denise Smith, Sally Hunt, Fiona Sinclair, Lyn Hatch and Sue Conde,

East Anglian Beer Festival

Wendy Hooton

This was our third year of volunteering at the Beer & Cider Festival in Bury St Edmunds for the benefit of the WRAC Association. It is held in St Edmundsbury Cathedral, courtesy of the Dean, Joe Hawes.

A very unique setting but not the first time beer has been drunk in the Cathedral. Prior to this there was an Abbey, which was one of the largest and grandest monasteries in England. Henry VIII closed the abbey in 1539 and had it destroyed. The monks had been brewing beer for the Abbott since 1086

This year I put a shout out for volunteers to help anytime between 23rd-28th August. Any amount of hours would count towards our total. The more hours we volunteer the greater our proportion of the profits as a beneficiary of the event.

I am delighted that we had 24 volunteers doing various shifts and jobs. There were some serving beer & cider, clearing tables, washing glasses, selling Beer cards and booking people in. We had some new volunteers this year who are already on my list for next year, they loved it.



Wendy Hooton, Sean & Debbie Crowley, Audrey Pearce



Wendy Hooton, Debbie Sutton, Sean & Debbie Crowley, Kym Lofthouse. FRONT Christine Hayman



Wendy Hooton, Errol & Susan Whitworth



Benita Davies



Jennie Thomas & Jan TC Rees



Wendy Hooton & Dean Joe Hawes



Lyn Hatch & Leslie Scott



Kym Lofthouse & Debbie Sutton



Peter & Christine Hayman



Wendy Hooton, Gina Spacey, Debbie & Sean Crowley

This was our third year of volunteering at the Beer & Cider Festival in Bury St Edmunds for the benefit of the WRAC Association. It is held in St Edmundsbury Cathedral, courtesy of the Dean Joe Hawes.

We not only sell beer & cider, we have a gin bar with numerous gins and we also sell Pimms. There are a variety of food stalls outside by the marquee and stage and entertainment inside the Cathedral and outside on the stage. There were some great musicians and bands this year, I particularly liked the Marrakesh Band.

We had lots of fun and everyone enjoyed trying the different beers & ciders as well as the gin and Pimms! You have to try them to recommend them ;) Anyone helping gets free entry into the Beer Festival for the duration. You just need to buy a Beer card to purchase drinks when you're not working.

If you would like to join us next year just let me know. Ask the people who have helped and they will tell you what it's like. The shifts are in 4 1/2 hour sessions allowing for handover. There are hotels, B&B's, Campsites, Airbnb for accommodation. The Cathedral is in the town centre.

NEXT YEARS DATES 21st-26th August (Setting up and packing up is 18th/19th/27th August.)

At the time of print I don't have a figure for the amount we earned from the hours we worked. The presentation is on Saturday 2nd December and Leslie Scott will be representing the WRAC Association to receive the cheque. In 2021 it was £1200 and in 2022 £1100.

LOOKING FORWARD TO YOU JOINING US NEXT YEAR :) All information for our fundraising activities are posted on the WRAC Lionesses Fundraising Group on Facebook.

**HUGE THANKS TO
ALL THOSE WHO
HELPED
THIS YEAR,
YOU WERE
AMAZING.
THE PUNTERS
LOVED YOU.....
*It's the military
humour!***

North East

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: 1230hrs 4th Weds 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

Facebook: Doncaster Branch-WRAC Association

East Riding & North Lincolnshire

Contact: Dorothy Mitchelmore

Tel: 07897 449920

Email: mydeluxe06@icloud.com

Facebook: East Riding and North Lincolnshire Branch of the WRAC

Grimsby

When: 1400hrs 2nd Fri 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: 1230hrs 1st Weds of the month

Where: The RBL, 73-75 Albion St,

Leeds, LS1 5AA

And

When: 1100hrs 3rd Sat 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

Facebook: WRAC Association Leeds Branch

Newcastle

When: 1200hrs 3rd Thurs of the month
Where: Leazes End Club, 45-47 Leazes Park Road, Newcastle, NE1 4PG
Contact: Tanya Hall Tel: 07590 323497
Facebook: Newcastle Branch WRAC Association

Sheffield

Contact: Sandy Warne
Tel: 07713 252521
Facebook: WRAC Sheffield and Surrounding Area Branch

York

When: 1400-1600hrs 1st Weds of the month (except August), phone to confirm
Where: Haxby & Wigginton Methodist Church Hall, Haxby, York, YO32 2JJ
haxbyandwiggintonmethodistchurch.org.uk
Contact: Feona Dixon
Tel: 01904 633438

Sheffield

Sandy Warne

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The all new Sheffield Branch is up and running! (see main article page 10).

Our great group of South Yorkshire's finest met for the first time for coffee, cake and a chat in October, and then again in November with a couple more new faces. Ten ladies attended our first meeting and before we knew it, two hours had flown by. We were due to meet again in December, but we all got snowed in! The mince pies were put on hold for the new year. In the run up to Remembrance we placed a cross on the grave of LCpl Molly Carter (pictured) who was one of the 26 ATS girls killed at Great Yarmouth on 11th May 1943, we won't forget you Molly.



We've got a great group together - some who have been Association members for a long while, and a few who have only joined since we started the branch which is great news. Our numbers are steadily growing and we now have 38 members on our Facebook page, plus two honorary furry members whose paws aren't great at posting, but who have been made very welcome at our meet-ups. Regular monthly get togethers are planned and once the weather picks up in the spring, days out further afield are planned.



L-R Yara the dog, Kim Edwards, Janice Smith, Alison Cairns, Joyce Street, Clare Haynes, Heather Hale, Mandy Smith, Jane Dennison, Sandy Warne, Debi Wainwright.

Anyone wishing to join us please contact Sandy Warne on 07713 252521 or visit our Facebook page WRAC Sheffield And Surrounding Area Branch.

North West

Area Co-ordinator:

Dawn Hawker

Contact: northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Cumbria

Are you interested in joining a newly forming Cumbria Informal Branch?
- 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: gaildki@talktalk.net

Liverpool

When: 1200hrs 1st Weds of the month
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
Facebook: WRAC Association Manchester Branch

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: 1900hrs 3rd Thurs 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: 1900hrs 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

Oldham

Kath Kirtley

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Unfortunately being a small group we have not been very active the last few months.

Susan Feeney and Debbie Davies attended the WRAC Dinner Club at Liverpool and had a great time

I went up to Scotland with my husband for the Scots Guards gathering but that is about all. Both Rene Burlinson and Elaine Brookes have been poorly.

We are all looking forward to Christmas and the New Year.

**Be more
Sandy Warne!**

**Contact HQ to find
out how to set up
your own group**

Manchester

Pip Flegel

Three members of the Manchester Branch entered the Worcester 10k raising money for the WRAC Association. Jafin Brant Cassidy with help and support and Beryl Sidebotham a runner completing the course in less than two hours. Not bad for a lioness of a certain age. I had the easier challenge being pushed in a wheelchair around Worcester for 10k although being kept in the chair without head butting the pavement over some cobbles was no mean feat! Thank you Pat Rosewel, my life saver. But the biggest thanks goes to Dawn who gave me the loan of said wheelchair, as mine ended up in wheelchair heaven after the Manchester 10k and my six pushers, Jan Rees, Jenny Thomas, Pat Rosewell, Ali Brown and Mary Woollard MRM. We achieved a PB at 1 hour 29 minutes. Bring on Bristol 10k 2024.

Thank you Lionesses You Guys Rock!!!!
"In It Together"



Wirral & Chester

Sharon Broderick MBE

It has been a really busy summer and autumn for the ladies of the Wirral and Chester branches. Both have continued to meet at least monthly. Chester meets the third Monday of the month in the city centre for a nice meal and a good catch up. Wirral up to date have met on the third Tuesday of each month for an evening meeting at Chetwynd TA Barracks. It has been decided at the October meeting and AGM that it is

becoming more and more difficult for several ladies to come out in the dark evenings, so we agreed for a trial period of 3 months initially that we will meet on a Saturday afternoon and maybe have a meal with our meeting. If anyone would like to join us call or email the details above.

Two of the group were fortunate to be invited to the last camp to be organised by the veterans Outpost charity in Forres, Scotland. Great fun was had by all who attended and there were the usual shenanigans with Kath Harrison sewing wool onto Sharon Broderick's stuffed horned cow, transforming it into Senga the Highland Coo. There was a campfire every night, despite the weather's best efforts to put a dampener on it.

Pat Sanders and Sheila Brown attended a regimental style dinner at the Wirral Veterans Mess in the summer and thoroughly enjoyed the meal and the company.



The Wirral ladies joined other branches for the Not Forgotten drive-in Garden Party at the beautiful Knowsley Hall in September. Unlike last year the weather was absolutely fabulous (a little too hot to be honest). As always, the afternoon was amazing. We all enjoyed the food and the entertainment. The Take That tribute act was great and the very cheeky Robbie Williams was the cause of much hilarity with the girls. We met up with new friends and old. A big thank you to the Not Forgotten for their hospitality.



On a more serious note, the last weekend of October saw the Wirral branch remembering our sisters in arms of yesterday. We are very blessed to have an Ex- WREN (Elaine) within our group who is a history and genealogy expert. Over the summer she has researched and found the details of 14 ladies who have gone before us and sadly lost their lives in conflict whilst serving. We honoured each lady's resting place with a painted kindness rock and a remembrance cross. We visited 6 cemeteries in the borough and held a short service of remembrance at each. This was a very moving experience, and all concerned would like to send a big thank you to Elaine, our resident ex- Puddle Pirate and her little granddaughter Robyn.

