

LIONESS

SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS



ALSO IN
THIS EDITION

Grand Reunion
2025

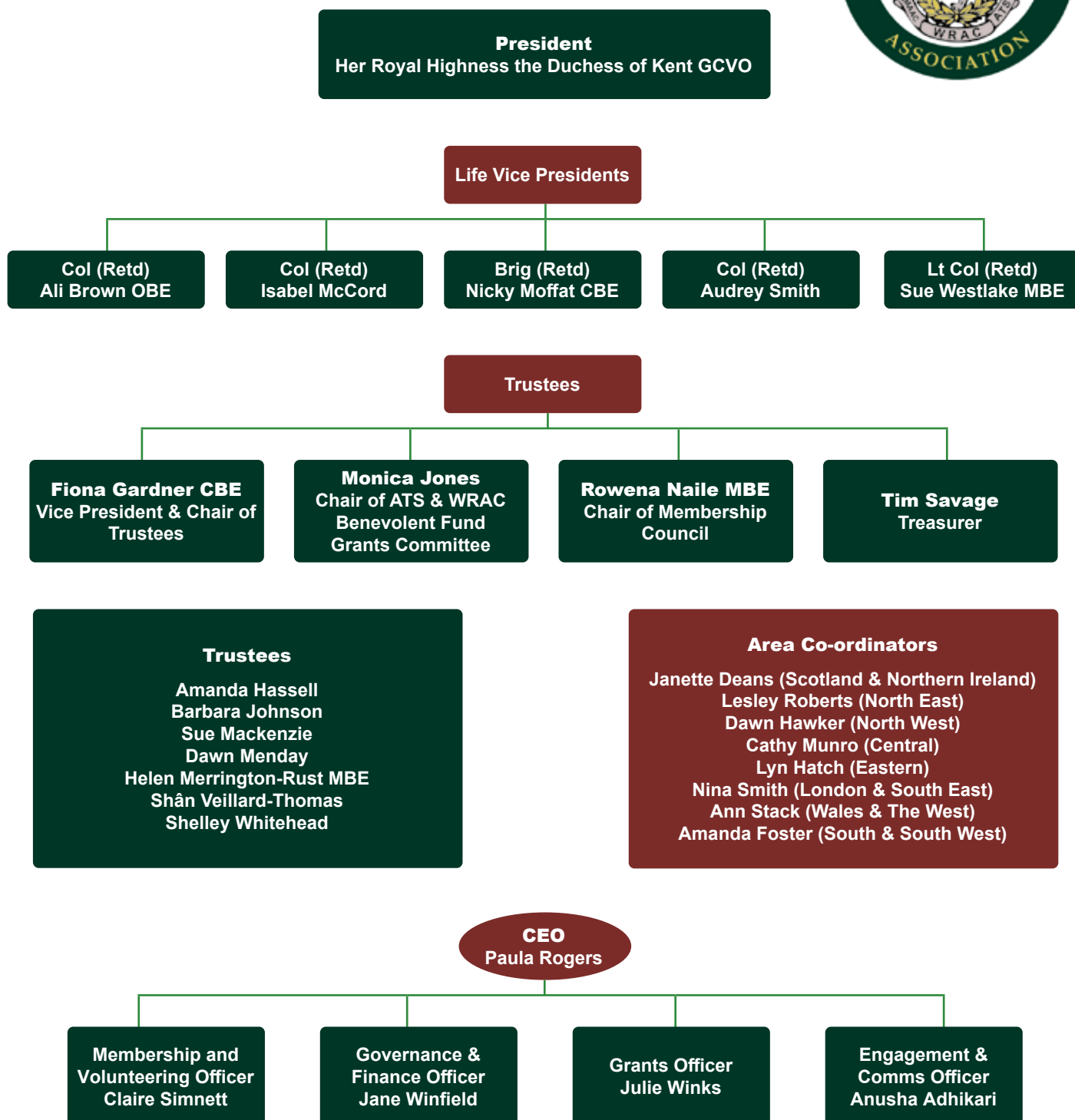
Garden Party
Celebrity Quiz

New Look
Branch News

THREE SISTERS?
THE WRAC ASSOCIATION
SENT A WHOLE CONTINGENT!



WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION



Published by the WRAC Association wraca.org.uk

Printed in Great Britain and distributed worldwide by Tiger Ink Ltd, Eastleigh, SO50 9FD

Contributions for editorial for the next issue by **14th November** to editor@wraca.org.uk

Message from the Chair of the Membership Council



The year has been excellent for the Membership of the Association, we have already had several great events with more to come. About 100 of us got together in Guildford Cathedral on 1 February to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the WRAC, we all enjoyed a splendid afternoon tea before we attended Evensong. It was on this occasion that we thoroughly embarrassed Sharon Baker-Joyce for all her hard work and devotion as the National Standard Bearer. As part of Evensong Sharon formally handed over the Standard, thanks to Ozzy Osbourne who stood in for our new Standard Bearer, Heather Bradbury.

In March a large number gathered at the NAM for the WRAC Soldiers Stories. The five members of the Association were excellent and spoke so well about their service. I was exceptionally glad that I was able to join the AGM online and get the proposal agreed by the members to reduce the annual subscription to zero, which has led to a magnificent upsurge in membership. At the AGM we had 3060 members and as of August, we had increased our membership to 3882, a 27% increase. I must thank Herme, Margaret, Daphne, Denise, Sandra and Lesley from Winchester Branch who came in to prepare the membership packs for our new members as otherwise the staff would have done nothing else for weeks.



Following on from the success of last year's all-colour Annual Report, we have produced the latest version to the same high standard. Being able to demonstrate our work in this way allows us to clearly explain to all the individual people and other organisations we meet what it is we do and the difference we make. We are pleased to include the Annual Report alongside your Lioness and hope you will enjoy reading it.

The Summer event at The Three Sisters Race Track in Wigan was wonderful and enjoyed by all. I never realised how many speed merchants we had in our midst – I dread to think what all our drivers did when they were staff car drivers! I am sure that next year we will come up with another superb day out.

We have two big events coming up starting in Guildford in October. On Saturday the 5th we will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the opening of Queen Elizabeth Barracks, and on Sunday the 6th we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Guildford Pub Bombing when two of our sisters were murdered by the IRA, by taking part in a Church Service that our members will parade to.

The Grand Reunion in Cardiff in March 2025 is not far off now, and we are looking forward to welcoming you all. It should be an excellent weekend and I know that the fancy dress on Friday evening will be as wild as ever and that you will all look very glamorous on Saturday evening. You will be glad to know that we will be parading again on Sunday, we were so disappointed that there was nowhere suitable in Leeds.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the forthcoming events and meeting some of the new members.

Rowena Naile MBE

Contents

Message from the Vice President	4
Hail and Farewell	5
Features	9
Call to Action	46
ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund	48
Branch News	52
Member Survey	74
Happy 100's	77
AGM Minutes	78
Certificates of Appreciation	80
In My Day - Reminiscences	82
Obituaries - Their Final Salute	83
Letters	90
Association Notices A-Z	91

Cover:

WRAC Association Summer Event at the Three Sisters Race Circuit in Wigan courtesy of Mission Motorsport.

Disclaimer: The contents of Lioness are strictly copyright and all rights are expressly reserved. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of the Editor or the WRAC Association, and accordingly no responsibility for these will be accepted. The Editor reserves the right to amend or omit articles and photos. Photos will only be returned if a SAE is provided.

Message from the Vice President



As we leave the summer (or what passed for a summer) behind and head into the autumn I am conscious of significant changes within our Association this year and of significant dates in the coming months.

A very successful AGM attended by 85 in person and online saw our membership fees reduced to zero with

tremendous results on membership. The membership was briefed on the amalgamation of our funds; the review of our structure and staffing, the welcoming of three new members of staff – Jane, Claire and Anusha; and our impending HQ move to Sir John Moore Barracks in Winchester.

Isabel McCord who has served as Association Treasurer and latterly Chairman of the Benevolent Fund has now stood down as a trustee of the Association but happily has accepted the invitation to join our ranks of Life Vice Presidents. Isabel reflects on her time as a trustee on page 7. Our National Standard now has a new bearer. Sharon Baker-Joyce has stepped down after 12 exceptional years of service to the Association. We are enormously grateful for all that Sharon has done, and you can read more about her farewell on page 8. Heather Bradbury has now taken over the duties of Association Standard Bearer and we look forward to her presence at coming events.

The Office for Veteran Affairs had been expected to deliver the Women Veterans' Strategy in the early summer but following a change of government its future is, at the time of publishing, uncertain. Both Ali Brown and Paula Rogers have been involved in advising on this strategy and we are pleased that the Female Veterans Transformation Programme has been closely aligned to support the overall delivery of better outcomes for female veterans across the UK, regardless of the strategy's future.

The Ministry of Defence has been working to process the restoration of berets and cap badges to those dismissed under the pre-2000 'gay ban'. Whilst all of the background work is being done by the MOD, it is our proud duty to make arrangements for the ceremony to formally welcome back these veterans alongside whom we served. In the next issue of the Lioness, we will reflect on the presentations which have taken place, and I'm sure all our Association members are as delighted as I am that these servicewomen can reconnect with us in this way.

October is a significant month in the history of our Corps. We will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford and hope to see many of you joining us for the unveiling of a new plaque which will ensure our presence remains felt in the place so many Association members undertook their training. We will also mark the 50th anniversary of the Guildford Pub Bombings as we come together to remember the two WRAC, two Scots Guards and the civilians killed in 1974. In the presence of their families, and joined by the Scots Guards, local dignitaries, emergency services and the people of the borough, we will remember them. The names of Pte Ann Hamilton and Pte Caroline Slater will also be in our minds as we march past the Cenotaph in November.

Fiona Gardner

The View from HQ

Welcome to the autumn edition of The Lioness.

We have had some great articles sent in for inclusion in this issue – so interesting and absorbing that it's a wonder we stopped reading long enough to get this edition printed! With plenty of great photos we hope you enjoy reading about Armed Forces Day (p14) and our Summer Event (p26), and playing our photo quiz (p20). We hope you like the front cover with our specially designed logo for the Grand Reunion 2025 representing the lioness of the WRAC and the Welsh dragon. You will have noticed some issues with the last edition as a serious problem at the printers meant that the magazines were produced with several printing errors, including our first fabulous wraparound cover. This was such a disappointment after so much effort went into the design, but we are delighted to say that we have engaged a new printer and sincerely hope that this issue makes it to your doorstep without issue.



There has been much change at your Association HQ over the last year, having said farewell to Julia, Penny and now Tanya, and welcoming Jane, Claire and until next year Anusha. Julie Winks and I are now the 'old hands' of the office, with so much information to impart to our new staff members. Jane Winfield is our Governance and Finance Officer who keeps us in check and on track; Claire Simnett takes on the new role of Membership and Volunteering Officer and is the first port of call for all members contacting the office; and Anusha Adhikari is our temporary Communications and Engagement Officer who looks after our social media and has brilliantly pulled together this issue of the Lioness. Some of you have already met them, and I know that you will make them all very welcome – especially as we initiate them into the world of the Grand Reunion next year! You can meet Claire and Jane on page 5.

I am pleased to announce the reopening of the Association shop with a variety of new products including a tie, scarf and pin in time for Remembrance. We asked for members' opinions on these additions to our product list and we hope they meet your expectations. Visit wraca.org.uk to browse and place an order.

We have busy times ahead in the coming months as we are moving home! After 10 years in civilian accommodation, we are back under an Army roof, but don't worry about the change of postal address - we will continue to receive mail at Basepoint for the time being and we'll let you know of any future changes. Our move into Sir John Moore Barracks is the result of an appreciated welcome from the modern Army, saves us money and most importantly gives us access to a bargain breakfast. Thank goodness we also have gym privileges otherwise you'd be seeing a lot more of us – in all the wrong ways!

What do you do with your Lioness and Annual Report? We know that many of our members keep shelves of past issues to refer back to and enjoy. If you don't hang on to yours, before recycling them, perhaps consider passing it to a friend who is not a member or dropping it onto the table of your local GP surgery or hairdresser – you never know who might pick it up and realise that they are eligible to join the Association.

Paula Rogers CEO

Hail and Farewell

Hailing: Jane Winfield Finance & Governance Officer

Jane joined us as the Finance Officer temporarily while the charity was undergoing its organisational review. She is now a permanent team member in her new role as Finance & Governance Officer.

Hello everybody, I started life in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, then attended University in Sunderland followed by Liverpool University to do a Masters degree.



Some of my previous roles include working for Harrods Central Cash office, managing the Vendor accounts team at Bonhams Auctioneers in London and heading up the Energy Management team at Hampshire County Council.

A gradual move South now sees me living in Winchester where the WRAC Association Headquarters are.

I have encountered various ambitious projects since I started with the Association including a new system of reporting for the Investment register, the merger of the Funds and since the AGM the setting of subscriptions to zero.

I did not serve but have a nephew in the Royal Corps of Signals, a Great Uncle who was a sniper in WWII and my grandfather who served in both WWI and WWII.

Having never encountered serving women in my own family, I enjoy getting to know and hearing some of the amazing stories of our ladies who have broken down barriers and blazed a trail for the women currently serving.

Working for a charity has been an exciting change, hopefully, I have risen to the challenge and I am positively enjoying my time here.

I am married to a large ginger Welshman called Gwyn, have two children at University and a small ginger dog called Voodle.

Hailing: Claire Simnett Membership and Volunteering Officer

I joined the WRAC Association in April this year in the new role of Membership and Volunteering Officer. Before this, I spent 12 years in a corporate membership organisation looking after members and organising speakers and events, and 2 years at a social enterprise focussed on developing women in business and leadership.

Outside of work, I live in Winchester with my husband Mike, our Golden Retriever Bramble, and our black and white cat Puffin. I grew up in St Albans in Hertfordshire, but came to Winchester in 2001 for university and never left!

I'm a bit of a foodie and love cooking for friends and eating out. I am a big fan of theatre and have performed as part of a local am-dram in Winchester and have gone to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival many times. I love writing and in my spare time have written articles for HerHampshire, an online regional women's magazine.

I have also combined my passion for writing with another passion; cats - and volunteer with the Cat Welfare Group sharing case studies on their socials, writing up the cats' stories to be shared on their annual print calendar and contributing to their newsletter.

I am a big fan of tennis, and Strongman events, am a keen skier and love wild swimming.

I'm looking forward to meeting many of our WRAC ladies and being involved in all of the event production, I've heard great things about previous Grand Reunions so that will be an exciting challenge!



Hailing: Cathy Munro Central Area Co-ordinator

Cathy has returned to the newly defined Central Area as the Area Coordinator. Previously, she served as the East Midlands Area Coordinator but stepped down due to family, work, and other commitments. With the Areas redefined and no replacement found, Cathy is back and answered some questions for us



Where are you from?

Since leaving the Regular Army after 25 years, I found a Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) post just ten minutes from home. I live in Peterborough with my wife Nikki, a physiotherapist, and our three spaniels: Edwina (Eddie), Loki, and Indiana (Bones).

Where did you grow up?

I spent my early years in Germany, attending military schools, before returning to the UK when my dad's military career ended. We settled in Darlington, where I attended college before joining the Army.

What is your military pedigree?

I come from a military family. My mom and aunt were in the WRAC, my dad was in the Parachute Regiment and Royal Signals, and many uncles served in Scottish Regiments. Nothing makes me prouder than marching beside my uncle on Remembrance Sunday.

Why did you join the Army?

I initially joined the TA as a Data Telegraphist to pay for college. Family circumstances changed, and I then joined the Army as a WRAC PTI, embarking on an adventure much like my parents did.

What did you do?

I served as a WRAC PTI for seven years and then as an AGC PTI until my twelve-year point, when I transferred to a clerk role.

What are the highlights of your career?

Two major highlights stand out. First, when the gay ban was lifted in the Army, allowing me to fully embrace my identity. Second, serving as the UK Military Liaison Officer to the UN in Korea, where I met world leaders and immersed myself in a new culture.

Tell us about something you would rather forget.

The time before the gay ban was lifted was awful. The open discrimination was painful, and I consider myself lucky to have survived and had a full military career.

What do you bring to the role of Area Coordinator?

I bring enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and skills in media, branding, and marketing. I use my passion for photography and graphic design to connect with and support fellow veterans.

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

Not really. I've had to fight hard for equal footing in the military and veteran community. I'm determined to improve the Female Veteran World and ensure our stories are told. I might not always get it right, but I always try.

What would be your motto if you had one?

"The worst that can happen is that you give up."

Do you still work or volunteer?

I'm still serving as an FTRS RAWO in Peterborough and running an online business, which I plan to pursue full-time after leaving the services. I also volunteer for various veteran communities and charities, using my business resources to support them.

Company's coming – what are you cooking?

An Asian-UK fusion dish, like Beef Bulgogi with hot mustard mash and steamed cabbage. My wife and I love cooking together, especially with produce from our allotment.

Which three famous people are you inviting over?

Hazel O'Connor, the Dalai Lama, and my younger self. I'd tell my younger self to be fearless and trust that everything happens for a reason.

What would people be most surprised to learn about you?

Despite my confident exterior, I'm incredibly nervous in large crowds.



Farewell to: Isabel McCord

When Sue Westlake was Vice President and asked me to stand for election as a trustee, I was in two minds about whether to do it. But then I remembered sitting in the Major Grants Committee Meetings (MGCM) as a young captain and realizing how much difference a grant made to those former members of the ATS and WRAC who needed and appreciated our help. I seem to remember we provided a lot of TVs, but only black-and-white ones. Later, when the WRAC had been disbanded, I sat on the committee with Colonel Eleanor Bowles, who was Commandant at the WRAC College when I was a young instructor there. She had a big influence on my early career. She, like Sue, was a great supporter of the Association, and it was their approach that persuaded me to become a trustee.



I have always enjoyed getting things done and trying to make a difference to people, as well as working in a team. So, when the opportunity to take on the Hon Treasurer role came up, I thought, why not give it a go, even though my only encounter with accounts was many years ago running army women's sports accounts with a calculator to hand. Fortunately, I had the support of Gabi Shanahan, who I had known for many years, and she was hugely adept at keeping the finances in order. When she retired, I then worked closely with Julia Doig, who was equally competent. During my time as Hon Treasurer, trustees agreed we needed active management of our large portfolio of investments, so we held a "beauty parade" to select an investment manager. In doing this, I was able to use some of the program management experience I had gained during my last tour in the Army, working in the Armed Forces Pay and Personnel Agency, as well as calling on Helen Merrington-Rust's wealth of investment management experience.

Although I enjoyed the Hon Treasurer role, what I wanted was to be more involved in the Benevolent Fund, where I felt we make a real difference in our veterans' lives. I saw it as a good fit with my War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation tribunal member role, where I review evidence to decide whether compensation should be awarded and, if so, how much. Also, through this work, I gained a working knowledge of DWP benefits. When Audrey Smith retired as chairman of the MGCM, I was delighted to be appointed as her successor. It was a baptism of fire, as very shortly after taking over, Gabi went on long-term sick leave, so I had to take on her role as Ben Fund Sec as well. That time provided me with the opportunity to see what changes needed to be made to our

grant-giving criteria, and once Julie Wilks joined the Benevolent Fund team, we made those changes, which allowed us to provide more help to our veterans. I have always looked at the way I do things or am involved in to see if I can make improvements. Working closely with Julie provided that opportunity. I



was delighted when we linked up with the Veterans Charity to offer immediate help to our veterans rather than them having to wait for the casework to be done through other service charities, which understandably all take time.

I was sorry to leave the Benevolent Fund last year, as I had enjoyed my role immensely, and to retire as a trustee in July this year. I will still be involved, as I have been asked to become a Life VP. I will not be short of "retirement activities," as I will continue with my tribunal work and as chairman of my parish council, a role I have held since June last year.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has supported me in my time as Hon Treasurer and Chairman of the MGCM, and particularly to Gabi, Julia, and Julie for their professionalism and friendship.

Farewell to: Tanya-Jayne Park

My first week working for the Association was Grand Reunion Week 2012 in Bristol. To say it was a 'baptism of fire' would be clichéd but also immensely true!

Since then, I have worked with and met so many amazing women, plus a few odd ones (you know who you are!). I won't name any names, as to do so, and include everyone, would take up the rest of this edition of Lioness.



Over the twelve years I worked for the Association, I can honestly say that each day has been different, and most of them have been fun, too.

Highlights will include every single Grand Reunion, they've all been such great fun, exhausting at times for sure. On more than one occasion, I've been surprised we haven't managed to drink the hotels out of gin or prosecco.

Other highlights include editing the 100 Wonderful Women book; helping to organise the Centenary events; and meeting the Queen; Princess Anne and Sophie, the Countess of Wessex (as she was then).

Before working for the Association I had almost zero knowledge of women in the armed forces and the crucial & valuable work of the QMAAC, ATS & WRAC which has meant that modern-day women can serve in the British Army on an equal footing to their male counterparts.

I am so very proud to have been a very small part of the WRAC Association's history. I shall miss you all, even the odd ones, but who knows I may just turn up at a future Grand Reunion and help to drink the bars dry!



"THE LADY IN GREEN" Farewell to: Sharon Baker-Joyce National Standard Bearer



Ladies and fellow Lionesses,

I think a lot of you know that with a sad and heavy heart, I have had to retire from being the WRAC Association Standard Bearer.

At the Grand Reunion in 2012, I was asked to parade the standard as Maureen Dealy, the then-current standard bearer, was unwell. Two days later, I was asked if I would take on the position permanently.

I have had some amazing times, some very happy and some rather sad, which was part of the job description when accepting the position. I had very big shoes to fill after Maureen. One of my first duties was, sadly, at Maureen's funeral.

I must give a big thank you to Ali Brown. During her time as Vice President of the Association, Ali was proactive in ensuring the standard was paraded at many high-profile events and gave me the freedom to make the standard visible.

This included all the Armed Forces Day parades, the Freedom of Guildford and Remembrance parades, VE Day and VJ Day in London (2015), and our parades and services for the ATS and WRAC at the NMA over the years, especially our Grand Reunion parades where you have been able to join me on parade.

If asked if any events stand out, there are many, but if I were to choose, there would be four:

First: Meeting Her Late Majesty in 2017 to commemorate "100 Years of Women in Service."

Second: Remembrance Sunday at the Royal Albert Hall in 2017 (I believe it was the first time the standard was on parade and I had the honour to begin the parade with the RN, ourselves, and the QARANC standards).

Third: Our 70 years of the WRAC celebration in 2019 at the Royal Albert Hall. The atmosphere of the RAH is amazing; the history and the grandeur are something I will never forget.

Fourth: In 2018, the RBL GP90 to Ypres to parade from the Menin Gate into the town. Over 950 standards were parading. The biggest and most moving memory is when the parade turned right into the main street, and looking at the standards in front of me all swaying left and right as we marched down the street brought tears to my eyes and still does when I talk about it.

Ladies, it has been an honour and pleasure to represent the WRAC Association and a big thank you for all your support. I shall miss it treble, but I have to be sensible. With my recent health issues, I feel now is the right time to pass the standard over.

There is one more lady I need to thank: Melody, my wife, who has supported me all these years come rain or shine, short and long parades, and has been my "batwoman." Thank you, Mel.

People asked me how they would recognize me when on parade. Easy: look for "The Lady in Green," and it has stuck!

I have passed the standard into the capable hands of Heather Bradbury. Heather, she is all yours. Keep her safe, enjoy, and good luck.



Features

From Major to Mayor

Major (Retd) Sallie Barker's Inspiring Journey from the WRAC to Guildford's Mayor.

The WRAC's connection to Guildford is a long and proud one. Our spiritual home where we enjoy the Freedom of the Borough, we are represented each year for Remembrance in November and all year round by the obelisks and plaques which recall our strong presence. In this diamond jubilee year of the Queen Elizabeth Barracks we have yet another reason to take pride in Guildford as one of our own, Major (Retd) Sallie Barker has been made Mayor of Guildford. Life Vice President Col (Retd) Audrey Smith and CEO Paula Rogers attended her Mayor Making. Mayor Sallie tells us about her path from bottle green to scarlet.

I joined the Territorial Army in 1980, when a fellow teacher at a school in North Wales introduced me to the concept of the TA and the RAOC. Little did I know when I went to Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford for my basic training that 8 years later I would be moving to Guildford to live permanently, or that 36 years later I would end up being Mayor!

I don't remember much about my time in the WRAC and those two weeks' basic training, but I do remember spending a lot of time polishing my boots! The women I trained with were a friendly bunch, but the time passed in a blur of learning new skills before it was time to go onto officer training with the RAOC. I ended my army career about 20 years later as a Major in the RLC.

Following my retirement in 2015, from a career in sports' administration, I decided to put something back into my community, hoping to put my skills and knowledge into good effect, and so went into local politics. On my second attempt to become a Guildford Borough Councillor, I was elected in 2022 and became Deputy Mayor that same year (as no-one else wanted to take on the role!). On the 8th May this year I had the great honour of being elected Mayor of Guildford for 2024/25.

There have been Mayors of Guildford since 1362 and on looking at the records, I am the 19th female Mayor (women only started to become Mayors in the 1970s!) and the first Barker.

As Mayor, my role is to represent the Council at Official functions (e.g. our recent Commemoration of D-Day), open community events and happenings, raise funds for local charities and chair Council meetings.

During my Mayoral year, I am looking to support as many local charities as possible and aim to attend local fundraising events that support the differing areas of need within the borough, as well as organising 5 fundraising events for small, local charities where a little bit of money will have a great impact and go a long way. I have met hundreds of people who are working hard to help others by volunteering their time and skills and it has been both humbling and exciting.

Later this year I will be attending the WRAC Association commemoration of 50 years of the Guildford pub bombings, where two serving WRAC soldiers sadly died. As a member of the WRAC Association I will be honoured to commemorate this tragic event and lead the Civic procession.



*Find out how you can
join us in Guildford this
October on page 46.*

The WRAC Thrive at Seventy Five



As the WRAC celebrated our 75th anniversary, Major (Retd) Imogen Corrigan was at Guildford Cathedral reporting on the poignant ceremony and celebration for former members of the Women's Royal Army Corps.

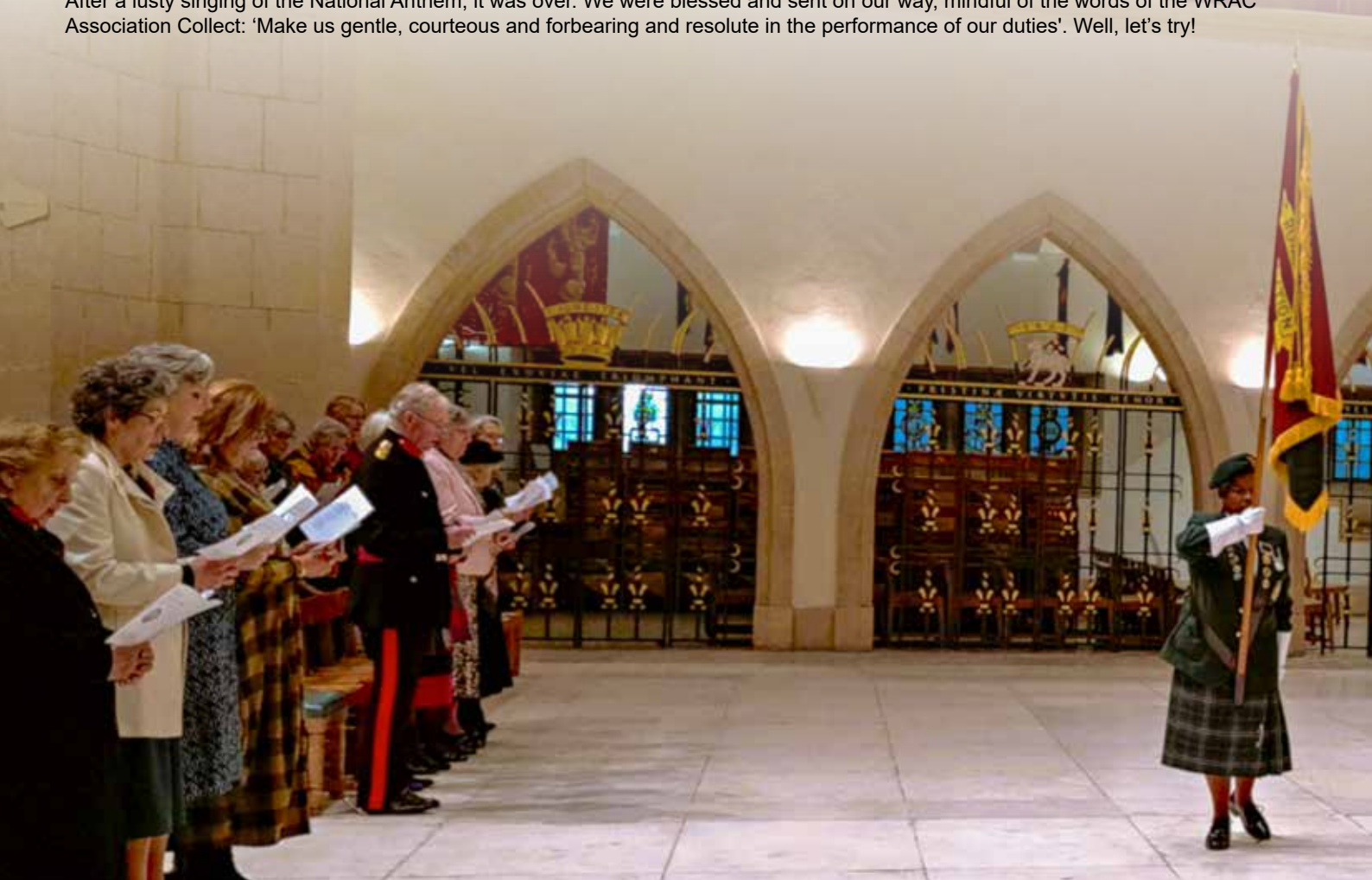
The 1st of February 2024 was the 75th anniversary of the formation of the WRAC, a day on which my mother (who was ATS) told me that in her unit, at least, they all had to swear the Oath of Allegiance again, something about which she was always slightly indignant! Her loyalty was not in doubt and nor was that of the thousands and thousands of women who served in the WRAC over the following 43 years and 2 months, before the Corps was disbanded on 6 April 1992. So much had been achieved by women in the Armed Forces in that time and although young women now do extraordinary things, (not least becoming Deputy Chief of the General Staff), the achievements of the WRAC should never be forgotten. It was not just those outstanding accomplishments, but also the day-to-day contribution of individual women, their good cheer, hard graft, determination, sisterhood and often exasperation, that we gathered to celebrate.