Scotland & N Ireland

Area Co-ordinator:

Janette Deans

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

Aberdeen

When: 1100hrs 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: debbiecoulpland14@gmail.com

Glasgow

When: 1300hrs 2nd Mon 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: 1200hrs last Sat of the month
Contact: Liz Dixon Tel: 01786 743635
Email: liz_m_dixon@yahoo.co.uk
Facebook: WRAC Stirling Branch

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

Stirling

Penny Ellis



I joined the Stirling Branch in 2022 following many years of thinking about joining but feeling a bit of a fraud as I only served for 4 years and left the Army when I married in 1974. I realised, though, once I met the ladies in Stirling that it did not matter how long you served, and I was welcomed warmly into the group by everyone. Although I have not managed every monthly meeting I feel really included and would urge anyone in a similar position to join your nearest branch.

When I joined there was already a regular group attending the monthly lunches and this year's membership has continued to grow and we give a big welcome to Mhairi Turner, Lillias Thomson, Karen Brown and Lesley Johnstone.

One of our members Anne Borthwick has unfortunately been in and out of hospital over the past year and in addition to Liz keeping in close contact with her, we also thank Moira from the Aberdeen Branch and Sharon from Edinburgh for popping in to visit Anne. We all wish her well and look forward to seeing her again soon as we miss her sense of humour and wittiness.

Another of our regular members Lynn Connolly had a very nasty accident while on holiday this summer. She was knocked down by a motorcyclist and ended up in Intensive Care for 4 days with trauma to her brain. She was eventually discharged and returned home but continues to attend medical appointments to check on her condition and ensure she is recovering well. She was keen to get home to see a newborn member of the family, another grandchild. We wish Lynn well in her recovery and many congratulations on becoming a granny again.

In May Liz and I attended the memorial of Pte Jeanie Scougall who was born and brought up in Edinburgh and who was one of 26 ATS servicewomen killed 80 years ago in Great Yarmouth. We joined Janette Deans, Area Co-ordinator for Scotland and NI along with some other members of the Edinburgh Branch to remember Jean and Janette did a write up with a picture in the Lioness 2023 edition No 2 if you wish to read more. On Saturday 23rd September some of us attended the Annual General Meeting which was held in the Salutation Hotel in Perth. We enjoyed a very interesting meeting which included a presentation from a serving member giving a frank account of her experiences, as a woman and mother, having overcome the challenges of making a successful career as a Metal Smith in the Army. Thank you, Pamela, for taking the time to come to the AGM and not only sharing your life experiences but also joining us for the lunch afterwards. We all wish you well in your retirement when it comes next year.

Liz was unfortunately unable to make the AGM this year which was unusual for her as she is normally always there. On this occasion she missed the presentation of her Certificate of Appreciation Award for all her hard work and commitment to the Stirling Branch over the years. We agreed that she would be presented with the award at the next monthly lunch and that 'mums the word' until then so it would be a surprise.

Janette Deans came along for our next lunch and presented the award to Liz who proudly accepted it. Well done, Liz, you really do deserve it and thank you for all you do in keeping the branch going. Liz has continued to organise the monthly meet ups and through the summer changed the venue to the 1314 Inn in Bannockburn. The previous venue was getting a bit uppity about us paying separately for our food so, unfortunately for them, they have now lost our custom. The 1314 Inn has been very accommodating, and everyone seems happy with the venue, and we should mention the portion sizes which are quite something, particularly the puddings which always go down a treat.

Although the group has only been using the 1314 for about 6 months the staff now know us and attend to our needs very well as you will see in the picture of Liz, our professional 'slitterer' with a 1314 tea towel.



Liz Dixon being presented with Certificate of Appreciation by Janette Deans Area Co-ordinator for Scotland and NI



Mhairi Turner, Lillias Thomas, Liz Dixon, Penny Ellis and Karen Brown



Liz Enjoying the cuisine at the 1314 Inn



Anne Borthwick at one of our Christmas meet ups.

Ulster

Sylvia Connachan

On the 8th July 2023, we attended the yearly event of the Combined British Legion's North / South All Ireland Veterans and Commonwealth Representatives who attended were Sarah Cairns, Elizabeth Montgomery, Sylvia Connachan, and friend Pat Baker. We travelled with the local Legion Branch, by coach to Dublin. Sarah Cairns laid a wreath for the Royal Signals Association, Sylvia Connachan laid a wreath for WRAC Association, and a great day was had by all.

The Not Forgotten Association invited our Branch to a lunch, on the 12th August 2023, to mark the change of name to The Not Forgotten NI Branch. It was held in Brownlow House, Lurgan, Co Armagh. Jill Hope and I attended the Lunch. This was Jill's first outing with the NFA. Meal was lovely, and we had a great afternoon.

My local British Legion had a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum, on the 18th to 20th August 2023. We travelled by coach via Dublin Ferry, and stayed at Tamworth, Sarah Cairns and myself attended. I laid a Wreath at our WRAC Statue, and a posy of poppies at the ATS Statue, Sarah laid a wreath for WRAC at the main memorial. It was her first time there, it was lovely going round all the memorials of the Regiments. In the afternoon there was a flypast, with the Spitfires and Gliders. In memory of the Parachute Regiment. It was lovely to see.



We had our AGM on 30th September 2023, which was held at New Forge Country Club, Belfast, followed by lunch. We had our election of officers, which has stayed the same, President: Mary Wilson ATS/WRAC, Chair: Sylvia Connachan, Treasurer: Sarah Cairns, Secretary: Sylvia Connachan. Sarah Cairns won the blown glass poppy, which was donated by Margaret Davies. Thank you Marg.

On the 28th October 2023, Dromore Legion had the Launching of the Poppy Appeal, at which I unveiled the Poppy Waterfall. It was a great privilege to do so.

Our Annual Cross Laying at City Hall, Belfast, has been brought forward to 30th October 2023. Which Jill Hope will be laying the cross for the WRAC Association.

Our Remembrance Sunday on 12th November 2023, to be held at the Cenotaph City Hall, Belfast, where the wreath will be laid by Jill hope, as this is one of our new members, it is only fitting that Jill should do it for her first time, Well done Jill.



Princess Anne came to Dromore Square, to unveil our new Community Bench for Dromore. It started to rain, but then that's Ireland.

We would like to thank Joan McCabe for starting a new Branch NI Veterans Group, Wish you all the best in your new venture. Take Care, Stay Safe.

**Contributions for next issue
by 1st July, 2024
to editor@wraca.org.uk**

CALL TO ACTION

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2024

Soldiers' Stories	15 March, National Army Museum
AGM	16 March, Victory Services Club, London
10k Run	Sunday 19th May
RHC Founders Day	Thursday 6th June
Armed Forces Day	22 June 2024 National event – Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim and around the UK
Summer Event	TBC
Guildford Remembered	October 2024 – exact date TBC
WRAC Dinner Club	Saturday 12th October
Remembrance	7 November – Field of Remembrance, London 10 November – Guildford Borough & Cenotaph, London
Officers' Dining Club	Saturday 23 Nov

SOLDIERS' STORIES NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

Friday 15th March 2024 18.00 – 19.30

Panellists will include Association members drawn from across the decades, rank and service.

The NAM Café will remain open throughout the afternoon until 18.00.

This event is free, but booking is required. Please book at wraca.org.uk/NAM75, or call the WRAC Office on 0300-400-1992 or visit wracassociation.org.uk/event/soldiers-stories-national-army-museum/

The event is the evening before the AGM (16th, Victory Services Club, London) so why not book some accommodation and make a weekend of it with your friends and colleagues.

GUILDFORD REMEMBERED

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.

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 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, but please get in touch if you would like to attend. Email: info@wraca.org.uk. Updates will be posted at wraca.org.uk/guildfordremembered

REMEMBRANCE

London

Dates for 2024 are:

- Thursday 7 November – Field of Remembrance, Westminster. This will be ticketed.
- Sunday 10 November – Cenotaph Parade. This is always ticketed.
- Sunday 10 November – Westminster Abbey Service. Enquire via HQ/Tanya to find out what the arrangements are for this service. Requests will need to be made to the office if you are interested in attending.

Guildford

- Sunday 10 November – Guildford Borough Remembrance events. As one of only two Regiments that have Freedom of the Borough, this is a hugely significant event for the Association and we encourage as many of you as possible to attend.

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.



Private Gwyneth Evans, ATS

Little is known about the important work carried out by members of the ATS during WWII who used their geographical skills, training and dexterity to trace maps and plans employed in critical offensive campaigns, such as D-Day.

Private Gwyneth Evans is one such woman so when we were contacted by her daughter, Glinys Horton, herself ex-WRAC, we were fascinated to hear her story.

Gwyneth was born in Salford in 1925 and was a qualified tracer working in a draughtman's office in Manchester before joining up in 1942. Gwyneth found herself selected to become a tracer of maps and plans. With no other means of making copies of important documents, this would involve tracing over the original documents, so that they could then be distributed and despatched to wherever they were needed.

One set of maps and plans that Gwyneth worked on were those required for Operation Neptune, or D-Day as it was more widely known, and which became the largest seaborne invasion in history. Of course, the operation began the liberation of France and the rest of Western Europe and laid the foundations of the Allied victory on the Western Front. So critical to the direction of the war and being highly top secret in nature, Gwyneth was held in quarantine under guard for 14 days before the maps were released.



Glinys recounts: "My mum was in the ATS and she traced the plans that went out to various Forces involved in D-Day. She was under guard for two weeks, 24/7 prior to the start of D-Day. She was livid as she wasn't allowed to go out at night to the NAAFI with her friends. She told me all the plans went out to the various Forces by despatch riders."