It was great to see over a hundred women of all ranks and trades gathered in Guildford Cathedral's Seasons Café for a wonderful tea - we probably would not need to eat for a week! There is always that 'will I know anyone' moment which was overcome immediately (as it always is) by the simple act that we all have something in common that no one else can now share. The room was full of reunions, new meetings and a lot of laughter. And cake.

Lt Col (Retd) Rowena Naile talked to us about the Corps and Association, before welcoming guests such as the Deputy Mayor (now Mayor), Councillor Sallie Barker MBE, who is ex-WRAC TA, and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Brigadier Paul Evans OBE DL. Most importantly Rowena gave well-deserved thanks to the outgoing National Standard Bearer, Sharon Baker-Joyce, who has served in that post since 2012. The moment at the end of Evensong in the Cathedral, when she handed the Standard over to Elaine Osborne, was extremely poignant, and certainly the end of an era. There was no great fuss, just acknowledgement of something being conducted with precision and dignity; a great representation of the Corps.

Having talked our heads off in the Café we wandered into the silent loftiness of the Cathedral, many of us remembering other occasions there; the service before the Final Parade of the WRAC in front of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother sticks in my mind - a thousand women on parade with almost no rehearsal! Absent friends were spoken of between groups of new friends and whilst we settled into the pews the organist played 'Greensleeves'.

It was the Cathedral's usual choral Evensong service but adapted for us. Lessons were read by Lt Col (Retd) Rowena Naile and Col (Retd) Audrey Smith, whilst the Honorary Chaplain to the WRAC Association, the Reverend Susan Wing, led the intercessions. After a lusty singing of the National Anthem, it was over. We were blessed and sent on our way, mindful of the words of the WRAC Association Collect: 'Make us gentle, courteous and forbearing and resolute in the performance of our duties'. Well, let's try!





Unforgettable Moments: Founder's Day at Royal Hospital Chelsea



Andie Ford recounts her experience of Oak Apple Day, watching our in-pensioners proudly parade.

How lucky was I, to attend Founder's Day in the prestigious grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea?! I had applied over 3 years for a ticket and was thrilled when I received the good news that I would be there to watch the Parade this year. I served from 1975 to 1988 as WRAC Provost and, despite the normal ribbing that RMP received, I soon became part of the WRAC Association group.

Founder's Day, the first Thursday after 29th May every year is celebrated to remember King Charles II, who implemented his idea for a home or hospice for old soldiers, which was completed in 1692, when the first Chelsea Pensioners were admitted. The Oak leaf worn by the Pensioners symbolises Charles II, when he took refuge in an oak tree to avoid capture after the Battle of Worcester in 1651 by Parliamentary pursuers.

It felt such a privilege to receive the formal invitation and walk through the gates on the day to meet fellow veterans. The glorious sunny day made it even more special. Everyone had time to take in the impressive buildings, manicured lawns and views before and after the parade. The reviewing officer was Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal. It was an honour to be one of the 3,000 guests. I went on my own (there's no plus 1 on the invitation) and did not know anyone. There was no need to worry though. Thirty members of the Association soon got together, laughing and exchanging the banter we so enjoyed when we served.





The WRAC Association guests were seated together which meant that we could reminisce about people, and various postings at home and abroad. Just as you would imagine, every part of the parade ran to the exact timings on the programme. The bands, trumpeters and pipers were amazing. However, the stars of the day were the Chelsea Pensioners in their scarlet tunics. Those able to march formed four Guards in Figure Court whilst the remainder occupied seats around the Parade Ground. The Sovereign's Mace (presented by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in 2002 to mark her Golden Jubilee) was then marched onto parade with a General Salute. Unlike Army Regiments, The Royal Hospital has no Colour, Standard or Guidon so the Mace is afforded the same ceremonial honour.

Princess Anne took the time to speak to every Pensioner on parade, especially a contingent who had served in the Second World War and were able to parade. The day also coincided with the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings so it was especially poignant. Princess Anne gave a wonderful moving address with a humorous nod to those wearing the LS&GC medal that it was for "undetected crime"! Once the Parade was dismissed, we mingled with the Chelsea Pensioners and other guests, and enjoyed the exciting atmosphere of the post-parade celebrations. Many photographs and smiley faces!

So, if you've ever thought about applying for a ticket to any Association event, then do it. You could be lucky like I was and have a wonderful day out, knowing the privilege of attending an historic day and being proud of your Veteran status. Attending Founder's Day will be forever memorable for me, not just for the Parade but for the camaraderie of everyone there. I have lifelong memories now and I hope you enjoy the photographs. *Email: info@wraca.org.uk to get your name into next year's ballot.*

Armed Forces Day: From Belfast to Bedford



Sat 22nd June saw the start of Armed Forces Week, culminating in Armed Forces Day the following Saturday. Fantastic representation from WRAC Association members across the UK ensured our visibility continues to rise, and as Janette Deans crossed the Irish Sea to this year's host city, she sent this report.

If you had told those of us serving in the 1980s and 90s that we would be holding Armed Forces Day in Belfast in the millennium, one's sanity would have come into question. However folks, as you know that is exactly what happened this year and not for the first time. How times change for the better! I was fortunate to have the company of Moira Thom and met up with Sylvia Connachan and Jill Hope from Ulster branch. It was an early start with a drumhead service at 0930 and Irish Guards in attendance. The service had to be followed by a brew so a mere 25 mins waiting in the queue saw us

fortified and ready for the next event; the Red Arrows. It was a wonderful display over the water at Newtownabbey, but we did too much 'oooing' and 'aaaing' to take photos. We then had lots of stands to visit, music and song to listen to and Highland dancing. Yes really! Not quite sure how that happened.

Then a bit of confusion. Beating of the Retreat was scheduled for 1630 however it took place at 1530 so we missed it. We are presuming that they were keen to get to the pub!

It was such a good day and a pleasure to meet both Sylvia and Jill. I look forward to another visit across the Irish Sea to meet up with our fellow veterans. In the meantime we are looking forward to Sylvia joining us for our annual meeting in Perth.



Thanks Janette – it's great to hear that veterans were able to stand proudly together in Northern Ireland. Over on the mainland, more members were attending their local AFD events, including Michelle Patterson and Christine Hayman whose reports follow.

Lincolnshire Wolds and Coast Branch in Cleethorpes.



Shropshire Branch proudly received invitations to attend Armed Forces Day events in both Shrewsbury Castle on Saturday, June 29, and MOD Donnington Field on Sunday, June 30, in our WRAC Association Marquee.

Both events were supported by a dedicated roster of our members, who helped manage the Tombola. Our ladies generously donated a variety of prizes, and consolation prizes ensured no-one left empty-handed. These efforts raised £300 for our branch fund - well done, ladies!

The events were a tremendous success, bringing together veterans of all ages and genders, as well as members of the civilian and serving communities. Shropshire Branch stood proudly alongside our Armed Forces, Civil Police, and Emergency Response Services, while also celebrating the future of our Armed Forces, the Cadet Force. We are thrilled to have been invited back for next year's event on June 28 in Shrewsbury. Let the Tombola prizes begin!

Michelle Patterson



My husband Peter and I, volunteers for Bedfordshire SSAFA, recently found ourselves part of the newly amalgamated Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire team. This fortunate change allowed us to attend the Armed Forces Weekend at St Neots on June 22nd and 23rd, and later at Cambridge on June 29th and Bedford on June 30th.

We arrived bright and early at St Neots, setting up our gazebo and preparing for the many visitors. We handed out goodies to children and provided information leaflets, notebooks, and pens for adults. Generosity was abundant at all the venues. On Saturday, we were honoured by visits from the Lord Lieutenant of Northampton and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of St Neots. They were keenly interested in SSAFA's work, especially after signing the Armed Forces Covenant Agreement.

Despite only volunteering with SSAFA for five years, Peter and I find immense satisfaction in helping veterans in need. At Armed Forces Day events we encountered genuine requests for assistance and connected those in need with caseworkers. Knowing we've made a difference makes all our efforts worthwhile.

Christine Hayman

Your pictures from around the country



Gloucester



Birmingham, Manchester and Tamworth Branches at the National Memorial Arboretum



Shropshire



Gosport



Plymouth

WRAC Sisters and Bristolian Blisters

The Lionesses Do It Again! From Start to Finish, the Lionesses Running Team Shines.

Members of the Lionesses Running Team headed for Bristol in May to take part in the 10k and this time, we were marking the 75th anniversary of the formation of the WRAC.

On Saturday evening, we gathered in the bar for the 'T-shirt meeting', where Wendy Hooton gave us our t-shirts and instructions about where to be, and when. She described the location for our 'before' photo and then told us about her correspondence with Bristol City Council about the poor condition of Queen Victoria's statue, where we would pose for our 'after' photo. Long story short, it got cleaned! Wendy is soooo powerful!

At the 'T-shirt meeting' we bought raffle tickets and some very useful luggage tags, which had been made by Kate Prewer and raised £104. There were some notable absentees this time. Our team whippet, Rowena Naile took the extraordinary decision to fall off her bike and break her arm only two days before the run, whilst our photographers Heather and Rosie, were hit by illness.



As we headed towards the start line on Sunday, there was excitement in the ranks. Our very own Sandy Cawley was to sound the bell for the start of the Pink Wave because she was the oldest woman in the race at 83. If Sandy can do 10k, so can we. We formed a group to cross the starting line together and got a shout-out on the Tannoy. It was awesome, and the watching crowds got behind us.

"We seem to have a habit of attracting the hottest day of the year for our annual jog" said Babs Anderson "so it was a very warm day. The serious work started, and hearts were pumping, as we struggled at times on the cobbles. In the meantime, our amazing wheelchair team whisked Pip Flegel along and they soon disappeared into the distance".

At the 8k mark, we had to climb quite a hill and our hearts were pumping. Meanwhile, the elite runners were already heading away with their medals and shouting encouragement to us slower competitors. As we trudged along the finishing straight, we could see and hear our Lionesses urging us on. We might have been overtaken by a blow-up turkey and his farmyard friends, but we weren't disheartened.

When your name is shouted over the tannoy, it can cause you to break into a rather awkward trot and you look a bit like a pantomime horse, but you run over the line anyway, to get that medal, and that's another 10k completed. First home this year was Betty Gash, who sprinted over the line in 52 minutes. As for the rest of us, it doesn't matter if we got there in under an hour or under two hours, we all made it safely and without injury.

Several other people needed some serious medical attention and sadly, we have heard that a 26-year-old man died. One of our Lioness team, Jill Martin's daughter Vicky, was able to jump in and help with one young man and then took on triage duties with the St John Ambulance, after having run the 10k with us. Vicky happens to be a nurse.

As always, Wendy had arranged a post-run celebration meal, and the Lionesses were in a buoyant mood. The rowdy raffle raised £281.50, which is included in the incredible total of over £8500! Huge thanks must go to Wendy 'Hoots' Hooton and her little band of helpers, for getting us all organised again, to do something which is way outside our comfort zone.

Pip's Perspective

When I joined The WRAC Association, I never dreamt I would be invited to so many events and activities, including taking part in the Manchester, Worcester and now, Bristol 10k's, in a wheelchair recounts Pip, but, thanks to Wendy Hooton, 10k organiser extraordinaire and my 5 sponsored, rotating, Lioness pushers, Ali Brown, Mary Woollard, Karen Radford, Heather Bradbury and Wendy Summerell-Wheeldon, I was at the starting line again.

They were all Lionesses of a certain age, with fixed smiles, red cheeks and one or two blisters, and they were determined to get me, my wheelchair and themselves across that finishing line in record time.

1 hour 32 minutes and 15 seconds was the chip time for the team, whilst, leading from the front, I was recorded as 2 hours 5 minutes and 34 seconds Ha Ha! We can't work out how I came in 33 minutes after my pushing team.



I'm so proud of being part of a team with an unbreakable bond. We Were In It Together!!!!

Why not join us in Kings Lynn on 4 May 2025?



A PERSONAL THANK YOU! by Wendy Hooton

I would like to thank the following for their continued support for this event.

- Helen Davies - Recce 2 I/C • Pat Rosewell - Raffle Queen • Babs Anderson - Sponsor Form Designer
- Nell Fray - T-shirt Labeller • Dawn Mackender - I/C Banner for Supporters
- Heather Gaughan & Rosie Garrison - Photographers

I would also like to thank Kate Prewer for making the wonderful luggage tags for us to sell this year.

Special thanks must go to Christina Raddon from Bristol City Council. Christina got onto my case and arranged for the Queen Victoria statue to be cleaned before our arrival so we could have a group photo there. An amazing effort AND I had the pleasure of speaking to the chaps who cleaned her and repaired both the orb and her hand.

My final thanks to all our runners, walkers, the wheelchair team, supporters and the WRAC Association for their support and for providing our T-shirts each year. Special thanks to everyone for taking such excellent photos this year in the absence of our official photographers Heather & Rosie.

Last but not least all the fabulous people who fundraised for us, sponsored us and gave donations...you are all amazing.

THANK YOU ALL SO VERY MUCH!
WE'RE DOING IT ALL AGAIN NEXT YEAR IN KINGS LYNN...
Sunday 4th May 2025
SEE YOU THERE

Making our marquee

Your Association is now the proud owner of four fabulous marquees providing great visibility and shelter in one package. Two are being held in HQ, one is with Wendy Hooton in Bury St. Edmunds, whilst the other is in Shropshire with Michelle Patterson who came up with the idea to purchase them. Making its debut at the Shrewsbury Armed Forces Football Match in March, Michelle describes the impact it had.

The WRAC Association Shropshire branch is thrilled to announce the purchase of a stunning new marquee, designed to proudly advertise our incredible Association to everyone. This vibrant addition made its debut at the Shrewsbury Armed Forces Football Match on March 23, 2024, where it garnered significant attention and admiration.

One of the highlights of the event was a visit from Councillor Nellans, former OC 4 Merc, whose wife is an ex-WRAC member. He expressed his surprise and delight, saying, "I never knew you existed." This kind of feedback is exactly why we are so excited about our new marquee—it's already helping to raise awareness about our Association.

The debut event proved to be a tremendous success. We attracted a lot of interest and managed to recruit three new members on the spot. Following the event, the marquee photo circulated widely, bringing in an additional three new members. The enthusiasm



and support have been overwhelming, and the Association is grateful for the positive response.

For those interested in borrowing the marquee for events, please contact info@wraca.org.uk. We look forward to continuing to spread the word about the Association and welcoming more members into our community.



Honouring Heroes: The D-Day Beacon Parade

By Mandy Fenwick Proud Participant and Veteran



I recently had the privilege of participating in the D-Day Beacon Parade in my hometown of Ottery St Mary. This meaningful event was meticulously organised by the Carnival and Tar Barrel Committees in collaboration with the Veterans Society.

One of the highlights of the parade was the honour bestowed upon the Veterans, who were invited to carry the iconic Tar Barrel from the town council office to Millennium Green, where the Beacon was lit. For those unfamiliar, the Flaming Tar Barrel

Festival is a cherished tradition in Ottery St Mary, rich in history and significance. You can find extensive information about this vibrant annual event with a simple Google search.

Carrying the Tar Barrel was no easy feat—it was incredibly heavy, and each Veteran took their turn bearing its weight. Despite the challenge, I embraced it wholeheartedly as my tribute to our D-Day Heroes and our Association.



The experience was profoundly moving and unforgettable. As we marched, I felt a deep sense of camaraderie and pride. This act of remembrance serves as a powerful reminder that the bravery and sacrifices of our Heroes will never be forgotten.



Rest in peace to all those who fought for our freedom.

Anyone for a cucumber sandwich?



Eight members of the Association were invited to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party as a 'thank you' for going above and beyond for us over the last year. Organising Remembrance services, supporting individual members and starting up a new branch, our member's great efforts are greatly appreciated. Moira Thom picked out her outfit and tells us about her experience.

On the day of the event, the weather was ideal. Entering the gates and walking to the gardens was surreal. The men looked brilliant and the ladies were in beautiful bright outfits, all smiling, talking to people both known and never met before, such a happy, exciting atmosphere.

The map helped us navigate around the gardens and lake. We eventually met up and got a seat while we ate the delicious afternoon tea but moved on with so much to see. Celebrities mingled with the guests, ones I could name, Anita Harris, Bonnie Langford, Tony Stamp, and many, many more.

At 3.00 pm Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, and Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence arrived on the Terrace Steps. We stood to attention while the National Anthem was played. They met and spoke to the veterans for longer than noted on the programme, resulting in the Irish Guards band being behind schedule in Beating Retreat. We were all happy to linger and cherish the afternoon as long as possible.



We thank those in the WRAC Association for nominating us and the Not Forgotten Association for an impeccably planned event. Never to be forgotten.



TAKE THE GARDEN PARTY QUIZ

The Buckingham Palace Garden Party was a great opportunity to do some celebrity watching, but Sandy Warne went one better. Armed with her camera phone and some brass neck she spotted some very famous faces enjoying the Lioness magazine.

But how many can you name? Each photo has a clue attached, and you'll find the answers on page 44.



Number One: Did the Lioness receive a Lukewarm reception?
It doesn't look like it!



Number Three: Can you name this bird who flocked to join
the party?



Number Two: Is that a bow tie? Maybe not, but this singer
was very well turned out nonetheless





Number Five: This chap is wide awake and clearly finding the magazine en pointe



Number Nine: We felt we'd seen her face before, or heard her voice – but do you know her name?



Number Six: Three Cheers for this garden party – he looks stoked to be there!



Number Ten: This pair are engrossed in the Lioness, which makes a change from watching the TV

Number Seven: This model citizen is more used to being in the magazines than reading them



Number Eight: What's on p51? I'll bet you a tenner it's the North West branch news



Number Eleven: We can see this Gentleman's Manner's Totally Vivacious – but can you name him?

Preserving Her Stories: WRAC Veterans Share Their Legacy



Martin Bisiker highlights how Legasee Educational Trust, in collaboration with the WRAC and AGC Museum, is capturing the unique experiences of WRAC veterans to inspire and educate future generations.

Legasee Educational Trust has joined forces with the WRAC Association and the Adjutant General's Corps (AGC) Museum to help shine a light on the changing role of women in

the British Army. Thanks to a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the charity's oral history project aims to capture and preserve the unique experiences of WRAC veterans, ensuring that your voices and stories are remembered and celebrated for years to come.

Martin Bisiker is the Founder of Legasee and a regional adviser for the Oral History Society. He believes passionately in the importance of creating a record of recent British military history through the accounts of people there. Over 700 interviews with British military veterans already exist in the Legasee Video Archive (legasee.org.uk) and this project is an opportunity to ensure the female voice is better represented.

Legasee has been reaching out to the WRAC community in the last few months. A wide spectrum of service experiences has been shared through phone calls and conversations, including humorous anecdotes, moments of heartache, tough personal decisions, and extraordinary opportunities encountered as Army personnel. The charity is very grateful to the WRAC veterans who have already agreed to have their account filmed. The filmed interviews will be added to the video archive in the next few months, as part of Legasee's commitment to educate and inform.

But the charity is keen to speak to as many veterans as possible. Everyone's individual story is valuable and worth sharing – your standout memories, your once-in-a-lifetime experiences, the realisation of your dreams, as well as the challenges and disappointments. Every account shared with Legasee will help to inform and enrich the research base from which the AGC museum exhibition and educational resources will be created.

Currently, the plan is to film just 30 WRAC veteran interviews, and through those films to capture as much of the richness and breadth of the WRAC experience as possible. With that limit in mind, Legasee is particularly keen to hear from veterans who served in the early days of the WRAC (the 1950s or 1960s), in some of the smaller trades (such as hairdressing), those who were based in Benbecula or Shoeburyness, or who served as vehicle mechanics or electricians.



The wide range of knowledge and experience within the WRAC years, 1949-1992, is rarely heard; this project provides an opportunity to address that. The project also seeks to inspire future generations by showcasing the incredible resilience, bravery, and camaraderie of you, the WRAC veterans, that has been evident in every account that has been shared with the project so far. Legasee is profoundly grateful for the opportunity to document and share your powerful stories.

If you want to get involved or find out more, please email trailblazers@legasee.org.uk or call Martin on 07881 814707.

Follow Legasee Educational Trust on Facebook and Instagram to see regular updates on the project and their wider work.



Lionesses Roar to Life: A Day of Cricket at Chatsworth

From a Bar Bet to a Peak District Showdown: Jan Rees and Lynn Hines commentate on 'The Lionesses vs. Chatsworth', an Unforgettable Cricket Match. First in to bat, Jan.

Normally, after attending a WRAC Association event, Sunday afternoons are spent relaxing and reminiscing about the good times, meeting up with old friends, and making new ones. This time it was different I thought. I only had nine months to get a Veteran's cricket team together to play against the Chatsworth Ladies. The venue would be the grounds of Chatsworth House on Saturday, 29th June 2024.

Recruiting players initially was very promising; I had around 30 names, but only a handful had played cricket before. Most had played Rounders, and that was over 40 years ago! Numbers slowly dwindled as reality kicked in, and only time would tell what our bodies would allow us to do, however, the competitiveness was still there. With only three weeks to go, we were down to twenty players.

It was clear from the start that Elaine Smith (Wolfie) and Phyll Mattinson would have to play an important role as both were keen cricket supporters who had knowledge and understanding of the rules and tactics. They were nominated as captain and vice-captain. We had a WhatsApp group so everyone could be advised on kit, training, and of course, we had the compulsory military banter.

The only time we practiced as a team was the Friday night before the actual event. Then again on Saturday morning, we met up to sort out our bowling and batting order. Kym Lofthouse made sure we loosened up with a few stretching exercises before we took to the field.



Lynn takes over commentary

My throwaway remark to Wendy Hooton in the bar before last year's Worcester 10K about getting a veteran team together, resulted in 60 or so WRAC players and supporters arriving at Chatsworth House, in the stunning Peak District, to play a game of cricket against the resident Chatsworth Ladies' team.

I had promised my Chatsworth team a fun day of cricket and a great social event in the evening. As the obvious excitement built on the WRAC group chat, I knew they would not be disappointed. That the fixture coincided with Armed Forces Day made it extra special for, dare I say, the inaugural WRAC vs. Chatsworth T20.

I opened the ground early for a very keen WRAC side to practice and go over team selection. After brews and sausage sarnies, there was a quick team briefing before Chatsworth won the toss and elected to field first. To ensure everyone got a game, it was agreed that there would be no LBW, batters could not be out first ball, and batters would retire at 20 runs. The age range on the pitch spanned 60 years, Chatsworth's youngest being 17 and Beryl stepping out for the WRAC.



With perfect weather and the stunning backdrop of Chatsworth House, both teams were looking forward to a friendly, if not slightly competitive game. We decided each batter should have a small port livener (dispensed by Jo McCue) to settle the nerves as they walked out to the Corps March. This was wholly embraced by the Chatsworth side, who have suggested we carry on this practice for the rest of the season. By the tenth over, the WRAC had racked up a respectable 51 runs for 6, 21 of which had been scored by Wendy Summerell, who put in a steady performance before retiring. Jackie Wilton then came out meaning business but was spectacularly caught by a cracking shot that was destined for the boundary. The final score was 97 for 7 after some great fours from Max "Hey Up Cocker".

After superb halftime teas and something cold and fizzy, Chatsworth went out to chase down the formidable score. A tight field was set by Wolfie and Debs Sutton, and it soon became apparent that years of rounders were not wasted as all fielders gave 100% and kept the scoring to singles. By the tenth over, the run rate was identical with Chatsworth on 54 for 2. The middle-order batters then got in their stride, and by the nineteenth over, Chatsworth required just one more run to win. The final score was Chatsworth winning with 108 runs for 3. The umpires voted Phyll Mattinson as player of the match, scoring 9 runs and taking all 3 wickets, still protesting that she had never bowled before.

A truly great afternoon was followed by a buffet in the Cavendish Hall, where both teams enjoyed music, the raffle, and playing balloon keepy-uppy. Chatsworth very much looks forward to hosting again next year for the return match.

Wendy reviews the match

Thank you to everyone who took part. You proved that once a Lioness, always a Lioness. A special mention to Beryl Sidebotham, our oldest player at 77 years of age, and congratulations to Phyll Mattinson, who was player of the match.

A very special thank you to everyone who came to Chatsworth to support the girls and also to Cath Munroe and Phoenix Rising, who very kindly donated the trophy and engraved pens presented to all the players. A rematch is already planned for next year.



Historic Paths and Coastal Treks:

Marg Davies' 2024 Pembrokeshire Walk



Marg Davies takes us through her nostalgic 100-mile solo trek across historic South Pembrokeshire.

April 2024 saw my 11th solo walk, this time in South Pembrokeshire, the beautiful county of my birth, in aid of the WRAC Association and The VC Gallery (Pembroke Dock). The route I was taking was familiar as my family and I had walked much of the newly 'carved' Pembrokeshire Coastal Path in the late 60's and early 70's. South Pembrokeshire had been a much-defended area over the centuries thanks to its Atlantic coastline and fine natural deep-water harbour. I found over 30 historic sites to visit along my route from prehistoric promontory forts and mediaeval castles to Tudor and Napoleonic forts and blockhouses. The area was also strategically important during WWI as a Royal Naval Dockyard and during WW2 as the world's largest seaplane base protecting the Atlantic approach. I aimed to visit as many of the sites as I could over the eight days of my 100-mile walk. To read the full account please search for my online blog at: margdaviesswalks.blogspot.co.uk

These were some of the highlights of my walk.

Day 1 - Amroth to Tenby - my nemesis, herds of cattle, spoilt the first picture within minutes of starting my walk! It was also the day with the most ups & downs on a path I'd never walked before - now I know why!



Day 2 - Tenby to Manorbier - Denise almost got run over trying to take a photo of me with the WRAC and ATS badges on the refurbished gates to Tenby War Memorial. I walked past the Artillery Range to Manorbier Castle.

Day 3 - Manorbier to Bosherton - the weather took a turn for the worse. The rain made the coastal path hazardous as the exposed rocks became greasy and slippery so I chose to stick to the lanes. I love Stackpole Quay, it's one of my favourite wild swimming places when the tide is right. My walk took me through the NT Stackpole Estate previously owned by the Cawdor family. The Court has been demolished but the service buildings, gardens and fishponds remain. Little did I know over 60 years ago, when I was running around the cliffs above the ponds, that I was treading on a prehistoric promontory fort.



Day 4 - Bosherton to Castlemartin - was one of the easiest walks mostly on the Castlemartin Training Area & armoured vehicle range. The weather was blustery with some sunshine & a few light showers. The range is a great place for spying on a variety of seabirds as they nest in & around Stack Rocks. Apart from the promontory forts and enclosures on the cliff tops the best bag of the day was the original Merion Camp (not the present military camp), a prehistoric fortified enclosure. I never knew it existed before this walk.

Day 5 - Castlemartin to Angle - What a difference a day makes! Some of the walks should have been on the south-facing cliffs from Freshwater West, around the headland to Angle Bay and the mouth of Milford Haven. Gale Force 8, gusting to Storm Force 9, winds were blowing from the south so I decided that battling that kind of wind on an uneven, rocky & muddy coastal path would not be sensible. I re-routed along the coastal road whilst still attempting to access each fortified site. After battling for a couple of hours I met up with Denise at West Angle Beach and she drove me to the VC Gallery (my

other charity) at Pembroke Dock. I met with local veterans for their regular NAAFI Break where we were both given a very warm welcome by the assembled veterans, volunteers and staff. I also met up with the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales, Colonel James Phillips as we vied for photo opportunities with our T-shirts! Mine had 'Women's Royal Army Corps Association' "writ" large front & back (as I swapped from 1 shirt to another) whilst James was wearing a 'Fighting with Pride' T-shirt only "writ" large on the back! It was uplifting, especially after my early morning battering, meeting so many lovely people, some of whom had known my family. Steph Cross, the manager of the Gallery, gave us both a guided tour of the ex-Catholic Primary School. Multiple rooms are dedicated to creativity, repurposing materials & clothes, woodworking, photography, and art studios to name but a few. After filling my face with the delicious spread they'd provided we said our goodbyes & Denise drove me back to West Angle to continue my walk with renewed enthusiasm. I managed to stagger up the ridge to Chapel Bay Battery in the storm and then continue to my finish point at East Angle Bay in relative shelter.

Day 6 - East Angle Bay to Pembroke - the rain persisted but the wind was more manageable. My route featured Milford Haven oil jetties, an oil refinery and a power station together with glorious Pembrokeshire lanes, rich with wild flowers - I even saw my first orchids of the year. I passed Bullwell Bay where, when I was young, we used to land from our boat and go cockling at low tide. I came to a field full of cattle as miserable and fed up with the weather as I was; we chose to ignore each other. Next came squelchy mud baths requiring some nifty footwork and concentration as I tried to keep my balance till at last, I arrived at Pembroke Castle.

Day 7 - Pembroke to Carew via Pembroke Dock - glorious sunshine for my return to the town of my birth. So many childhood memories; I have never felt so close to my late parents and family as I did on this day. PD, as it is known locally, was built as a Royal Dockyard and military town with massive stone defences and additional brick-built barracks, the only Military Chapel and Military Cemetery in Wales; all of these were on my list to visit. I also wanted to pay my respects to my late parents and my late uncle (to whom I'd dedicated my walk) whose graves were in the civil cemetery. The day was a mixture of emotions; happy childhood memories, sadness at the decay evident in the town together with sorrow and pride remembering all those no longer with me.

Day 8 - Carew Castle to Lawrenny - back to miserable weather – heavy rain and gusty wind. I visited a prehistoric enclosure which turned out to be a nicely manicured part of someone's garden; Cresswell Castle, a site that I've passed many times but didn't realise was there. I was hoping to cross the river on stepping stones as it was low tide, however, the heavy rainfall decided otherwise, the river was in full flow and the stones were completely submerged. I took the road to get back onto the Landsker Borderland Trail for the final leg to Lawrenny Quay. I chose this as my finish point for no other reason than the delicious crab sandwiches at Lawrenny Quay Tearoom! It was only when I was doing my research that I discovered that it played a role in WW2 as a base for Supermarine Walrus seaplanes and a training centre, known as HMS Daedalus II, operated by the Fleet Air Arm.



My walk was completed in the worst weather that I have ever experienced. I normally come back from visits to Pembrokeshire walking sideways due to the amount of crab that I've eaten! This time I came home with webbed feet!!

*Note to self: "If there's another walk - choose somewhere drier!
Oh, and flat, with no mud, or cows!"*



*Congratulations Marg!
We hope you have dried out!*

Many Sisters at Three Sisters

The WRAC Association Summer Event.