Gwyneth remained in the ATS after victory was declared and until she married. Gwyneth met another WWII veteran, Henry (Harry) Horton and they went on to marry on 22nd September, 1945 and have two daughters, Glinys and her sister, Laraine. Harry was a qualified engineer before enlisting in 1939. Initially in the RAOC, in 1942 he was transferred to REME at its formation from an existing branch of the RAOC. Harry was one of Monty's Desert Rats, a member of REME British Recovery troops, whose job it was to retrieve tanks, armoured cars and other equipment from the battlefield, often under appalling conditions with bombs and shells raining down on them. Harry became REME's first AQMS.



When demobbed, one of Gwyneth's successes was to be involved in the set-up of what would later become the Marshall Ward home-shopping catalogue. She was also a professional ballroom and Latin American dance teacher, travelling to Blackpool with her students who competed at the Mecca of dance that is The Tower Ballroom. Gwyneth was even a guest presenter on the extremely popular peak time show 'Come Dancing'. She remained a dance teacher until well into her 80s.

Gwyneth remained extremely proud of the part she played in D-Day and what its success eventually meant for the Allies and the direction of World War II. Gwyneth sadly passed away on 22nd September, 2011 on her and Harry's 66th wedding anniversary. Although latterly she had lived with Alzheimer's, this never diminished her memories or took away her ability to remember features on the D-Day maps, and she could still recall all the names of the Normandy beaches.

Mollie Hendry (nee Sparrow): WWII as she experienced it.

Mollie's memories of the war years, 1939 to 1945 have been serialised over the last 2 editions of the Lioness. In this last installment we pick up Mollie's story in 1945.



4 Jan. We had snow. 28th Jan – danced in woollen socks and wellies.

29th Jan. Went for an interview with Brig. McCandlish, who needed a P.A.. There were two of us interviewed, and I was delighted to know I had got the job. The Brig was a very military-looking man, with a small moustache and a very brisk manner. I was rather scared at first, but his previous PA (a man Lt.) told me he was very nice, and so I found him. I often worked until 7/8 at night. Still had all my own personal washing and ironing to do, billets to clean, only one day off a week. On the 26th March I was promoted to Corporal, so felt that I was doing OK as PA. I had an interesting visit to the battlefields of Waterloo on the 30th March. It gave one a very eerie feeling to see the site of such a famous battle. On the 14th April we received a rumour that the 9th US Army was in Berlin.

Whilst in Brussels, working for the Brig, Bill Jones, Iris' brother in the SAS had the opportunity to visit me as for a time. They had previously captured a German whilst in action, and instead of handing him over, kept him with them and he did their cleaning, shoes, etc. The SAS were very much a "do as you like" outfit, except of course when in action, where they were well disciplined and very brave. Used to go in their jeeps to airfields behind enemy lines, plant bombs and get out of there. However, this man they had was called Carl, a man about 30 years of age, and when the boys used to come to the HQ to collect me (and my friends) to take us out in their jeeps (with guns aboard), Carl would come too, just dressed in a khaki uniform without any insignia. One day, Bill came into my office and asked me if I knew where the men's toilets were. "Why do you want to know?" "Well, we have Carl with us and he is desperate". I said "You cannot possibly bring Carl into the HQ, there are so many officers around who would want to know who he is" and he could not speak proper English. "Well" I was told "we will just say that he has laryngitis!"

27th May. There was going to be a big conference of all the Army units held in Luneberg, the 2nd Army HQ, with the object of re-arranging the Army. The Chief of Staff was supposed to be there, with his P.A. but he had had to attend an important meeting in London and could not get back in time. I suggested to the Colonel that I should fill one of the empty seats on the plane – it was really in fun, but he said he would speak to the Brig. The next day I was told that I could go. Well, I hoped I had not bitten off more than I could chew! I was the only woman on the plane, the lowest rank being a Lt. Col. I just sat quietly (for a change) and did as I was told. We arrived at 10 a.m. and I had the pleasure of walking under a guard of honour outside the conference hall. I sat with a Corporal from 2nd Army. Officers were popping up and down all the time, stating their name and

Division, and I was busy taking notes. It was a long and tiring conference, we had a buffet lunch and tea before leaving. I was in a bit of a fix when I found there were no ladies' toilets at the HQ. My friendly Corporal kept guard outside the men's whilst I was inside. The next day I spent typing my notes – the Brigadier being away for the day – presented them to one of the Lt.Col's who encouraged me by saying I had done very well. The conference was all about changing the status of 21 Army Group to British Army of the Rhine. No longer an invading army, but one to help restore some law and order into this sad country.

On the 7th June (just one year after D-Day) the HQ was moved to Bad Oeyenhausen (BO) about 50 kms from Hannover. We were up at 6.30, and I was taken in the Brigadier's car. The Brigadier's driver was female, and I think he got me to travel with them as company for Dorothy. The German towns we passed were very badly damaged. B.O. was a charming little Spa town, with a park enclosing the Town Hall in the centre.

25th June. Promoted to Sergeant, backdated to April. This meant a change of dining, now with the Sergeants' Mess. To celebrate, several of the male sergeants in our branch invited me to join them in a few drinks. Decided on liqueurs, but managed to stay sober! A few days later I had a letter from my brother to say he'd arrived home, after four years away. In July the Brig was off to Brussels, so he said that I could have a lift with him, then I must hitch a lift to Ghent (in the back of an open truck as it happened), and meet up with him there to continue to Nijmegen, where we stayed in a very nice Dutch house. Dorothy and I slept in the attic, but it was a very charming and comfortable room. Next day, back to BO.

On the 5th August the Brig was due to go and see the Moehne Dam, which was the one bombed by the special bomb which skimmed across the water – a wonderful performance by the RAF. He also brought along Col. Lees, an Australian Liaison Officer, and Joan Kirby, a friend who was PA to Colonel Knox. Whilst the Brig went off we were left with Col Lees and a picnic lunch. The weather was lovely, and as we had been told to bring our swimsuits, we girls made the most of the day. This was the second time I had swum in German waters. On another occasion we had an outing to Hamelin (Pied Piper fame), where I swam across the river Weser. We were amazed to see a table with a lot of German children drinking beer! On the 10th August we heard rumours about Japan's capitulation. I was due for leave on the 13th, longing to see my brother again, and managed to talk my way through customs with three bottles of French champagne, which I said was for a very special occasion. We could buy drinks from our mess at a much lower price than elsewhere, but I think we deserved it!

On the 14th August peace was finally declared, so I enjoyed my champagne with the family (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) VJ Day declared the following day, spent with friends in London. Back in BO life consisted of work, parties, games of netball against other branches, galas, 'A' Branch Club, cinemas and demob parties (rather sad). Brig went to Luneberg for the Belsen trials (war crimes). Two members of our staff got married, and the Brig lent them his car.

On 5th Nov Joan, Dorothy and I went with the Brig to hear the massed bands of 50, 51 and 52 Div. - very enjoyable. Meantime I was attending shorthand classes, dancing classes, whist drives, and cycle club meetings. Not exactly a boring life!

13 Dec. On leave for England this time. Before I left BO the ATS officers asked me if I would be interested in taking part in a broadcast in London. Anything for something new, so I agreed. I was called for an interview with the BBC and whilst in the city, visited my old firm who, although they could not give me a job, my old one being filled, said that one of their clients was willing to give me a job. It was a large Fur firm. I was still in the ATS and said that I did not think this would be suitable, but good of

them to offer. Left it in abeyance. On the 23rd December I took part in a broadcast and enjoyed the experience.

I had arranged a date in BO for New Year's Eve with my boyfriend there, and we had been told that we could wear civilian clothes. So I packed my most glamorous dress and looked forward to my return. The weather was bad and we were delayed on our return, spending New Year's Eve in a ship (!) off the coast of France. We arrived in Calais about 9 a.m. and it was very cold. Spent miserable day there, train departed about 5.30. Overnight on train arriving BO at 5 o'clock, had tea and evening in 'A' Club. There was no heating in our billets. Found that I had now been promoted to Staff Sergeant. The Brigadier asked me if I would be interested in staying on in the Army and would recommend me. It was tempting, because I was very happy in the job and working for him, but then I thought "I have to get back to Civvy Street sometime" It was all very unsettling. I had a surprise when I received a cheque for Five Pounds from the BBC for my part in the broadcast.

During January had busy and slack days, went to demob parties, took shorthand speed test (for 120 wpm), had bar duties in Mess, riding (German Cavalry) horses at Herford, sampled more French champagne, played table tennis, had dates. Bought skates, skated on the frozen lake. Boyfriend demobbed. I signed on until 7th June. Upon his return from leave, the Brig gave me a brooch of Sir Walter Scott from Scotland (still have it). I had put my name down for ten days leave time in Chamonix for winter sports. We left on the 18th Feb, stayed overnight in Brussels and the next overnight in Paris. Although we had to pay for these holidays, they were very cheap, and the Army arranged accommodation for us - spoiled, weren't we? I had a look around Paris, but slept in the afternoon, WYCA for supper, crowded train but fun. Changed trains at St. Germain and arrived at Chamonix soon after 3pm. Had lots of fun - our photo was taken by "Sunday Sketch" photographer, appearing on centre page in England later. The stay in Chamonix was lovely - skiing, skating, sleigh rides, dancing in evenings. Cold journey back through Paris and Brussels, arriving Wed. 6th March at 9.30. Upon my return found I had been promoted to WO2! However, some changes took place in the office, because the Dep. Adj. Gen had been involved in a plane crash, and although not seriously injured was advised to stay in UK. The Brig became temporary DAG, and told me that he had been advised that he must have an officer for his PA. and was given a Lt by the name of Wodehouse (a cousin of PG Wodehouse I later discovered). So the Brig gave me the choice of taking over as another Brig's PA or staying on with him to do his typing (all the hard work of course). I opted for the latter, because I liked working for him and there is a lot to be said for "the devil you know". He seemed very pleased about this, so I continued doing the work I had done before, and the Lt. arranged official visits for the Brig, kept his maps up to date and sat talking to his girlfriends with his feet on the desk! He was quite a decent chap really, and we got on quite well. One day the Brig. called me in and said "The Chief of Staff has asked me to recommend an ADC for him, so I have recommended Lt. Wodehouse, and you can come back as my official PA. What a dear he was - said he knew who was doing all the work, and he could arrange his own visits and tours, and I told him I could keep the map up to date.