Our 2024 Summer get-together saw members reunite at the Three Sisters Race Circuit thanks to the wonderful military charity Mission Motorsport. On the outskirts of Wigan, this brilliant circuit welcomed, thrilled and challenged us for a track day to remember.

The speed demons among us (you know who you are) raced around the track at a terrifying pace in cars capable of 200MPH, whilst those who requested a more leisurely pace still went fast enough to receive a Wigan facelift! In the safe hands of the experienced volunteer drivers we were able to enjoy multiple laps and unlimited returns as we raced, chased and lapped each other in Boxters, Caymans, 944s and even a 911 GT3 RS.

For those looking for a skills challenge "Lightening McQueen" offered a chance to complete the coned slalom in a split control stock car. With one person turning the steering wheel and the other controlling the pedals and gears the challenge was tricky enough, but to do the course again with the driver blindfolded and the pedal-pusher navigating - that required real trust and strong communication. Relying on other people instead of your own sight took nerves of steel and real talent – no surprise Pip aced this one!

The wonderful musical accompaniment came from a quintet from the Yorkshire Military Band. To fabulous medleys of Abba and Bond Themes, we chatted, ate lunch and watched those on the track, cheering for the drivers and clapping along to the WRAC Quick March.

A big "thank you" goes to Mark, Jill, Jonathan from Mission Motorsport and all their amazing volunteers, to Louise and her brilliant band, to Three Sisters for making us so welcome and of course to our thrill-seeking members who made the day so very special.

With all the helmets it might be hard to tell who is who, but the smiles are clear to see. A thrilling day was had by all, and if you weren't there, here's what you missed!

I had the best day ever, it was just amazing as were the drivers who kindly drove us in their cars. A day to remember with great company and many thrills. Loved every moment. Chris Collins



I had a Bazzing Time, and for the first time since I left the army I had a Spam Buttie. Pip Flegel



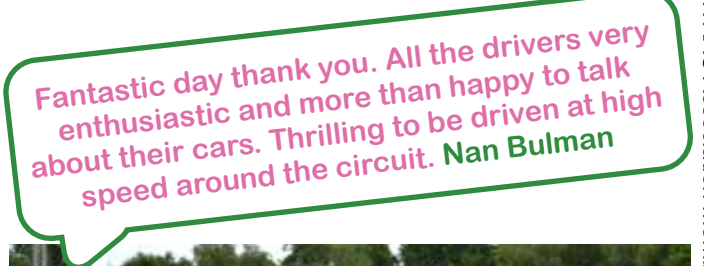


As a spectator the day was exciting and interesting, and it was lovely to listen to the Yorkshire military band.
Mal Fulton

I brought some ladies from the Wirral and Chester branches who had an immense time. We also met up a friend who has struggled massively both physically and emotionally for about 5 years. To see her smiling and getting fully involved absolutely made my year. She was like the fun-loving veteran of days gone by.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart, it is worth a million dollars to see my friend smile again. Sharon Broderick







The last Porsche I was driven in was the fastest I had experienced and so exhilarating! The speed and noise of the engines, and camaraderie between those attending and all those who were part of the day made it a totally amazing experience. **Sarah Chapman**



Thank you everyone for a wonderful day and all your hard work for making the day so special. **Jean Macdonald**



That was a squeaky bum moment!
Anonymous of Wirral Branch



A fabulous day, who knew I could drive better with a blindfold on!
Loved Lightning McQueen.
Chris Whitehead



Excellent company, amazing cars, loads of speed and fun and all while having The Yorkshire Military Band playing. Everyone I feel, came from there with stories that'll last them forever. It was a day out I never envisioned I'd ever be taking part in. **Lynda Armstrong**

The WRAC Association AGM

More than just a meeting



The Annual General meeting of the Woman's Royal Army Corps Association was held at the Victory Services Club, London, on Saturday 16th March 2024, and, as Helen Jephcote reports for us, is a gathering which is always welcomed with the anticipation of meeting old friends and making new ones alongside the business of the day.

The meeting started at 2pm promptly, although it was such a lively gathering that the noise of people talking all but drowned out Fiona Gardner calling us to order! It was a packed agenda with lots to get through, staff and constitution changes; a vote on reducing membership fees to zero; and the report from our Membership Council Chair, Rowena Naile (delivered via videocall from New Zealand no less). There were other members who joined us electronically too which increased the members attending allowing them an opportunity to take a full and active part in the meeting, asking questions, voting and enjoying the momentum of the meeting. They were, however, unable to take part in a rather splendid afternoon tea which followed in the Carisbrooke Hall where the chatter once again was deafening but Fiona managed to quiet the crowd for a few minutes to present two Certificates of Appreciation, to Pip Flegel and to Wendy Hooton (see pages 80 - 81). The applause for both was thunderous with well-deserved standing ovations. There were photo's, handshakes, hugs, and a few happy tears being wiped away from wet cheeks around the room as emotions were high. There was also a mention for Marg Davies for her many walks over the years and a thank you to the supporters of the fund-raising events.

Of course we made a real weekend of the occasion to get together. The day before, there was a talk held at the National Army Museum to hear tales from some of our members - by all accounts it was a good evening. Others, however, chose to take in the night life of London and attended a show whilst others settled for dinner and a chat at the bar. Then following the afternoon tea on Saturday the celebrations continued as most people made their way to the UJC for a surprise birthday party for Pip to celebrate her 70th birthday which had been organised by Dawn Hawker – a great time was had by all.



The best is yet to come, 2025 will be the next 'Grand Reunion' so keep your diaries free from 21-23 March 2025 as we head for Cardiff. There will of course be a frenzy of booking rooms, organising travel, party dresses being bought, and uniforms being prepared for parades. Start the bulling parties now ladies!

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

The WRAC Association Shop reopens in September with some fantastic new products as well as your old favourites. We've sourced the items most popularly requested by members, including new scarves, ties and blankets. We'd love to see some of these on display during Remembrance services this November as the scarves have been specifically designed to go with a warm winter coat.

NEW PRODUCTS WILL INCLUDE:

WOVEN SCARF WITH EMBROIDERED BADGES - PERFECT FOR THOSE CHILLY PARADES (pictured above).

CLIP ON TIE WITH EMBROIDERED BADGE - JUST IN TI(E)ME FOR CHRISTMAS!

ENAMEL SCARF PIN 4CM DIAMETER - PERFECT FOR PINNING YOUR SCARF DOWN

VISCOSE SCARF - 70CM X 170CM
LIGHTWEIGHT AND JUST WHAT OUR MEMBERS REQUESTED ON OUR FACEBOOK POLL (pictured below).



So if you'd like to place an order in time for Remembrance, Christmas or just for your next trip to the supermarket, have a look at our shop pages at wraca.org.uk or call the office to purchase by phone. We look forward to featuring photos of you wearing the new kit in the next Lioness.

IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY

Resources for Military Veterans

Michelle Patterson has a timely reminder of essential resources and support for veterans in need.

If you haven't yet applied for your free Military Veteran ID Card, now is the time to do it, at Gov.UK (HM Armed Forces Veteran Card) to take advantage of numerous benefits and discounts.



For veterans facing challenges, several support services are available:

- OP COURAGE – NHS Veterans' Mental Health Service. Go to nhs.uk and search 'OP Courage'
- Veterans' Gateway: Offers 24/7 advice and support. Visit veteransgateway.org.uk or call 0808 802 1212

For those needing some relaxation, here are some options:

- Lee Rigby Retreats: Four R&R mobile homes by the seaside for one week at £150.
- Heroes Retreat – Kent: Wheelchair-friendly accommodations.
- AGC: Two homes available, one in Devon and one in the Lake District.
- VW Campers – Wolves: Free to use; you just pay for the site and fuel.
- Battle Back Centre Lilleshall: Contact Jaqui, 01952 815681 to self-refer for a free 5-day residential Veteran MAC Course (RBL).

This is only a short list of the help and support available. Remember, you only need to have served one day to qualify for assistance. Don't suffer in silence—reach out for support.

For further assistance or to discuss your needs, you can contact Michelle Patterson via Shropshire Branch. With 22 years of full Colour Service and a decade into an FTRS contract, Michelle is welfare-trained and helps deliver mental health briefs to all regulars. She is here to help or direct you to the right resources.

Please, don't dismiss yourself. Reach out and get the support you deserve.

Help others and help yourself

Are you interested in being part of a study looking at a mental wellbeing mobile app for female veterans, for managing low mood and anxiety? A lack of research regarding female veterans has resulted in an inequity in the provision of support and services, but a new evaluation study aims to improve the acceptability and usability of a mobile phone app based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to support female Armed Forces veterans experiencing low mood or anxiety. Undertaking this evaluation provides an opportunity to contribute to the current limited research base and to help in overcoming barriers for female veterans in accessing support for a range of difficulties.



Participants will be sent a link to the app and asked to use the intervention. After use participants will then complete an online questionnaire. This evaluation study has received ethical approval from the University of Exeter. All participants' data will be anonymised, and you will be entered into a prize draw with the possibility of winning £100.

Are you eligible?

- Female veteran
- Not currently receiving treatment for a mental health difficulty

If you would like to take part in the study or find out more about it email Natalie at: nf330@exeter.ac.uk

Once you have received the link you will be invited to use the app for two weeks. You will then be asked to complete an online questionnaire which will take up to 30 minutes.

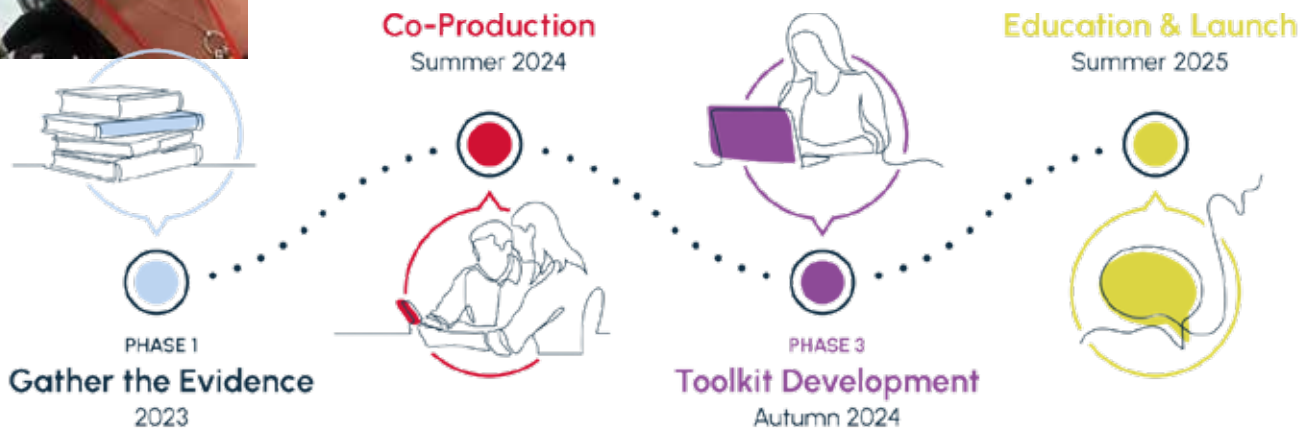
The WRAC Association will keep our members informed of the app's progress, and is grateful to all our members who are supporting this important research

Empowering Female Veterans: Co-designing Support for the Future



Liza Jarvis updates on the Female Veterans Transformation Programme, which so many of our members have engaged with.

The Female Veterans Transformation Programme is now well underway and what a busy time it has been! The programme is funded for 3 years and we have split this into the 4 phases below.



We have been busy building connections and relationships to make sure we engage with all the great work that is already underway, but also to hear from as many female veterans as possible as the programme progresses.

We have now completed phase one, which saw us bring together all the research that has been undertaken by female veterans in the UK, to synthesise and simplify it, highlighting the key messages and issues within an Evidence Review (fvtp.org.uk/publications). We also want to make it very easy to understand the needs of female veterans at a glance and produced the Statement of Need to provide a one-page overview of the Review.

We have now moved into phase 2 of the project focusing on consultation and co-design. We are doing this in 2 stages, firstly an online questionnaire for female veterans and one for services that support them and then a range of focus groups that will allow us to dig deeper and look at 'what good looks like' in terms of service provision in the future. The idea of this stage is to hear from people like you about what should be done to provide the best support, whether they are in the charity, statutory or commercial sector i.e. employers. The focus groups will run mainly through September and October, with 2 online groups planned too. However, we have done a few groups already and the feedback is really interesting, including a lot about imagery and language used by services that often do not make female veterans feel welcome. By the time the next edition of the Lioness is published, we should be able to give you feedback about what we have heard and what we are doing about the things you said.

If you would like to find out more about getting involved you can go to the website fvtp.org.uk/get-involved or check out our new social media accounts on Facebook, X and LinkedIn for the very latest updates.



Shaping the Future: Women's Wartime Roles Revisited



Exploring the Impact of WWII on Women's Lives and Society's transformation. Adapted from an Editorial by Nicky Moffatt for "The Human Body".

As the war continued in the 1940s, women - formerly housewives, secretaries, clerks, receptionists, and nurses - were enlisted into broader military roles. They were radar and searchlight operators, anti-aircraft gunners, mechanics and engineers, codebreakers, and secret agents. With these wider opportunities - and increased risk - 313 servicewomen were wounded and 72 killed in action. During the war, women played a vital role in boosting Britain's food production by working on the land. They also operated narrow boats carrying important steel, coal, and munitions supplies on the canals and inland waterways. Moreover, women drove fire engines and ambulances and built bombers, manning the engineering and production lines of heavy industry and wartime plants. Their contribution was crucial to the war effort.



With the freedom from traditional domestic duties, women were able to develop insight and opinions beyond the home and across social divides before the war. With greater authority and skill, they demonstrated that they could manage homes and finances, and even do tasks previously considered only for men. They showed their ability to adapt to challenging situations by 'making do and mending' while 'keeping calm and carrying on.'

After the war, women were expected to conform to the pre-war traditional gender roles. However, many women gained new skills, confidence and personal fulfilment during the wartime. As a result, their self-perception, ambitions, capabilities, and place in society inevitably changed.

By 1947, men were returning home in their millions to a materially and socially different world. The fortunate returned relatively unscathed, while others had suffered life-changing physical injury, disfigurement, and incapacitation. Many experienced long-term psychological trauma, their minds burdened by the weight of what they had seen, done, thought and felt.

After the War, society was more compassionate towards those who had lost a limb while serving their country. However, it was a much lonelier place if you felt you'd lost your mind. Many suffered from combat stress, which was often viewed as a sign of weakness or cowardice. Unfortunately, many individuals affected by this condition did not receive the help they needed nor did they ask for help, therefore they were left feeling alone and unsupported. They were not recognised or acknowledged for their condition, and they went undiagnosed and untreated.

Men who arrived home less capable - physically or mentally - returned to women who had become more capable. Thus across the nation, new challenges emerged for households and families amid post-war austerity, including unemployment, poverty, and rationing due to severe food shortages, clothing, and textiles.

After being separated, displaced and disconnected for years, spending most of their time with people of their own sex, how can husbands and wives come together again and adjust to living with each other? How can they accept and understand the changed attitudes and values developed from each other's experiences, struggles, observations and actions? How can they redefine their roles and routines to work for both? Many people were unable to handle the deep-seated trauma and underlying resentments, which led to micro and macro aggressions. As a result, the divorce rate increased significantly during the post-war years.

During an economic and political transformation, several key industries such as coal mining, civil aviation, railways, electricity and gas were nationalised. This transformation was accompanied by social and cultural changes such as the reconstruction of new housing estates, the rebuilding of communities and the establishment of the NHS. These changes inspired hope, debate, forecasted resistance to change and divided opinions.

Women's experiences and efforts during the war have played a significant role in shaping their future. They have gained greater independence financially and in terms of their mindset and spirit, allowing them to make their own choices in a world where change is constant.

This article has been adapted from an Editorial written by Nicky Moffatt for The Human Body (a Play set in the years immediately following World WarII), which premiered at the Donmar Warehouse in London in February 2024.

From Arctic Adventures to Battlefield Tours: Lioness on Tour

Susie Cooper shares her incredible experiences, from serving in the Royal Signals and training in the Arctic Circle to guiding historical battlefield tours and honouring war heroes in Ypres.

I embarked on my Army journey in 1997 as an apprentice in the Royal Signals, honing my skills at Blandford. My career has been a thrilling adventure, spanning various units and roles. From a tri-service communication centre at PJHQ to commanding a section at The Army Training Centre, Pirbright, each assignment has been an enriching experience. In 2010, I took on the challenge of the RMAS cadre course and later participated in Exercise ICE MAIDEN, where I advanced to the final 22 out of 250 female applicants. This unforgettable journey took me to the Arctic Circle with the Norwegian Army and the Royal Marines.

My service has brought me to remarkable places, including the Falkland Islands for the 20th anniversary of the Falklands War, one operational tour in Iraq, and two in Afghanistan. Each deployment offered unique challenges and unforgettable memories.

After dedicating 23 years to the regular Army, I transitioned to the Reserve Army in May 2020. I successfully completed the Senior Soldier Entry Direct Entry Officer selection, earning a Queen's Commission in 2022 and achieving the rank of Captain last year. Currently, I proudly serve as an Army Reserve Officer.

Outside the uniform, my passion for history has led me to become a self-employed Battlefield Guide. This fascinating role introduced me to Jane Griffin-Ash and Sandy Cawly (pictured). I guide diverse groups, from school children and Army recruits to senior staff from NATO HQ and Armed Forces Veterans, through the battlefields of the First and Second World Wars.

This photo is from our recent journey to Ypres (June 30 - July 3, 2024). We kicked off our tour at the UJC with an insightful talk on the causes of the war, followed by a delightful three-course dinner. The next morning, we set off for Dover, delving into its historical significance with a special focus on WWI before crossing the Channel.

In Ypres, we immersed ourselves in the history of the Ypres Salient, exploring the battles and personal stories of soldiers who fought there. We paid our respects to Staff Nurse Nellie Spindler, buried at Lijssenthoek, the only woman among nearly 10,000 casualties of WWI.

Our journey reached its emotional peak at the Menin Gate with the Last Post Association ceremony, a solemn tribute held every evening at 8 pm.



From Provost to Picasso: A WRAC veteran at ease at the easel



Blind Veterans UK is a lifeline for blind or partially sighted veterans, including some of our own members, including Jennie Fuller who works for the charity in membership engagement. This summer, Jennie raised over £600 with an art exhibition, including pieces of her own work (pictured).

Jennie served in the Woman's Royal Army Corps (Provost) for five years from 1979. She told the Lioness "After completing my basic training at Guildford I went on to trade training in Chichester. During my time in the Army I served in Münster, in Northern Ireland, in Dhekelia, Cyprus, finishing my military career in Colchester."

Moving on to a career with Northamptonshire Police, Jennie lost her sight suddenly whilst at work and was eventually diagnosed with bilateral optic atrophy which is sight loss caused by damage to the optic nerve. She says: "When I was first told of my diagnosis I was devastated, extremely worried. My world fell apart; I feared I would lose my job and my home. All these things come flashing into your mind which sent me into a spiral."



Jennie began to receive support from Blind Veterans UK in 2018 and now works for them helping to support other blind or partially sighted veterans: "Meeting a fellow blind veteran at the Blind Veterans UK Centre of Wellbeing in Llandudno inspired me to challenge myself and get on with life. That peer support was worth its weight in gold. I learnt that just because I'd lost some of my sight, it didn't mean life was over. I just had to accept it and adjust which was a journey in itself."

Jennie's love of art has helped her during her rehabilitation and through her passion she has raised funds to help others to access the vital support they need. Together with her husband, this year's exhibition, which took place on 4 and 5 May at Dodford Village Hall, raised over £600 for Blind Veterans UK. Jennie says: "Following my sight loss, I pushed myself to try and continue with

the things I loved such as painting, cake decorating, drawing and cooking. I just have to find work arounds that allow me to do things differently and appreciate it takes longer too.

"I have no usable sight in one eye, seeing only grey and limited sight in the other and therefore have no perspective, so art is challenging. However, I become totally immersed in what I'm doing when I paint."

"I make the most of what I can do, and I'm open to trying new things. I wake each morning and as long as I can see the sun, I feel very lucky and very grateful. I don't know if this information might be useful for the membership in the next Lioness issue. We have a few female veteran members in Blind Veterans UK already so any blind or partially sighted newcomers would not be alone."

Your artwork is inspiring Jennie, thank you so much for thinking of us and our readers. We are sure this information will be useful for several of our members.



About Blind Veterans UK

Blind Veterans UK is the national charity for ex-Service men and women with severe sight loss. The charity knows that there are thousands of blind veterans out there who could be entitled to its support but are not receiving it.

Founded in 1915 in response to blinded soldiers returning from the First World War, and previously known as St Dunstan's, Blind Veterans UK has supported tens of thousands of Armed Forces and National Service veterans to rebuild their lives after sight loss.

While Blind Veterans UK initially cared for veterans blinded in active Service, today they help veterans no matter what caused their sight loss. They help veterans to learn vital life skills and give them the tools they need to be safe in their own homes.

Blind Veterans UK has a network of local support teams all over the UK who give blind veterans the rehabilitation and training they need closer to them, either in their own home, their local area, or remotely. They also have two dedicated centres supporting wellbeing in all aspects of blind veterans' lives including holidays and respite breaks. As well as providing free specialist equipment, the charity also supports veterans to find new hobbies such as art and other creative activities.

For more information call 0800 389 7979 or visit blindveterans.org.uk.



The Key(ring) to our Success

The WRAC Association keyring – just some plastic with the logo on right? Wrong!

With members across the UK proudly carrying the keyring, we hear it has sparked interest from fellow veterans, curious youngsters, and even a former WRAC who became an Association member as a result of seeing it and starting a conversation – great news.

But recently the true power of the keyring was demonstrated on social media. One of our members lost her keys and they were found by a member of the public who looked up our website, called our offices and asked whether we could reunite the keys with their owner. We're the WRAC Association – we can do anything!

So at 0858 Claire posted about the lost keys on our Facebook page. By 0912, not 15 minutes later, we had found the owner – what a result! As you can see from the comments, Sheila had planned to use her local social media to track them down, but your Association moves far faster than that. We're delighted to have been able to help, and fully agree with the comments – the keyring worked its magic!



Have you got your keyring?

You can purchase them at our shop, when it re-opens in September, or come along to one of our events when we're bound to have a few to give away.



Top of the Class

When HQ received an email from 10 year-old Persephone asking to meet a female veteran for her school project we were delighted and sprung into action. Replying to establish whereabouts she was in the country, her mum Chloe revealed they were in Norwich and added "Thank you so much for your wonderful reply to Persephone's email, she was thrilled to hear she had a response & was delighted by reading your message. Persephone was already enthusiastic about the school project before we contacted you but now she is inspired!"



Norwich you say? We know the woman for the job! Lyn Hatch arranged to meet the family and report back for us.

Charlie Charlie One was a project that 10-year-old Persephone was doing at school, and she was asked to write about someone in her family that had served. As she had no one to write about and she did not want to do the same as the rest of the group who were going to be writing about the men in their families, with the help of her mum, she went online and found the Women's Royal Army Corps Association.

The Charlie Charlie One programme draws on the values and skills of ex-Forces personnel to inspire young people to achieve at school. It includes team building, problem solving challenges, team sports, outdoor pursuits, first aid and navigation skills.

I met with Chloe and Persephone at our local garden centre, first stop the café, tea and cake for me and coffee and a bacon sandwich for Persephone, and then into the marquee where we claimed the table tucked away in the corner. The questions, which I had been sent prior to meeting did not take too long to go through. I also took along a few photographs of the me in recruit training, adventure training and uniform.



SOMEONE I KNOW WHO HAS SERVED IN THE MILITARY

NAME:

Her name is
Lyn Hatch.

RELATIONSHIP TO ME:

A new friend!

Paula Rogers, Chief Executive Officer of WRAC Association, put us in touch.




SOMEONE I KNOW WHO HAS SERVED IN THE MILITARY Page 1

Their name

Their relationship to you (Granddad, neighbour, family friend, etc)

Their service (Army, Navy, Air Force, Royal Marines, etc)

Their age when they joined

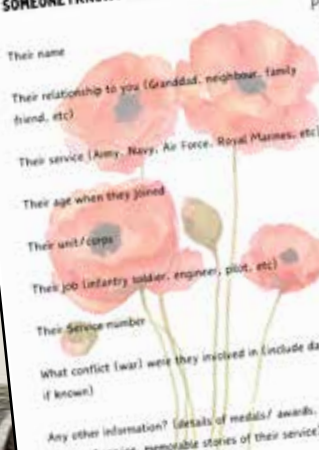
Their unit/corps

Their job (infantry soldier, engineer, pilot, etc)

Their Service number

What conflict (war) were they involved in (include dates if known)

Any other information? (details of medals/ awards, length of service, memorable stories of their service)




I was 17 years old when I enlisted, this had surprised Persephone, I told her about my time at Guildford, as recruits the training we went through and explained that even though we were noncombatant we were also given weapon training.

We talked about some of the places I had been posted and the opportunities that I enjoyed, and the camaraderie. All of which I would never have had if I had not joined the WRAC.

I also talked about transferable skills, sports, and activities, those that I participated in and coached both whilst serving and once I left.

Lyn told me that she loved being in the army and she wouldn't change anything that she did.

These are some of the things she has learnt from her time in the armed forces:

COMRADESHIP **DISCIPLINE**

BEING CONSIDERATE

HAVING SELF-RESPECT

LOOKING SMART, NEAT AND TIDY

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS



THEIR AGE WHEN THEY JOINED

Lyn Hatch was 17 years old when she went to Queen Elizabeth's Park in Guildford. It was two weeks before her 18th birthday.

THEIR UNIT OR CORPS

Women's Royal Army Corps



4

THEIR JOB

Lyn Hatch was a PTI.

It is like an Army PE teacher!



THEIR SERVICE NUMBER

Lyn's service number was:

WO459792

Lyn knows this number off by heart!

Persephone also loves sports, she enjoys climbing, running, swimming and has recently taken up boxing and hopes to join her school football team.

I had a wonderful time talking with Persephone, and I was extremely proud to have had the opportunity, and as a female veteran to be part of and represented in her project.



What a fantastic project! Thanks to Persephone for sending it to us, and of course to Lyn for putting in so much effort with Persephone. Her mum wrote "Persephone was very inspired by the role you had as a PTI. I can imagine her doing a very active job as an adult. Having you as an inspiration and a role model is wonderful." Well said Chloe, we couldn't agree more!

Outreach to schools and youth groups is just one of the ways we are working to raise the profile of female veterans. If you have been approached by an organisation to give a talk, we can help support you, and of course we would love to include photos and a review in the Lioness. In the next issue, Sue Westlake will be sharing her experiences at the Wildern School in Hampshire.

From Dawn to Dusk: Marching with the WRAAC on Anzac Day

Dawn Irwin Shares Her Memorable Anzac Day Experience in Melbourne.

Six months ago, I made the somewhat radical decision to quit my job and go travelling. First, the USA to see friends and blow off steam in the theme parks, then on to Australia to stay with a good friend with whom I had undertaken paediatric nurse training back in the day. I realised that my travel dates would include Anzac Day so made contact with the Returned and Services League of Australia for permission to march, receiving a quick yes.

The day arrived and we left home at 0435, coinciding with the time the ANZAC troops started to climb Ari Burnu in 1915. We made our way on foot to the Shrine of Remembrance, glowing an eerie red amid the darkness. A reverent silence was palpable as the darkness gradually emerged into light after the dawn service. And so began my search for the banner of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (1951 – 1984). I spotted it eventually in the distance and made my way through the throng of servicemen and women.

Upon explaining who I was, I was immediately welcomed with great enthusiasm and wide-open arms. WRAAC Association Treasurer, Margaret Jager, subsequently produced a cap badge and kindly presented it to me, further adding to the emotion that the day had already brought.

After Margaret had led us for the march, I was taken to the garden of flowers, dedicated to the 70,000 women who served Australia in the Navy, Army, Air Force and Auxiliary Services. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end and there were emotional goodbyes and promises to stay in touch as each of us took our leave.

My day was not over yet, and I made my way to "The G" aka the infamous Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) for the annual "Ozzie Rules" football fixture between Collingwood (Magpies) and Essendon (Bombers) which is an opportunity to honour and recognise those who have served for Australia in times of war. Fans are encouraged to arrive at the match early for a range of proceedings including the traditional pre-game ceremony, including the veterans' parade. The game was attended by 93,400 people, I have never experienced anything like it. The attitude and dedication of both teams reflected the Anzac spirit culminating in a draw, with the Magpies captain encouraging the Bombers captain to make the post-game speech.

The following night at the O'Brien Icehouse, home of ice hockey teams Melbourne Ice and Melbourne Mustangs, there was another Anzac commemoration with a veteran performing the ceremonial puck drop, New Zealand and Australian national anthems were sung, the last post and rouse were played, followed by another hard-fought game, with Melbourne Ice as victors.

A few days later I received a lovely email from Margaret, thanking me for marching with the Victoria WRAAC Association on ANZAC Day, expressing her hope we could meet again and sending me some great photos.



Trailblazing at Sandhurst: Celebrating 40 Years of Women Shaping Military Equality



Sue Evans, reflects on the 40th anniversary of the first women's entry into the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and their enduring impact on gender equality in the armed forces.

An historic anniversary... 40 years on

On 6th April 1984, 30 women stepped into the history books at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. We were the first women to attend the academy, undertaking training on the standard graduate course alongside 600 male officer cadets and passing out as part of the Sovereign's Parade. As we arrived at the top of those famous steps, relieved and excited for the future we were very conscious that this was a significant step for women and that we had blazed the trail for others to follow.

The experience at RMAS had been quite something. Some thought the experiment would never work – and some took direct action to try to make sure it didn't! We were ignored, filmed, observed, ridiculed and subjected to some quite crass behaviours. Some things just hadn't been thought through – you might think that Sandhurst could prepare sufficient stocks of boots smaller than a size 7 and kit that would fit smaller frames. Being told we looked untidy regularly was a bit rich when we were given kits designed for men in the wrong sizes. Our male counterparts had been briefed not to speak to us and when we arrived, usually late, and often in the wrong order of dress, a deathly hush would descend as we clambered with as much dignity as we could manage, out of a 4-ton truck in our barrack dress skirts.

There were high points of course – we learned to hold ourselves and our heads high. We stuck together, helped each other through and we are still in touch today. We have become resilient and strong women. Each of us has made a mark, some in the Army and some outside, all taking something useful and unforgettable into the future. It was a grounding like no other.