21st April, Easter. Had a few days leave to visit Hamburg. Badly damaged with sometimes just a façade of a building. Many people were living in basements, evident from seeing smoke come through holes in the ground. It was quite cold too. My two friends and I went to a park and played with some delightful German children.

25th April. Field Marshal Montgomery visited BO. The following day I was told to go to his office, where he presented me with the C-in-C's certificate (many of these awarded, so nothing special). It was a beautiful day, and the lilac trees, which were plentiful, were in full flower. We had our photograph taken with

Monty. I enjoyed the month of April when the weather was beautiful, and spent as much time as possible in the fresh air. I was beginning to get a little concerned about my life after demob. Had a weekend in Brussels during May and in June, myself and others leaving the service had a demob party, which the Brig and several other officers and NCOs attended.



Field Marshal Montgomery with WOII Mollie Sparrow furthest right

On the 6th June I left the HQ to return to England. The Brigadier lent me his staff car to take my luggage and me to the station. When I asked him how he would get around he said, "I will borrow the orderly's bicycle". He also organised a sleeper for me and the Colonel's PA, who was being demobbed at the same time. These were supposed to be for officers only, but I guess I was privileged. Arrived in Calais on 7th June and caught the midday boat.

8th June VICTORY DAY. I went with my brother to town, meeting old friends and enjoying the fireworks. It was a very happy occasion after so many years. We returned home about 2 a.m. feeling rather jaded! I was not officially demobbed until the 10th June - and after that, well that's another story!

I hope this epistle does not tire and bore you to death. It is perhaps a record of the most eventful seven years of my life - aged 19 on the outbreak of war, 26 when it was over. I was very fortunate to have come out of this in one piece, older, and I hope wiser. Love to all my family and friends who may have had the patience to read all this.

Mollie.



We Will Remember Her

Private Kathleen Gaunt ATS



After last May's services around the UK, we found out more about one of the ATS servicewomen killed in Great Yarmouth - Private Kathleen Gaunt - thanks to the great work of Kathleen's second cousin Warwick Smith, and our own Caroline McEwan-Smith who reports for us.

When I was asked by the Association to coordinate the 80th Anniversary

Commemoration for Kathleen Gaunt I felt a deep sense of honour and responsibility to do my very best to pay a fitting tribute. I drove the 11 miles over the beautiful rolling hills of West Yorkshire to Bingley, a small market town transected by the River Aire. Bingley Cemetery is set on top of a long ridge and was opened in 1870. It has 28 Commonwealth burials from the 1914-1918 war and 17 Commonwealth burials from 1939-1945 war. I found Kathleen's resting place quickly, quite by chance at the highest point in the cemetery bathed in sunlight, daffodils in full bloom growing wild on the family plot. A beautiful resting place, tranquil and quite moving.

I was determined to reach out and try to find any relatives of our fallen sister Kathleen. This was achieved by the power of Facebook - linking in with local sites I placed an appeal for relatives and low and behold contacts came in. Firstly, Warwick Smith, second cousin to Kathleen who is the family history guru and then his distant cousin in Australia, Jill Ross.

Their research uncovered so many facts which really made Kathleen someone I could relate to. The daughter of Harry Gaunt and Mary Elizabeth Gaunt nee Croke of Bingley, Kathleen was born March 1923, with her sister Margarita (Margaret) born two years later. Kathleen had fiery red hair and worked for the Telegraph & Argus in Bradford prior to enlisting in ATS. Warwick's own mother enlisted under her maiden name of Joan Mary Bottomley. Joan and Kathleen were cousins, best of friends and really close, so decided to enlist in the ATS together



ATS Passing Out March Past - Bradford Town Hall. Kathleen (marked red) and Joan directly behind Kathleen (marked blue).

Kathleen had become engaged to "a man in Spitfires". Only her mother knew of her engagement at the time, and nothing is known of her fiancé. On her last visit home shortly before her death Kathleen took off her engagement ring and left it at home for safekeeping, she and the ring were reunited for her funeral.



Private Kathleen Mary Gaunt



Private Joan Mary Bottomley

Kathleen's father arranged for Kathleen's body to be brought home. He met his daughter's coffin and helped carry it. Harry had fought in WW1 alongside his brothers. What dreadful images must have gone through his mind when he carried his first born to be buried. Harry died aged 47, less than a month after Kathleen - "of a broken heart" said Jill Ross. Harry is at rest in the family plot with Kathleen and other immediate family members. Kathleen's mother Mary moved to Tipperary shortly after she lost her husband and daughter.

Joan went on to learn shorthand and typing in the ATS. During WW2 she kept an autograph book with entries by service personnel and filled with ditties, poems and drawings including a pencil portrait of Joan. The book also contains an entry written and signed by Kathleen Gaunt in 1942, to which she added a pressed red rose petal.

Warwick recalls " She was a wonderful mother, old fashioned, she wouldn't smoke outside and everyone loved her. What a lady she was. Commanded respect". He also recalls "When anyone picked on me, Mum was a tempest of rage. I remember her bashing an old sash window when she saw a bigger kid picking on me outside - she put her fist clean through it!"

Warwick has published a book of self-penned poems about his family's experiences of war. His poem entitled 'Alas ATS' remembers Kathleen, including the lines:

*Young Kathleen Gaunt joined the ATS with her
cousin Joan,
They were as close as two peas in a pod let it be
known.
Two Bradford lasses with hearts of Yorkshire
grit,
They'd fight to the end and would never quit.*

Private Molly Sherwell ATS

Association Life Vice President Sue Westlake attended the dedication of a new inscription on the Chinnor War Memorial and sent this report

On a very hot and beautiful September morning, Association Standard Bearer Sharon Baker-Joyce and I represented the Association at the unveiling of an inscription to ATS servicewoman Molly Sherwell on Chinnor War Memorial in Oxfordshire.

Molly, a Private in the ATS, lived in the village of Chinnor during WW2 where she worked at nearby Thame Park - a Special Operations Executive (SOE) base. On enlistment she had attended Special Training School 52 at Beaulieu where SOEs were trained in cypher, wireless procedures, codes and security so that they could work as undercover operators. Tragically, Molly was killed as a result of enemy action whilst she was home on leave in South London on 28th June 1944. She was buried in Beckenham cemetery by the War Graves Commission but was later reinterred in Bedford cemetery in 1952. In recent years, the residents of Chinnor have taken Molly 'to their hearts' and wanted to honour her sacrifice by having her name inscribed on the village war memorial.

The occasion was organised and beautifully executed by the Royal British Legion and Chinnor Parish Council with a very moving Commemorative Service, Last Post and Reveille. The Chinnor War Horses were in attendance as I laid our WRAC Association wreath at the war memorial alongside wreaths from the Royal British Legion and Chinnor Parish Council. The inscription on our wreath read:

'Private Molly Sherwell ATS, killed in service on 28 June 1944. Remembered with gratitude and pride by all members of the WRAC Association on this, the 85th Anniversary of the formation of the ATS, and to celebrate her name being inscribed on Chinnor War Memorial. Lest we Forget. 9 September 2023'



Chinnor War Horses



Sharon and Sue at the memorial



Sue and Sharon prepare for the service



Molly Sherwell's name is added to the memorial

Reunions & Dinners



Karen Radford reports from the Dinner Club 2023 at The Liner Hotel, Liverpool

It has been many years since Dinner Club was as far north as Liverpool but this year was certainly a DC to remember. The Liner Hotel is a large venue that includes all the hallmarks of a luxury cruise liner, creating a wonderful seafaring ambience. At last we were back to our pre-covid numbers and there were many new and old faces filing through reception to check in. Ladies were frantically running between the tables looking for the chance to win this year's tombola teddies, lottery opportunities and of course the winning ticket for one of the wonderful raffle prizes.



I am sure that everyone able to attend will support me in saying a huge "Thank You" to the NFA for providing us with this awesome trio free of charge and I would like to thank everyone for helping raise £500 for the Not Forgotten Association. Those ladies who were unable to attend the Friday evening due to the late booking, were disappointed to have missed it, but they had made the most of being in Liverpool by pre-booking theatre shows, meals out and attending other great get togethers with friends and family. Let's see what next year brings shall we!

Saturday brought many more ladies through the reception door, where more laughter and frivolity ensued. This year the committee were lucky enough to have several volunteers to help throughout the day. This was well received by everyone and a great opportunity for ladies to see what goes on in the background to produce our exciting DC Gala dinner each year.

Our staff at The Liner were the best I have worked with in my time on the DC Committee. They were so supportive, always happy to help and played a huge part in making the weekend a success. I am sure all our ladies will agree with me that there was never a task too difficult.

As the start of the Gala dinner was drawing near, there was the recognisable buzz of excitement rippling through the hotel. Some were very late leaving the Pacific Bar and could be seen running for their rooms when they realised time was short, Amanda Tillotson and Maxine McCue - yes I mean you! Ladies were starting to appear in the bar adjoining the Britannic Suite in readiness for the call to dinner. It was loud and busy, some ladies dressed in themed headwear and other additions, all of them chomping at the bit to get to their tables for the start of their Gala evening. This was my first year as Chair and so my responsibilities for the evening had changed from my previous role as the Entertainments Secretary. Suddenly there appeared to be much to remember however thanks to the support of our President, Babs Anderson and Chair predecessor Marg Davies it all went swimmingly!