On 10th April 2024, we returned to the Royal Military Academy, 40 years on, to celebrate and remember this milestone anniversary. We attended the Commandant's Parade and saw the young women of today, fully integrated into the parade. We were welcomed by the Commandant – albeit as the "Women's Royal Auxiliary Corps" which elicited a collective intake of outraged breath! It was wonderful to meet some of the young women cadets of today, to see their confidence and their absolute belief in their right to take a full and proper place alongside the men, and to be able to access all areas of military life and the opportunities open to them. Good luck to all of them – as one of them said, we "kicked down the door" for them to march through and they have done so, quite brilliantly.



Equality was a challenge for the army when we joined and it is not quite there yet. Increasing opportunities is one thing, supporting the cultural change required to make it work is quite another. The key is in recognising and valuing the differences and shifting the hard lines to allow for those differences to play out – simple things like adjustments to kit make a difference – we couldn't march alongside the men on the parade because our skirts were restrictive. It took the late Queen Elizabeth II to suggest that skirts were given a kick pleat to allow the women to march at a wider pace. On a more complex level, questions need to be asked about fitness training and how to recognise the very differences in male and female capabilities that make diversity a reality without diluting standards, we have separate teams for men and women in sports after all. Above all, working on creating the kind of culture where there is mutual respect and where women don't have to become like men to succeed.

Given the right environment and encouragement, ordinary people can do extraordinary things. Good organisations are made up of ordinary people giving their best, learning from their experiences and striving to make things better. Great leadership enables and supports that effort and the army is a first-class training ground for leaders.

I gained a commitment to diversity and equity from my time in the army and I have remained a champion of inclusive, positive and supportive cultures where individual strengths are recognised and valued. I have dared to call out toxic behaviours and support the drive for more inclusive cultures wherever I have practised. I am grateful to the army for helping me develop the resilience and strength to challenge and lead change.

We are all so proud to count ourselves members of that historic band with whom we share a strong bond of friendship, which spans more than half a lifetime. We were ordinary women who achieved something quite extraordinary. A real cause for celebration.

WRAC Association Grand Reunion Cardiff

21 – 23 March 2025

Mercure Cardiff Holland House
Hotel, Cardiff, CF24 0DD



How many times have you said to yourself
***“I wonder what ever happened to
Sergeant Whatshername?”***

Well, this is your chance to find out, and
meet other friends you didn't know you were
looking for.

Come along to the WRAC Association
Grand Reunion and join in with all the
fun and comradeship that only we know
how to do. You'll laugh until you cry, sing
with abandon and dance as if nobody is
watching. Just fill out the boring form, online
or snail mail and you're on your way to
Cardiff. It will be the 25th anniversary of the
last time we visited Cardiff for our Grand
reunion. See you on the dance floor.



Booking Information

Price: £85 per person

• How to Apply:

1. **Complete Form:** Fill out the form opposite
2. **Post:** Send a cheque for £85 along with the application form to:

WRAC Association
Unit 11 Basepoint Business Centre
1 Winnall Valley Road
Winchester, Hampshire SO23 0LD

3. **Online:** Apply online at wraca.org.uk/GR25.

Dietary Requirements: Please indicate any dietary
needs on the application form to ensure your
preferences are accommodated during the Grand
Reunion Dinner

Event Highlights

Friday Evening (March 21)

• Buffet Supper & Disco:

Start the reunion with a themed buffet supper,
then dance the night away at our lively disco.

Saturday (March 22)

- **Annual General Meeting:** Stay informed about the Association and have your say
- **Beating Retreat:** Experience a stunning display of precision and tradition by the fabulous Yorkshire Military Band
- **Reunion Gala Dinner:** Enjoy a formal dinner and a glass of wine with friends, old and new
The Yorkshire Military Band will entertain us throughout the meal and for the rest of the evening.

Sunday (March 23)

- **Drumhead Service & Parade:** Finish off the weekend with our usual Drumhead Service and parade, reliving the memories of our proud service in the WRAC.

Accommodation

Attendees are responsible for booking and paying for their own accommodation. The Mercure Cardiff Holland House Hotel offers a convenient location, and rooms may be released to the Association when cancellations occur so contact HQ to find out if rooms have become available. There are numerous other hotels available in Cardiff to suit all budgets.

Cost Details

The cost of the weekend is £85 per person (former WRAC and ATS only). This includes:

- **Friday Evening Themed Supper with Disco**
- **Saturday Afternoon AGM**
- **Saturday Early Evening Beating Retreat**
- **Gala Dinner:** Three-course meal, limited wine on the table, and entertainment.
- **Sunday Morning Drumhead Service and Parade**

Membership Support Grant

Our Membership Support Grant is available to assist members who may otherwise be unable to attend. For information please call 0300 400 1992 or email benfund@wraca.org.uk.

Applications

To attend the Grand Reunion, please complete the application form below and return it with the appropriate fee **by 4 January 2025**. Alternatively, you can apply and pay online via wraca.org.uk/GR25.

Personal Details

Full Name Known as (if different).....

Address

City Post Code

Telephone No Mobile No

Dietary Requirements: ☐ Vegetarian ☐ Coeliac/Gluten Intolerance ☐ Lactose Intolerance ☐ Other

Confirmation and Consent

1. I confirm that I am a member of the WRAC Association and served under the WRAC or ATS. I accept that my payment will be refunded if membership cannot be confirmed.
2. I acknowledge that I am responsible for my accommodation booking and payment.
3. I acknowledge that photographs and videos may be taken at this event and am content that I may be featured, and that this may be used for PR purposes including but not limited to social media, Lioness, annual report and website.

Signature: Date:

Thank you for your application. We look forward to seeing you at the Grand Reunion 2025! For any queries, please contact us at events@wraca.org.uk or call us at 0300 400 1992

Are you excited yet? Don't miss this incredible opportunity to reconnect with old friends, pull up a sand bag and share memories, old and new. The Grand Reunion 2025 promises to be an event filled with joy, laughter, pride, and the extraordinary bond shared by WRAC Association members.

Book now to secure your place and be a part of this special event. For further information or assistance, contact us at events@wraca.org.uk. We look forward to welcoming you to Cardiff.





Beer Money

Leslie Scott is all smiles as she receives a £3900 cheque from Martin Bates, the East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival Organiser.

The East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival was held at the St Edmundsbury Cathedral between the 21st and 26th August 2024, with over 250 real ales, 40 ciders, food stalls and a full entertainment programme.



Did you manage to name all 11 of the famous names reading the Lioness?
Were the clues any help at all?
Check your answers here



Number One:
Christopher Biggins

Number Six:
Garrison Sergeant Major
Andrew 'Vern' Stokes



Number Two:
Alfie Boe



Number Seven:
Linda Lusardi



Number Three:
Linda Robson

Number Eight:
Russell Watson



Number Four:
Tony Blackburn



Number Nine:
Vanessa Feltz



Number Ten:
Goggleboxers Daniel Lustig and
Stephen Webb



Number Five:
Wayne Sleep

OOOH I GOT 10 RIGHT - HOW DID YOU DO?



Number Eleven:
Richard Arnold



WRAC LIONESSES 13TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING 10K

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 4TH MAY 2025

TIME: 0930HRS

PLACE: KINGS LYNN, NORFOLK

FACEBOOK: WRAC LIONESSES FUNDRAISING GROUP

CONTACT WENDY : 07775505326

CALL TO ACTION

GUILDFORD REMEMBERED

On 5th October 1974 a bomb exploded in the Horse & Groom pub, Guildford claiming the lives of two off-duty WRAC servicewomen, two off-duty Scots Guards and one 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.

Join us for a Special Weekend of Respect, Remembrance and Celebration in Guildford

Saturday, 5th October

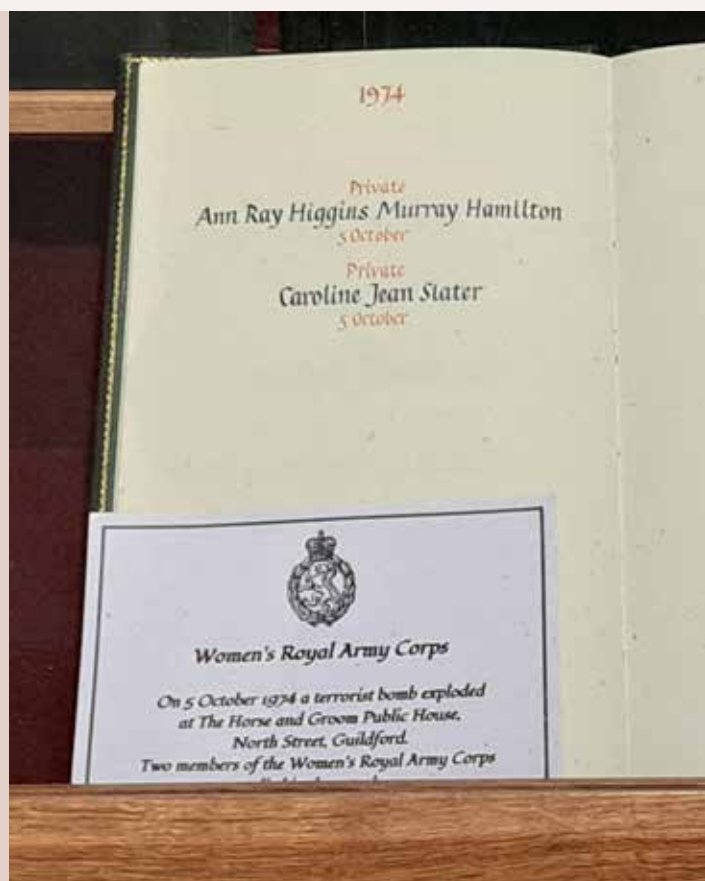
1400 Commemoration of Queen Elizabeth Barracks Opening. Celebrate the historic opening of Queen Elizabeth Barracks by HM Queen Elizabeth II on 31st October 1964. Followed by:
Presentation of berets and cap badges (Lord Etherton's Independent Review)
1700 Two course meal at Guildford Cathedral Refectory.

Sunday, 6th October

1100 Commemoration service for the fiftieth anniversary of the Guildford Pub Bombing. Our members will parade Guildford High Street and join the people of Guildford at Holy Trinity Church as we honour the memory of our fallen sisters, Pte Ann Hamilton and Pte Caroline Slater.

*Let's come together to honour our history, celebrate our community,
and remember those we have lost.*

Please get in touch if you would like to attend. Email: info@wraca.org.uk.



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.

WRAC Association clothing including a scarf and pin are available from our Association shop.

Please note this form of dress is not mandatory.

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

Since the Association is no longer an active Corps 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 brooch and the Veterans badge may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole.
- The medals awarded to a deceased 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.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2024 - 2025

Guildford Remembered	Saturday 5th - Sunday 6th October 2024
WRAC Dinner Club	Saturday 12th October 2024
Officers' Dining Club	Saturday 23rd November 2024
Grand Reunion	Saturday 21st - 23rd March 2025
AGM	Saturday 22nd March 2025
10k Run	Sunday 4th May 2025
Armed Forces Day	Saturday 28th June 2025 – Across the UK

Lioness & Postal Information

Change of Address. Please remember to notify us of any change of address.
Every time The Lioness is distributed a number of copies are returned
as we are unaware that members have moved.

ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund

Making A Difference

BENEVOLENT FUND GRANTS



**Are you or do you know a former ATS or WRAC servicewoman
in need of assistance?**

Do you know how the Benevolent Fund can help?

The ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund awards one-off and recurring financial grants to purchase specific goods, services or facilities for eligible former servicewomen, or their dependents, in need. The charity also provides annual maintenance 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.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR HELP?

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

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CRITERIA?

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

ONE OFF GRANTS

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

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

REGULAR CHARITABLE PAYMENTS?

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

SO HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR HELP?

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

RBL: 0808 802 8080

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



SSAFA: 0800 260 6767

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



BENEVOLENT FUND EXPENDITURE

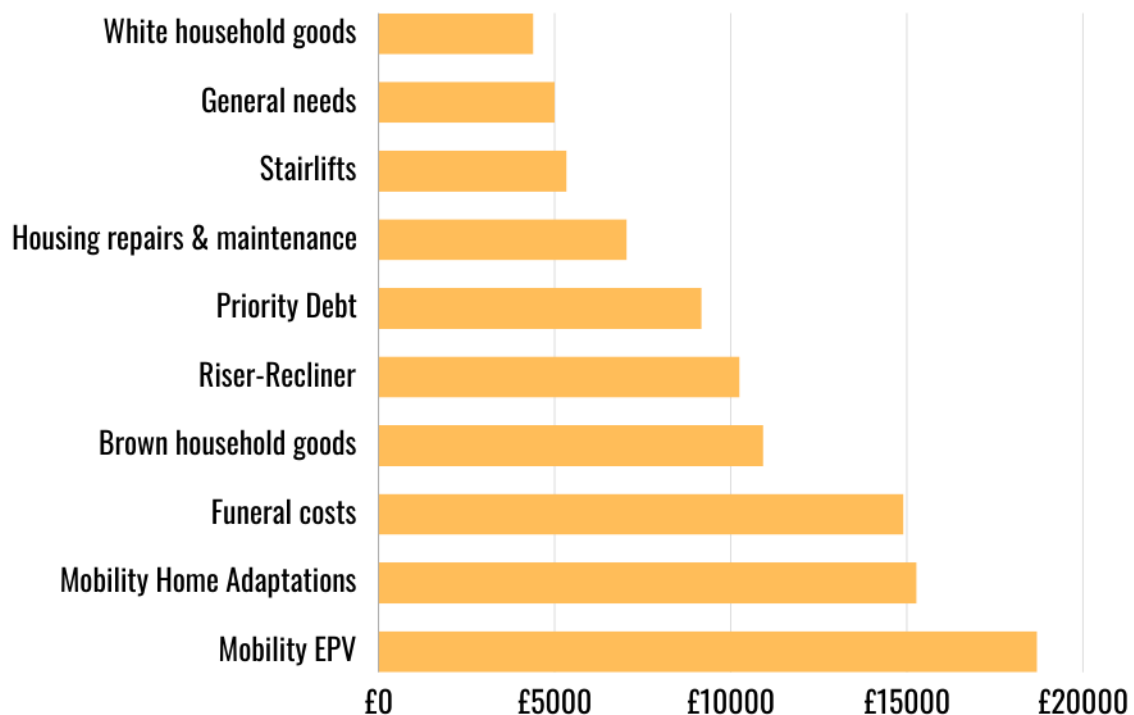
Key Facts FY 23/24 Q1-3

- 126 applications for assistance were considered by grant committees
- 88 awards were granted across 26 categories
- 19 Annual Maintenance Grant annuitants, including two overseas annuitants
- Care Enhancement Grants awarded for Nursing Home Fees.