The entertainment was to be the third outing for the Bradford based "VIP Ultimate Function Band". This year's group came with an extra treat of a wonderful saxophonist. We have mixed the instruments each year to provide us with a different sound. Our ladies danced the night away in true DC fashion to the sounds of the 60's through to the present day and of course there were two renditions of our very own DC theme tune, Tina Turner's "Simply the Best" Unfortunately there were a couple of last minute cancellations with Annette McChesney and Van Whitehill being unable to attend. Fortunately, they were both remembered by their lovely table folk in the form of a blow up Van, and then joined by Consuella Concheta Clark. Their dancing throughout the evening was admirable and very entertaining!



L-R: Chair - Karen Radford, President - Babs Anderson, Chris Powell (past Hotel Organiser) Marg Davies - Treasurer, Cheryl Jones - Hotel Organiser, Dawn Fleming- Co-opted Membership Sec, Heather Bradbury -Membership Sec, Morag Hardy - Secretary and Shirley Gladwin - Entertainments Secretary

This year's Committee had gone all out to provide a weekend of entertainment to be remembered and there is no doubt it was a success. The Friday night provided an extra treat with a last-minute opportunity to book Annie Riley from the Not Forgotten Association (NFA). She arrived with the fabulous Lloyd Ellery and Jason Allen and between them they gave us an evening of amazing entertainment. Sandy Cawley was the star of the show with her energetic dancing to "Crazy Little Thing Called Love", partnered with Chris Whitworth and then Jules White provided us with a perfect rendition of Amy Winehouse's "Valerie".







The weekend was an opportunity for many to visit the huge number of historical sites and make the most of tours, including the famous ferry across the Mersey cruise and Magical Mystery Bus Tour. Visits to the Beatles statues, museums, Liverpool and Everton football stadiums and much, much more followed. For those who were slightly more agile there was Matthew Street, one of the best streets for nightlife in Liverpool – especially live music. The most famous venue on this narrow, pedestrianised street is undoubtedly the Cavern Club, made famous by Liverpool's most famous band, The Beatles. I for one found Matthew Street vibrant and exciting, and it was wonderful to see so much musical talent in the bars and clubs. The weather was not our best friend at times but it did not stop some having fun on the open top bus and others walking around the historical city.





I am sorry I have been unable to include more pictures but I hope the few that are on here have made you smile. I would personally like to thank everyone who made the weekend as amazing as it was, from our hard working Committee members, volunteers, NFA and the incredible staff at The Liner. Now it's time to look forward to next year where hopefully it will be as exciting and amazing as this year. If you would like to become a DC member please contact our membership secretary Heather Bradbury at heather.bradbury@icloud.com and she will send you all you need to sign up.

WRAC and RMAS Sisterhood Dinner Night

The annual WRAC and Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) Sisterhood dinner took place in the Union Jack Club (UJC) on the 21st October 2023. The event was organized by Anna Loder and Frances West who did an excellent job and it all appeared to go seamlessly. This was the second year it had been held in the UJC. There were around 70 attendees with a good mix of WRAC and RMAS Sisterhood people. A number of those attending had decided to come in their commissioning course groups (WRAC 853 was amongst them, see photo) which made for some entertaining anecdotes. The food was excellent with good wines to accompany it.

This year, our after-dinner speaker was Major Fran Sykes RHA who commanded the King's Troop RHA from 2021 till recently so her command covered some hugely significant national events including the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, The Queen's funeral and shortly after, the Coronation of King Charles III. She gave a very humorous and enlightening speech recounting some of the behind the scenes events and shared her experiences in such a high-profile role. One fact we did learn is that the King's Troop have an additional after dinner toast – to the horses! We raised a toast to them that evening. At the same time as the dinner, England were playing South Africa in the Rugby World Cup and a number of us were anxiously following the English team – which ended in tears – at least for our team. Nevertheless, a good time was had that evening.



WRAC 853



Association News and Updates

CONGRATULATIONS

... to the following who have celebrated their 100th birthdays since the last Lioness edition:

Mrs Margaret Joyce

Mrs Martha Watson

Mrs Betty Wood

Mrs Pearl Heeley

Mrs Sheila Pantin

Mrs Audrey Davey

Emily Balmforth

Mrs Chris Gibbs



If you know of any ex-ATS due to celebrate her 100th birthday over the next 12 months please let us know.

We want to send them the Association's very best wishes along with a card and some flowers.

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

SATURDAY 16th MARCH 2024 14.00, The Victory Services Club, London

AGENDA:

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
11. Guest Speaker – Liza Jarvis, COBSEO
Female Veterans Transformation
Programme Lead
12. Any Other Business
13. Date of Next Meeting –
March/April 2025 (at GR)

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.

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)

If you cannot join us in person, you can still watch and take part (including voting) online. Full details of how to join online, including registration for online participation, will be available from March 1st at this webpage - wracassociation.org.uk/AGM2024

The AGM will also be available to watch only from our Facebook page - facebook.com/wracassociation

Happy Birthday Eileen



Eileen Florence Sage turns 100 on the 11th February and shares her memories of serving in the ATS

Aged 18, in May 1942, I enlisted in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Our group were sent to barracks in Fulford

Road, York - the home of the West Yorkshire Regiment, and then on several training courses, including a period at RAF Benson where we learned to recognise enemy aircraft by sight. From York, we went to Devizes for training and then on to Whitby where there was a firing camp for practical training on targeting aircraft. A Bolton Paul aircraft was flown over the plain, towing a large red flag on the end of a rope and which we were required to fire at with the correct positioning on the guns. I still have a piece of that red flag, kept as a souvenir.

From Whitby, we were assessed and allocated to our first postings, mine being to serve on Mitcham Common in south London, where I worked on an optical height and range finder,

an instrument used to determine the altitude and speed of an aircraft, information which was then used to direct anti-aircraft guns.

A new site on Wimbledon Common became operational and I was posted there to work with 350 Battery (B Troup) on a Barr and Stroud Rangefinder, working in a team with three other women. In conjunction with the aircraft spotters, we traced the range and height of incoming enemy aircraft and used a formula to work out the speed of the planes. This information was passed to the command post and from there to the Sergeant in charge of the gun, a twin-barrelled 5.25 naval gun. This enabled the gun's operators to assess the timing needed on the fuse for the gun. The enemy aircraft would be caught in the powerful searchlights to deter them from continuing their flight towards London and other target cities.

My section was billeted in "Spitfire Hut". In the morning, we checked the bulletin board to find out what the duties were for the day - sometimes operational, at other times performing other tasks such as cooking. Evenings were usually spent in the NAAFI where lifelong friendships were formed. On 24- or 48-hour passes we often visited home and family, and were occasionally given complimentary tickets to social events, theatre or cinema. Teams were formed to play sports and I particularly remember taking part in hockey matches.

Wimbledon was a major target for the Luftwaffe, who obviously knew that anti-aircraft batteries were located there - even the All-England Lawn Tennis Club had been hit in 1940, when there was extensive damage after a 500lb bomb crashed through the roof of centre court. There were factories in the vicinity producing machine guns and spark plugs, and with the airfield at Croydon just a few miles away Wimbledon was heavily bombed. On one occasion a 2000lb bomb fell on the area but did not explode, so we had to be transferred out of harm's way to Primrose Hill for a time while it was dealt with.

I was on leave at home in Kingsbury, northwest London when we heard news of VE Day. I received a telegram to say that we had all been granted 48 hours leave to mark the end of the war in Europe. There was much relief and celebration at the news. I was finally demobbed in 1946 but remained in contact with several dear friends who had shared the camaraderie of those days, despite the dangers endured during the conflict.



Eileen arrives in Fulford Barracks - second row, second left



Obituaries - Their Final Salute



MAJOR BRIGID FIANNA GRATTON ARCHDALE (NEE MOORE)

15th March 1938 -

22nd August 2023



Brigid was born on 15 March 1938, the daughter of a regular officer commissioned into the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and was very proud to be a daughter of the Regiment. She attended Bedgebury School in Tunbridge Wells before being employed by the owner of Apple Orchards. Having joined the Territorial Army she was commissioned just after her 21st birthday. Leaving working with apples to join the Regular Army in July 1961 her employer was very sorry to see her leave and said she was the best employee they had ever had.

Her first posting was to Larkhill, during which time she spent several months touring the USA, Irish Dancing with the Irish Pipe Bands which she remembered very fondly. She was then posted to BAOR as an Acting Captain. Returning from Germany, she was appointed an Instructor at Cadet Wing, a role reserved for only the most able officers. At the end of that tour, she was posted to Singapore as a Staff Captain in HQ FARELF. Nine months later I joined her in Singapore and discovered that she was an excellent ski boat driver who was very patient and taught me to water ski. Both passionate about the sport, we spent most of our

free time improving our skills at Slalom, Trick Skiing and Ski Jumping. We both entered the Singapore Water Ski Championships and were two of the ladies who skied four up across Singapore Harbour holding the Singapore flag on National Day. Brigid was by far the most accomplished skier of our group but never let us feel it.

While in Singapore, we went on two memorable trips. The first was on the Army Commanders Flight to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji which cost us £14.10 shillings. When we were in Rotorua, New Zealand we were told by the very large forbidding lady in charge of the Ladies section of the hot baths that we would have to take off our swimsuits as they would rot! We did this and slid in to the murky water. Shortly afterwards there was a shrill cry from a lady close to us of 'Māori's.' We replied in our best BBC accent that we were British. The reply was 'but you are brown all over.' We stood up and said in unison 'Not quite all over Madam.' Later that day it was only the Maori Hostel that found us somewhere to stay as everywhere else was full. The second trip was to Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand with a short stay in Manila. We had budgeted to tour Japan on a motor bike but when we arrived the only thing we could hire were motorised bicycles and so we were forced to hire a car which meant we could only stay in a hotel one night in three. The other nights were spent in the car sometimes in very strange places.



When Brigid left Singapore she served in Southern Command as an Acting Major and passed the exam to attend the Staff College but decided that perhaps it was time to see what life was like outside. Leaving the Army she became the PA to Patrick Vanson which started her involvement with importing wine

from France. Brigid and Audley also assisted her father who had retired as a Major General to develop the Oceanic System of planting trees in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Following the gales in Northern Ireland which destroyed large tracks of forest they developed the idea of a large crown to maximise food intake and an anchor of wide root growth which created stability for the trunk.

In April 1975 she married Audley in a wonderful ceremony in Westminster Abbey, followed by a ride in Open Topped London Buses to the Reception at the In and Out club where she was the first woman to enter the building by the front door! Shortly after I left for Cyprus in 1976, Nic was born and by the time I returned Patrick had also arrived. In 1977 Brigid started Grattan and Partners a company that used a Glass Engraving Process which produced engraved glass for many famous events such as the Silver Jubilee and for many prestigious organisations. The Company still exists today and presented a gift for the Platinum Jubilee.

Brigid was a excellent hostess and great fun to be with. There were always fantastic parties at Pooks Hill, Four Marks with the most memorable part being the amazing firework displays. I remember arriving at Pooks Hill at midnight soaking wet. She took me in, dried my clothes, gave me something to eat and insisted I stayed overnight. We had a wonderful trip to St Malo towing a red speed boat and a very ancient caravan from Calais. Of course, on arrival in St Malo, Brigid demonstrated that she had kept her ability to ski superbly.

Brigid was a great supporter of the WRAC Association and was an understanding member of the Grants Committee. She distributed children's knitted woollies to ex members of the WRAC who were in need.

It was so cruel that from 2010 someone who had so much more to contribute found it so difficult to communicate. Audley with the help of his sons, particularly Nic who was there all the time, looked after her tirelessly and their devotion was extraordinary.

Brigid was talented, able, and succeeded in all she did but was also kind, caring, understanding and a great friend who will be missed by many.

Audrey Smith
(Association Life Vice President)

**JEAN BROWNE
(NEE ROBINSON)
29th August 1921 -
22nd October 2023**



Formally of St Paul, Cheshire, aged 101, Jean passed away peacefully on 22nd October. Jean was born to Violet and Douglas Robinson in Derbyshire England on August 29, 1921. Beloved mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, aunt and friend. Preceded in death by her loving husband of 52 years, Joseph, infant daughter Carol, brothers George and Kenneth. Survived by sister Barbara, daughters Jennifer Chorlton, Cherida (Donald) McCall, Heather (Richard) Heilman. Grandchildren Shelley (Ryan) Hession, Tamala (Timothy) Riddle, Graham (Lindsay) McCall, Meriel McCall, Holli Heilman and Hunter Heilman. Great-grandchildren Riley Riddle, Lane Riddle, Arlo McCall, and Fitz McCall. Nephew, nieces, great-nephews, and great-nieces.

Throughout her life Jean was outgoing, energetic, and always fun to be with. She took pride in her appearance, remaining forever stylish and stunning. In 1942 she joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

She was trained to use the predictor assisting the gunners with the vital information on the height and range of enemy aircraft. During this time she suffered sun damage to her right eye eventually losing vision in that eye. In addition she became an enthusiastic Army Physical Training Instructor throughout the war.

After the war she resumed secretarial work and married Joe in 1947. Raising their three girls in a loving home Jean was known for her wisdom and good advice, for hosting dinner parties with pizzazz and her exemplary cooking and baking skills. In midlife she and Joe spent several years running a small hotel near Manchester. There, owing to Jean's high standards, they raised the standard of service and cleanliness.

After losing Joe at the turn of the millenium, Jean courageously embraced widowhood. However, with all three girls settled in the USA and travelling across the pond becoming more challenging for her, everyone agreed that it was time for her to come over permanently too. In 2014 she moved in with Cherida and Don in St Paul. Many happy memories were added over these fun filled years including travel to visit Jen, Heather, extended family, and friends in California, Washington and Florida. Jean was especially happy when loved ones came to visit her here in Minnesota. In addition to being welcomed into Cherida and Don's circle of friends she made her own friends through St. Timothy Lutheran Church and the Lyngblomsten Care Center Community, where she enjoyed many pleasant outings and social gatherings.

A major highlight was the privilege of joining other veterans on the Twin Cities Honor Flight to the Washington DC Memorial in 2016. Many thanks to Kindred Hospice for their loyal care and support throughout the last months of Jean's life, allowing her to stay at home until the end.

*Cherida McCall
Daughter*



**WO1 (RSM) AGNES MARY
DOIG
5th June 1931 –
27th August 2023**



Agnes was born on 5th June 1931 in Leicester, the youngest of six children and after moving to Thurmaston, Agnes attended the nearby schools and later found work locally. At 20 years old she made the big decision to join the WRAC.

Agnes enlisted into the Women's Royal Army Corps on the 5th February 1952 and after her basic military training was posted as a Private soldier to the Joint Services Staff College Latimer where she served for three years achieving the rank of Sergeant. Between August 1955 and July 1963 she served in the Driver and Clerks Training Centre Yeovil, in Berlin, and at the WRAC Centre which was then based at Hobbs Barracks in Lingfield. This was while the true home of the WRAC in Guildford was being rebuilt and due to the upheaval of returning to Guildford, Agnes was rewarded with a posting to Cyprus. The WRAC Centre came calling again on her promotion to Staff Sergeant CQMS.

After 2 years in Guildford Agnes went on to enjoy service north of the border in Edinburgh with 1 Independent Coy WRAC where she remained for 2 years. In April 1967 she was promoted to WO2 and posted as CSM to Cadet Wing, WRAC College Camberley training prospective officers and I am sure most of those officers will say that Agnes looked after them well.

She then enjoyed a short tour at the Postal & Courier Depot in Dusseldorf which was cut short due to her promotion to WO1 and then her posting as RSM at 10 Coy WRAC Aldershot where she served for two years. Sergeants' messes are renowned for their send offs and when Agnes was posted from Aldershot to WRAC College Camberley, Lyn Wenham, who served with her at this time recalls, that Agnes was, although the most senior rank in the Sgts Mess, friendly, kind and much respected. On then occasion of her posting back to the College all the members gave her a great send off by dining her out and making sure she left the Mess, decorated her car with coloured streamers and escorted her along Queen's Avenue. Agnes' final posting as RSM was with 29 Coy WRAC in Rheindahlen Germany. I served with her then although not in the same unit and I found her both kind and friendly but she still remained the 'RSM'. Upon her retirement after 25 years' service, I found out that Agnes was not always the straight laced lady I had come to know because her farewell party was a 'Hoot'. She believed she was just going out for dinner with the other Warrant Officers but she was led into the Sgts' Mess thinking she was waiting for a taxi to take her to the venue but all the other senior ranks were waiting for her to arrive to say their farewells to such a lovely lady. As the evening progressed Agnes climbed on to the bar and started singing to the Bee Gee's "Saved By the Bell". Everyone began to clap and cheer as this was so out of character for her What a night!



Agnes left the WRAC in 1977 but she could not stay away and rejoined in 1979 and served for a further six years in Lisburn, Germany and Beaconsfield. It was in Lisburn, Northern Ireland that I, as a newly commissioned officer, met up with her again and she was by this time, the CSM of the WRAC Element where she served as duty officer. I had to report to her after my duty finished and she said "Good morning Ma'am is there anything to report?" My answer was "No Ma'am". Old habits die hard!

Agnes finally hung up her forage cap in August 1985 having served her Queen and Country for 31 years.



During her retirement she joined the Leicester and Nottingham Branch of the WRAC Association where she was a well respected and much-loved member. She will always be remembered with love and affection

Dot Ryder

FRANCES ALMA GRACE FAIRCLOUGH (NEE SUNTER) 24th January 1953 – 14th February 2023



Frances Alma Grace Fairclough, born Sunter, in 1953 in Liverpool, was the second youngest in a large Catholic family. In school Frances was shy at first but was then often told off for chatting and making others laugh. After school Frances joined the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) based in Donnington. She was an avid shooter and won prizes within the ladies shooting competitions as well as being part of other ladies' teams such as the Netball team. It was whilst she was based at Donnington that she met a fellow soldier who was the man who was to become her husband - Robin. They already knew each other but he was told that she wanted to go out with him, so he said that he would take her out if she ironed some of his shirts – what a great chat up line!! So, he sent her six of his shirts which she duly ironed for him. He then took her to the pictures for their first date and then in time they fell in love and were married in 1972. They then spent the next 50 years as man and wife celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary last December.

When Robin and Frances met, he will tell you that she was quite shy and it was only when she went to Germany and he volunteered her to sit on a management team responsible for deciding the furnishings for the married quarters that her confidence grew.

Frances had to leave the WRAC as the rules at the time stated that if a female soldier became pregnant they had to leave the Army and Frances was expecting her first child, born in 1973. They travelled to various postings including Germany where their son was born in 1975. On returning to the UK they welcomed their third child in 1983. In 1984 Robin retired from the Army and they moved to the Cotswolds which was to be the family home for the rest of Frances' life.

Throughout her life, Frances has been an active member of her community. Joining PTAs, helping at Willersey Footlights,

village fetes, and school events. Much of her volunteering was with Girlguiding UK where she racked up over 20 years of leading Brownies and Rainbows in the Chipping Campden District of the North Cotswold Division as well as stints as District Commissioner. She went on many Brownie pack holidays and Guide camps where she would be first to join in the many activities including climbing, abseiling, dragon boat racing and go karting.

In 2017 Frances was diagnosed with cancer and went through various treatments. Even through these hard times she maintained the army mentality of carrying on and would not let her spirit for life waiver. Frances joined the Trefoil Guild and also volunteered time with the Gloucestershire branch of the WRAC Association. She would spend evenings knitting clothing for the hospital prem units, hats for the homeless and making fidget toys for those with dementia. When the pandemic came she made facemasks and wash bags for the local nursing teams. Even throughout her own suffering Frances' life was dedicated to helping other people.

She was in remission for over two years but sadly the cancer returned. Although too unwell to celebrate it, Frances made her 70th birthday on January 24th 2023. She sadly passed on Valentine's Day, 2023 - a much-loved Mother, Nana, Great Nana and Auntie.

*Alexandria Fairclough
Daughter*



LILIAN BEATRICE HOLLIS (NEE ARNOLD) 14th January 1927 - 23rd November 2023



Lillian 3rd from left

The family of Lilian Beatrice Hollis (nee Arnold), ATS 1944 to 1946, have advised us of her death on 23 November 2023 at the age of 96.

Lilian served in the ATS initially in the transport unit (at the same time as the late Queen Elizabeth - although they are not believed to have shared spanners!) but for most of her comparatively short ATS service, as an operator keyboard and line at Scottish Command in Edinburgh. She left service to marry Hubert who was an Irish Guardsman. Hubert was in the Leicester City constabulary for 26 years but died in December 1980.

Lilian renewed her ATS service contact through the Leicester WRAC Association, where she enjoyed the comradeship of several other former ATS ladies and members of other services. Lilian was Leicester branch secretary for many years and was delighted to meet HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and to be invited to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party. However the annual highlight for her was to attend and march in the November Festival of Remembrance where the solemnity of the occasion was lightened in enjoying the (often cheeky!) company of retired servicemen, and friendship of other ATS women while staying at the Union Jack Club.

Lilian's family pay tribute to the support Lilian's services' friends gave to her over many years, which undoubtedly had a very positive impact on her well being after the premature death of her husband.

*Mike Hollis
Son*



JEAN HOUGHTON (NEE APPS) 30th July 1929 - 8th August 2023



Jean was born in Waltham Chase in 1929. Her maiden name was Apps. She had a country childhood and went to Shedfield Primary school. Her secondary school was in Hedge End where they spent a lot of time in the air raid shelters as war had broken out.

Much to her disappointment, she had to leave school at 14 and she went to work in an aircraft factory cleaning out Spitfire fuel tanks. Then she went into service working as a housemaid in a private school in Wickham. However, life in service didn't suit Jean and she was ambitious, she really wanted to be a nurse.



After a couple of false starts she started her training at the Royal South Hants Hospital. But that didn't go too well either, she was bullied by other girls, so she became restless again and left after a year to join the Women's Royal Army Corps.

When they discovered that she played the piano and could read music, they said "Right - you're going to be in the Band". This was a very special band, set up in 1949 and was the first woman's band in the British Army. They called themselves "the 49ers" and stayed in touch for the rest of their lives, having many reunions. Found amongst her papers, was the following account of the formation of the band:

"In 1949, we came to Guildford from different counties, and from different backgrounds, but with one interest in common, MUSIC. Our weekly pay was 19 shillings" (95p in today's money!) and after completing their basic training, what followed was three years of hard work, putting together a repertoire for many sorts of occasions. Some of the girls were already accomplished musicians, but others, like Jean, had to master a new instrument (in Jean's case, the E flat base). In 1952, they made their debut at the Albert Hall, resplendent in the dress uniforms. The debut was a great success, and there followed many bookings. They played at the Royal

Tournament, the Edinburgh Tattoo, were part of the mourning for the death of George VI (marching through Guildford, with muffled drums, and playing the funeral march at a drumhead ceremony) and they played at the celebrations at Hendon for the accession of Queen Elizabeth. They even toured Germany.

The slow march of the WRAC is 'Greensleeves.' This was to be played by a recording of The Band of the Royal Marines at the end of Jean's funeral service. However, when sorting some things in Jean's bungalow, a CD was found of a recording, made by the 49ers in 1951, so at the end of Jean's funeral, she left the church to the sound of the 49ers themselves playing 'Greensleeves.' After four years in the Band, she left the WRAC to finish her training as a nurse, and then later rejoined the army in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps as a Captain, she was an SRN nurse, Registered Mental Nurse and Midwife. She worked at Netley hospital and then after leaving the army she worked at Wickham Medical Centre and Southampton General Hospital. She carried on working after retirement, caring for elderly people in their homes. Jean married her husband Norman in 1969 they loved travelling and driving. She and Norman were always off on another holiday. They went as far as Australia and the Far East and many countries closer to home.

Jean enjoyed her garden and cats, and was an active member of the WRAC Association, and the local branch of the British Legion, the local history society and the European Union of women. She had a wide circle of friends. She was also skilled at many crafts and was a member of the Meon Valley Quilters and several sewing, art and painting groups. In between all her activities, she found time to take an Open University degree, she studied history and attained a First.

Sport was one of her great loves, especially football, tennis and snooker. She was a night owl and would stay up into the early hours watching sport on TV. She played sport herself including badminton at Saint Mary's and in Bishops Waltham and short tennis and table tennis in Durley.

Jean was a very active member of Durley church, and I think she holds the record for the oldest helper at Messy church, she was still helping the children with their craft activities when she was 90! Jean never sat still, and was always on the go. She had a long and interesting life, much of it spent caring for others, and she enriched the lives of all who knew her.

Stephanie Caws

**RHC IP JOAN AGNES
TERESA MCLOUGHLIN**
**13th November 1934 -
17th November, 2023**



Joan was born in Dublin on 13 November 1934. She enlisted at Belfast on 9 October 1952 and badged to the Women's Royal Army Corps having followed in her father's footsteps who served during WW1 and who was awarded the Military Medal. Following her basic training at Aldershot she was streamed into the clerical role and went on to serve for three years and was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal (acting Corporal). She was discharged on 8 October 1955.

Following her Army service she worked as a secretary and bookkeeper for a company called Edwin Hall & Co from 1960 to 1976 and she then became a Civil Servant Clerical Officer working within the Department of Health and Social Security where she rose through the ranks and finished as a Higher Executive Officer before retiring in 1996.

Joan joined the Royal Hospital on 20 July 2015 and was posted to Long Ward 9 within the temporary accommodation in Light Horse Court before moving to the West Wing once the refurbishment was complete. More recently she moved into Campbell Ward within the Infirmary.

Joan was very keen to take full advantage of the many external trips on offer and attended over a hundred separate events. Shortly after her arrival she took part in the Battlefield Tour of Normandy in October 2015 and in September 2016 she was part of the group that travelled over to Northern Ireland for the Belfast Military Tattoo. She also attended a number of events organised and hosted by the WRAC Association and very much enjoyed the annual Christmas lunch at Gordon Ramsay's restaurant.

Following her move into the Infirmary she always enjoyed the many musical performances and concerts held within the Infirmary and remained active and was often seen walking along the King's Road or gently strolling around the Royal Hospital grounds. Joan died in Campbell Ward on 17 November 2023 aged 89. Our prayers and thoughts are with Joan, her family and her friends.

Gary Lloyd
Chief Clerk, RHC



SUE SMITH
**12th May 1959 -
1st June 2023**



Sue was born on 12 May 1959 in Eastbourne. She had five siblings and grew up in a loving family environment. Sue went to Eastbourne High School for Girls, where she was academically bright and excelled at sport, especially gymnastics, and where she earned many British Amateur Gymnastics Awards. She joined the Girls' Nautical Training Corps and in 1974 was selected to go to Canada to experience a working sailing ship.

In 1976, Sue joined the WRAC Junior Leaders and did six months training in Guildford before progressing into the WRAC. After selection for the Intelligence Corps, she commenced training as an AN(SI) at Comms & Sy Gp (UK). Sue was then posted to 9 Sig Regt (R) in Cyprus but was quickly selected for an Arabic course in London. She readily admitted that this was not for her and left after six months.

In April 1978, Sue was posted to 13 Sig Regt (R) as an analyst. It was here that she met John (JJ), who was in the Royal Signals. They were married in July 1979 and were posted to 9 Sig Regt (R) where they spent the first two years of happily married life before being posted back to 13 Sig Regt (R) in 1981. Sue loved sport, and during tours in Cyprus represented Army (Cyprus) at athletics, netball and hockey. She was promoted to Sgt but after falling pregnant, and in accordance with regulations of that time, had to leave the army in 1984. Sue followed John on tours for the next 23 years before settling in Warrington, Cheshire.

Sue had two children, in 1985 and 1989, both born in the UK whilst John was posted at Comms & Sy Gp (UK). It was during this second tour, that 5 Coy (TA) was formed and Sue was a founder member. She spent many enjoyable years with the Reserves, was promoted to WO2 in 2000 and awarded the VRSM. Sue retired from 5 Coy in 2002.

Sue was rarely out of employment with most jobs being in schools, including at Rheindahlen, where she spent seven years at Windsor School. She also kept her hand in on the sporting front, becoming a qualified basketball table official. Following John's demob, they settled in Warrington and Sue became HR Manager at Bridgewater High School. She was still employed there when she passed away.

Sue was blessed to have three grandchildren and she loved them immeasurably. She knew that a fourth was on the way and would be very happy to know that her new granddaughter was born in October.



Top L to R: Sandra Birchall, Angela Fenton, Sue Smith, Cara Price, Dawn Southern,
Bottom L to R: Glynn Cardy, Nerys Owen, Annette Jackson

Sue loved going on holiday and her final week was spent in Tenerife with John and their best friends from army days. They all planned to go to Mexico in 2024, but on 1 June 2023, only five hours after arriving home from Tenerife, Sue passed away quietly in her sleep. She had ischemic heart disease and this probably caused a heart attack. She would not have known anything about it or been in pain. It was a massive shock to everyone.

Sue loved serving in the military and fittingly, her coffin was covered with the Intelligence Corps drape. The last post and reveille was immaculately played by a RBL bugler. 200 people attended, a measure of the high esteem that she was held in. Sue left behind her husband John, daughter Melanie and son Tom, and four grandchildren. Sue was known as the 'life and soul of the party' and was loved and respected by everyone. She is sorely missed by many, many people.

John Smith
Sue's husband

**LT COL JILL MOIRA FIONA
STEWART TAIT
16th July 1932 -
7th September 2023**



Jill was 24 when she became an officer in the Women's Royal Army Corps and her first job was looking after the servicewomen who worked on the Artillery Range at Manorbier in Wales. It was there that her love of 22 shooting began as they had a very good Rifle Club. After that she was sent to the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot. Soon after she arrived in Aldershot she was part of the first team of Army Women to fire at Bisley in June 1967. It was when I was part of an WRAC TA Team while still in my University Officers Training Corps which fired against the female services and civil service that I first met Jill. Later we fired together in the Inter Service Team and Jill was an excellent shot who was always able to remain calm and focussed which was more than could always be said of me! We fired together for many years unless we were on overseas postings and had some amusing experiences during the week long training sessions before the match. She became the Secretary and then the Chairman of the Army Women's Rifle Association.

After she left Manorbier she was posted to the Army School of Physical Training where she developed her skills at squash and eventually played at Inter Service Level. She maintained her interest in squash throughout her career and could often be seen supporting the Inter Service Team. After leaving Aldershot she had two postings at the Depot and Training Centre and In October 1960 she was posted to the Joint Warfare Staff as a Staff Captain, an appointment that she enjoyed and had some interesting experiences. Her next posting was as Adjutant of 14 Battalion in BAOR. After just over a year she left Germany to attend the Army Staff College in Camberley and was only the 3rd female officer to complete the course. A posting to Singapore followed where she had a wonderful time and travelled extensively. On her return she was promoted to Major and was appointed the OC of 12 Company in Mill Hill which was an excellent job for a newly promoted Major. Two more challenging appointments followed, the first was

to be Staff Officer in charge of Officers Postings and the second the Officer Commanding Officer Cadet Wing which was reserved for only the most able officers. A posting to Cyprus followed which was marred by the Invasion. She was extended in post and sent to cope with problems near the border. When she returned to the UK she was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and became the ADWRAC of London District. She left London District to go to Chester to be responsible for Servicewomen's Careers before retiring after over 25 years on 1st June 1980.

Jill was a very able officer and a generous host with a thoughtful sense of humour who was fun to be with. Most of Jill's working life was in the Army but, in many ways, the focus of her life and her deepest love was the theatre. She could remember and analyse every play she had ever seen. Even in the final months of her life she was still teaching a long running and much respected class on Shakespeare for the University of the 3rd Age. Her amazing collection of Shakespeare on DVD has now been gratefully received by Warwick University.

A lively knowledge of art, music and travel also made her a companion who will be missed by many.

*Audrey Smith
(Association Life Vice President)
Liz Saxon*

Legacies & Donations

IN MEMORIAM

Since the last Lioness kind donations were made by individuals and Branches in memory of the following:

Brigid Archdale

Brenda Hurt

J Little

LEGACIES

The WRAC Association very much appreciated the legacy received from:

Madge Evans

Rachel M Green

**Throughout the years we have
been enormously grateful to
those who remember
the Association in their wills.**

Last Post



ASHENDEN, Mrs Pamela (nee White), of Middlesbrough on 7th March 2023 (WRAC)

CHAVASSE, Mrs Doris (nee Challingsworth), of Solihull on 26th July 2023 (ATS)

CLEMENTS, Lt.Col. Janet, of Stockport on 9th December 2023 (WRAC)

COPE, Mrs Winifred, of Leicester on 20th June 2023 (WRAC)

DAVIES, Mrs Bessie (nee Beasley), of Bath, on 24th December 2023 (ATS)

DOIG, WO1(RSM) Agnes, of Leicester on 27th August 2023 (ATS)

DUNNETT-MacLEOD, Mrs Jamesina, of Caithness on 21st September 2023 (ATS)

FLAUM, Mrs Lily (nee Leib), of Stanmore on 1st September 2023 (ATS)

HARRIS, Mrs Ida (nee Morris), of Solihull on 5th November 2023 (ATS)

HIGGINS, Mrs Teresa (nee Mooney), of London in May 2023 (ATS)

HUMPHREYS, Betty, of Birmingham in 2017 (WRAC)

JACKSON, Mrs Agnes, of Glasgow on 4th November 2023 (WRAC)

KIRBY, Ms Patricia of Somerset on 29th November 2023 (WRAC)

McCOY, Mrs Doris (nee Turner), of Plymouth in November 2023 (ATS)

OLIVER, Mrs Pamela Christine, of Colchester on 1st August 2023 (WRAC)

PARKER, Ms Elsie (nee Axted), of Norwich on 1st November 2023 (ATS)

PENNY, Mrs Pearl (nee Warr), of Bournemouth on 19th October 2023 (ATS)

PERROZZI, Mrs Maureen (nee Brown), of Sheffield in 2023 (WRAC)

RICHARDS, Mrs Pam (nee Dixon) of Royal Hospital Chelsea on 10th July 2023 (WRAC)

PRATT, Mrs Barbara (nee Pope), of Bath on 25th September 2023 (ATS)

SMITH, Ms Roz (nee Hawkin), of Isle of Anglesey in November 2023 (WRAC)

WADDINGTON, Mrs Vera (nee Edwards), of Leicester on 30th August 2023 (ATS)

Letters.....

Memories of Captain Crowcroft

Dear Editor,

I'm writing to respond to the article about Capt. Crowcroft, Director of Music of the WRAC Staff Band (Lioness No. 2, 2023), which was based on correspondence from his son Chris.

Having served in the WRAC Band from 1965-1969, I knew Capt. Crowcroft very well and can reassure Chris that his letter certainly does bring back memories. In fact one of which was seeing Chris and Mrs. Crowcroft visiting the Bandroom at Guildford in the 1960s: Chris was probably about 13-14.

I was pleased too, to see Major Lynette Hopkin, Capt. Zara Bowness-Smith and Major Ena Forster mentioned, all of whom I knew and who are no longer with us.

Chris was right to highlight a few of the Band's foreign tours, such as Malta, 12-21 May 1968. I don't know about the local population, but we certainly enjoyed it. Staying at Mtarfa Barracks, we had plenty of time for sunbathing outside the accommodation block and even one lazy afternoon in the sun at the local Forces lido. I also recall a group of us being invited to the home of a local journalist one evening for a delicious meal. Sgt. Kath Corrigan brought her guitar and we had a lively rendition of the Geordie folk song 'At the Blaydon Races!'

I got rather fond of Malta and have been back a couple of times since. As for Captain Crowcroft himself, he was certainly very professional and took us all seriously as musicians, which wasn't always the case for women in the 1960s. Perhaps not one for social chit-chat, his dry sense of humour appealed to me, especially the humorous asides on the bandstand between numbers. As I was sitting in the front row on the solo clarinet stand I was in a good position to hear them.

Two photographs opposite showing Capt. Crowcroft are attached as I thought other Band members might like to see them. Firstly, the Band playing in a shopping centre in Berlin during a tour of BAOR, 8-22 October 1965. L/Cpl. Kathy Southwell plays 'The Huntsman' on the post-horn, always a favourite with audiences.

Secondly, a group picture following a Christmas Dinner night at the WRAC Sgts' Mess on 7 December 1968.

Lastly, I wonder if Chris Crowcroft knows that there is a road named after his father on the former WRAC Centre site in Guildford? It is called Crowcroft Close.

Best wishes,

Jane Smith (formerly W/425499 Sgt. Stark, P. J.)



I was a member of the WRAC staff Band from 1965 to 1968 when Captain Crowcroft was the band's Director of Music.

I was 17 years old when I joined the Band and Captain Crowcroft was a much respected gentleman and an accomplished musician. He was also extremely smart in his uniform, setting a fine example to the junior ranks of the band. He was never unkind, but still managed to get the best from the musicians in the band.

My memories of Captain Crowcroft are good. As a teenaged girl, I remember him as an older gentleman, reserved and completely trustworthy.

Best wishes

Shirley Prime was Wilks W425835

Does anyone know....?

I am looking for a former WRAC member, with whom I served in Northern Ireland in 1980/81 at HQNI.

Her name was Yvonne Turner; she was a Private at the time and worked as a steward. She moved onto Larkhill in 1981. Her home was Addington, Croydon.

I don't know her Army number but I believe her middle name was Jaqueline.

If this is you or you have any information about Yvonne, I would love to hear from you.

Thank you.

Anthony John Young (24375031 Cpl Ex RCT).

(Editor: If you are Yvonne, or you know her, please contact HQ Office and we will put you in touch with Mr Young).

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 July 2024.**

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 2024 are:

Thu 07 Nov 2024 Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey. This will be ticketed – please apply to the HQ Office if you wish to attend.

Sun 10 Nov 2024 Cenotaph Parade. This is always ticketed – if you are interested in attending in 2024 please contact HQ Office 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 10 Nov 2024 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 via letter or email: office.manager@wraca.org.uk if you wish to attend.

• **Sun 10 Nov 2024 Westminster Abbey Service** – Enquire of HQ Office what 2024's arrangements may be for this service. 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. 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 12th October 2024), 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 the 24th November 2024. For more details email wracofficersdc@gmail.com or visit the Facebook Closed Group 'WRAC Officers' Dining Club'.

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