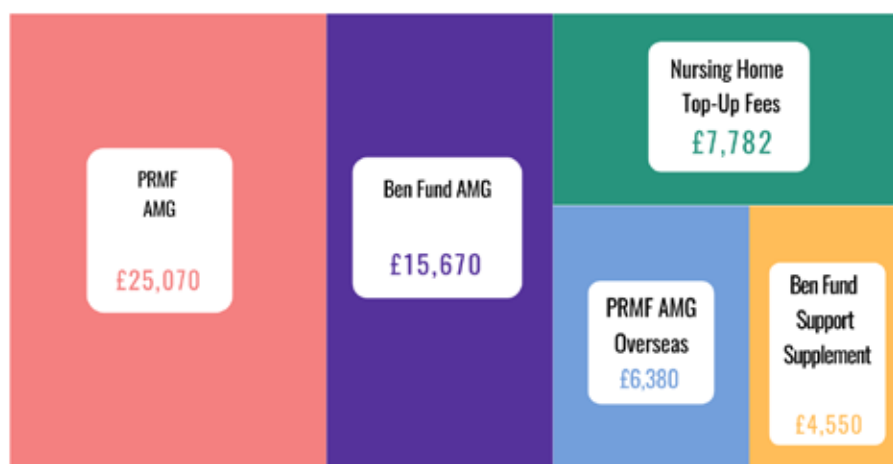
The total spends for the first nine months of this financial year across all committees totalled £156,484.28

Top 10 Category One-off Grant

2023/24 Q1-3



RECURRING GRANT - 2023/24 Q1-3



MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT GRANT

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 apply.

Grants can be used for:

Travel costs (public transport or petrol costs)
Taxi fares
Tickets for events

Minibus fare
Overnight accommodation
Cost of a meal

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

One recipient of the Membership Support Grant writes:

"I was extremely grateful to receive financial assistance to enable me to attend the WRAC Grand Reunion in 2022. Without the grant I would have been unable to afford to attend. It was my first ever WRAC event and I was thrilled to meet up with two friends I'd lost touch with and hadn't seen for 40 years. It was as if I was transported back in time, the sense of camaraderie was instant".

"It was so delightful to be able to attend the AGM. The grant funded my train fare meaning I could attend in person for the first time".

"I have difficulty with mobility making public transport difficult, the grant meant that I could attend my nearest "We Will Remember Her" event via taxi which I wouldn't be able to otherwise be able to afford."

Remember that The Veterans Charity Can Help?

The Veterans Charity and the WRAC Association have a partnership where those that served in the ATS or WRAC can apply for help which is funded by the Benevolent Fund. Applicants can apply for an immediate grant to assist with urgent items such as food, utilities (such as meter top ups), clothing and household items. Visit their website to find out more www.veteranscharity.org.uk. Requests for non-urgent assistance should still be directed through SSAFA or The Royal British Legion.



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

Our Support Programmes

Food/Groceries

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

Utilities

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

Clothing/Footwear

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

Household and Homeware

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

Communications

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



About The Veterans Charity

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

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

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

www.veteranscharity.org.uk

Registered Charity No.1123149



BRANCH NEWS

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Aberdeen - Sandra Lemmon

Nine of us travelled to Inverurie in June for lunch at Sinclair's restaurant and some of us did a bit of retail therapy before going home. Due to Aberdeen hosting a Pipe Band competition, Armed Forces Day was delayed by a week. Margaret Muirhead, Irene Thompson and Moira Thom joined the parade to march down Union Street.

In August, 6 of us attended the Scotland & Northern Ireland Area AGM in Perth. One of the main guests, Ali Brown informed us of the progress in Support Services for Female Veterans, both Charitable and Statutory. Then Sergeant Pamela McNeil, REME told us of experiences of life in the British Army today. It was all very interesting.

The Branch was invited to attend the Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) in October at Gordon Barracks, Aberdeen but Storm Babet caused so much damage, it was unsafe to travel, causing the event to be postponed. We were very disappointed.

Sandra Lemmon went to the WRAC Dinner Club weekend and had a great time.

In November, several of us attended Remembrance Services local to where we live and then, in December, Joan, Sandra, Margaret Irvine and Moira travelled to Perth for the Not Forgotten Christmas Lunch, where they made us feel very welcome. It was an afternoon of fun and games.

At our Branch Christmas lunch, some of us wore sparkly, seasonal jumpers and enjoyed a very tasty meal.

On a sad note, we learned in February, that Bailey, Pat and Keith's little dog had passed away.

We welcomed our Area Co-ordinator, Janette Deans and Jane, a new member to the March meeting, ending with lunch at Ma Cameron's, our usual monthly meeting place.

Moira met Janette and June for a fish & chip supper, before going to St Giles Cathedral for the Royal Corps of Army Music 30th Anniversary Concert. The music was heart-warming and the venue ideal.

The WRAC Association nominated Moira Thom and plus 1 to attend the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 17th May hosted by the Not Forgotten Association. Moira and Ann had an unforgettable afternoon. They said it was difficult to put into words how special the occasion was.

We welcome Jane, Julia Bell and Maggie Wilson to the Branch, although we have yet to meet Julia and Maggie. They will make it to meetings when they can.

Aberdeen Branch wish you all the best over the coming months.

Stirling - Liz Dixon

What a busy and enjoyable calendar it's been for the ladies of the Stirling branch.

After their big Christmas party night and overnight stay at the Atholl Palace Hotel in Pitlochry, there were surely 7 branch members with sore heads the next day! A fabulous 3-course dinner followed by a late night of entertainment in the form of a disco and traditional ceilidh. After such a memorable night, Liz is already on the case in booking up for Christmas 2024 at the Westerwood (Doubletree) Hotel in Cumbernauld!

On 12th May, 6 members attended a Central Radio FM-hosted event at the Westerwood in aid of Strathcarron Hospice near Stirling. Tickets cost £60 including a meal and entertainment, as well as an opportunity to find out more about this wonderful charity. £15,000 is needed every day to run the hospice and the lovely people who do so shared some very emotional stories with all those attending. Various craft stalls were selling their wares with 10% of sales going directly to the charity. £35,000 was raised during a great afternoon of disco and dining!

Branch member, Lillias Thomson, received an invitation to the Royal Garden Party, at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, hosted by King Charles III, in recognition of her work with the Children's panel. Well-deserved Lillias.

The regular meet-up for the branch is over lunch on the last Saturday of each month at the 1314 Inn in Bannockburn (planning a revolution Stirling branch?)



Edinburgh - Robina Knox

Can't believe all the incredible things that have happened this year! We've been having a blast in Edinburgh, meeting up every second Saturday for delicious food and great conversations. In April, we officially became an official branch and even changed our name in the process. Despite losing a few members from the old branch, we're slowly but steadily growing. Our branch has been super active, and we've been on some amazing adventures.

In May, our group member June Christie, along with her friends Christine Byers and Pauline Rimmer, attended the Not Forgotten Garden Party. They had served together at 10 Signal Regiment, and the event was unforgettable with beautiful sunny weather and fantastic company.

And then in June, some of us went to a D-Day concert and ran into Nicola Sturgeon, the former First Minister of Scotland, who kindly took a photo with us. Talk about an eventful day! We also had Pauline Cherrington from the Lothian Veterans Centre visit our branch meeting to talk about the support available to veterans at their centre.

In July, a few of us joined the Female Veterans Transformation Programme Networking Event, which was so much fun.

It's been such an eventful year, and we're thrilled to continue our amazing adventures as a branch. Can't wait to see what's in store next!



Ulster- Sylvia Connachan

We kicked off our year with a delightful lunch in March 2024 at New Forge, Belfast. It was wonderful to see Chrissy Tolcher, who travelled from England to join us. It was a lovely day, filled with great conversations and camaraderie.

In March, we also participated in the AGM in England via Zoom. Jill Hope joined us, and the meeting was both interesting and informative.

On a sad note, we bid farewell to our esteemed ATS member, Mary Wilson, aged 91, who passed peacefully in her sleep. She will always be remembered.

In May, Rosemary Ryan organised a lunch at Beechlawns Hotel, Dunmurry, where we enjoyed a delightful afternoon together.

We attended a tea party hosted by the Dromore British Legion in May. Jill Hope, Pat Baker, my daughter Lesley, and I had a lovely couple of hours there.

June saw us at the D-Day Service at the Dromore Cenotaph. Despite the wet weather, reminiscent of D-Day, it was a poignant and meaningful service.

On Armed Forces Day, we gathered at Lough Shore, Whiteabbey, Belfast. Jill Hope, Marie Jenkins, Sylvia Connachan, and our two guests from Scotland, Jeanette Deans and Moira Thom, made the event special. We were delighted they could join us. Thank you both for coming over to Northern Ireland.

Thank you, ladies, for reading our report. I hope you all had a wonderful summer. Take care and stay safe.



North West

Lancashire - Gail Newsham

WRAC friends in Lancashire meet every six weeks or so for lunch, hugs, and laughs. There are 12 of us in total but sometimes there are only half a dozen, depending on other commitments, but we always have a very enjoyable afternoon. Alice Masters brings her mum Betty, who is our oldest girl and will be celebrating her 90th birthday before you read this. We all hope she has a very special day with family and friends.



Towards the end of last year, we held our usual Remembrance gathering and celebrated Christmas together with family members and had a lovely time. This year is the 10th anniversary of the formation of our little group, so we're planning to celebrate and possibly make it an overnight event. It's currently in the planning stage, so watch this space.



If you know me at all, you will know that my passion is women's football, and more particularly, the famous Dick, Kerr Ladies Football Team. To keep their legacy alive, I have written a couple of books and organised walking football tournaments and fundraising events such as treasure hunts to help raise the profile, and our WRAC family are always invited. The most recent Gala Dinner involved a guest performance by Sheila Ferguson of Three Degrees fame. A special place was also allocated to display the magnificent Women's Euro Trophy won by the Lionesses in 2022. It was much photographed on the night.

Please feel free to join us any time if you are in our area.

Liverpool - Pat Brown

Liverpool Branch covers a wide area, so our new venue for monthly meetings is ideally situated. We meet at the Holiday Inn right opposite Lime Street Station. We have a lively bunch of members, who attend regularly with increased numbers since Covid times, and another couple hopefully joining us shortly, which pleases our new Chair, Sally Phillips and Secretary, Pat Brown. Sadly though, we lost Pat Prendergast about 3 years ago, though it was not Covid-related.



Two of our members, Jean Le Vaillant and Rita Bracey have unfortunately been on long-term sick. We miss them and hope they know we think of them.

Kathleen Murdoch and Janet Vickers were able to join other veterans at the raising of the Armed Forces Day flag. They enjoyed the occasion, as you can see from the photograph.

Going forward, we plan to take an open-top bus tour of Liverpool, as many of our members either live outside the city or else have never seen all there is to see here. Another outing in the pipeline is to take a boat trip along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. It's all go here in Liverpool Branch!

We have a special member in our Branch, who attends every month. Bebe is Janet McCormick's guide dog. So, if you would like to meet Bebe, why not pop into one of our meetings, on the first Wednesday of the month at 12 noon, for lunch and a chat?



Manchester - Pip Flegel

Manchester Branch Lionesses have had a very busy year with plenty of events still to attend.

In August we are attending the Military Barracks, Fulwood, Preston, home of the Lancaster Regiment, before it closes and becomes another housing estate. We will be doing a river cruise with afternoon tea in September, the Guildford gathering and WRAC Dinner Club in October, Remembrance Day Parade Manchester in November and the Infamous Manchester Doo in December.

Meanwhile, fourteen of us enjoyed a Crazy Golf competition at The Flower Bowl, Preston with a delicious lunch of fish n chips. Competition was fierce, with no quarter given and, after a closely fought battle, the winner was Rose Dean.

We are all members of the WRAC Association and it's through the Association that we have all met up, formed Branches and been invited to many events. If you know of any Lionesses, encourage them to join the WRAC Association It's FREE! You have plenty to gain and nothing to lose.



Oldham - Kathleen Kirtley



We are a small group, and two of our female members are still working while another one is in the process of moving. Despite the limited activities, I have been quite occupied lately, so here's a brief update.

I recently reached out to a company called LaserTech 22, and they kindly created a plaque to honour our female members. Interestingly, they also crafted another plaque at the request of a Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) member, featuring Tommy the Female, a Horse, a Dog, and a Pigeon, symbolising various contributors during wartime.

On the 80th D-Day anniversary, I participated in a poignant wreath-laying ceremony organised by our local British Legion branch in the morning. Later that day, I attended an event at an Age UK club, where we paid tribute to one of our member's uncles, a D-Day veteran, by wearing uniforms in his honour.



Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire - Chris Barratt

On Saturday, June 29th, while people across the country were celebrating Armed Forces Day, a heartfelt gathering took place in Luton to honour the life of DIANA LIDSTONE. Diana was a cherished member of the ATS WRAC Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Branch, and her family and friends came together to commemorate her remarkable life. Diana, who bravely served in the ATS during World War II, passed away in April, just a few weeks shy of her 100th birthday. It was a deeply fitting occasion to honour Diana's legacy and pay homage to her dedicated service in the ATS.



During the gathering, a special tribute was made to Diana's memory. A beautiful Rose Bush, named 'Nostalgia', was presented to Diana's daughter, Catherine, and her son, Andrew, as a token of remembrance for Diana's service in the ATS and the cherished friendships she formed within the Branch.

Diana Lidstone's contribution and commitment to both her nation and her loved ones were held in the highest regard. May she rest in peace knowing that her duty to her country and her cherished ones has been fulfilled.



Colchester & District - Kerry Warnes

Only one event to report on this time; an intrepid group of branch members met up in Aldeburgh, Suffolk for a day at the seaside in April, and sadly Spring had yet to make an appearance. The weather was a challenge as there was a bitter wind to be contended with. However, the bonus was that the highly recommended fish and chip shop was open for business so nobody starved!

A few of us continue to support the monthly meeting of the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club in Colchester. It is a good time for us to catch up and put the world to rights over some nice food and limitless cups of tea. From this, we also attended a St Georges Day dinner and dance. There are plans in the offing for a formal dinner in November on the Friday before Remembrance Day. I am hoping for volunteers to assist with the Poppy Appeal and to participate in Colchester Garrison's Remembrance Day ceremony – get those fleeces cleaned and medals polished ladies.

At the time of writing, we have no dates in our diary but are hopeful that someone will put themselves forward to take the lead in organising our annual event of "Seaside Havoc". I am sure that the locals of Clacton on Sea would not want to miss out on watching our antics especially the tug of war.

Hopefully, next time round I will have more events to report on and if there is anyone that would like to join our branch don't be afraid to make contact, I promise that we won't bite.



Norfolk- Lyn Hatch

Great Yarmouth ATS Remembrance

On Saturday 11th May, a small group of us gathered at the Imperial Hotel to commemorate the 26 ATS women who lost their lives 81 years ago when an enemy fighter bomber crept in under low clouds, resulting in a direct hit on their accommodation, reducing it to a pile of rubble.

The last two years have seen the plaque replaced, rededicated, and put back on the wall—this time on the correct hotel—followed by commemorating the 80th anniversary. It hardly seems like a year ago that memorial services were being held across the country to recognise the largest loss of women's lives in WW2.

With a table booked for lunch in The Terrace at the Imperial Hotel, there was a lot of talking and catching up, although the conversations quickly turned to food as it was served.

With lunch over, a few of us headed for Caister Cemetery, placing a rose in front of each of the six women's graves. Each year, more information about their lives and families becomes known, and they are no longer just names.

We then headed to the old Roman Catholic Cemetery, which is no longer used, where two of the women are buried. Sadly, the whole area is overgrown, and the Commonwealth graves are also neglected. A rose was laid on each of their graves, just visible amongst the long grass and weeds.

It had been a wonderful day, tinged only by the untended graves and overgrown area of the two women buried in the Roman Catholic Cemetery.



Central

Leicester & Nottingham - Ann (Monty) Montgomery

Remembrance started for us with the Leicestershire and Rutland Festival of Remembrance, followed by the Remembrance Parade at the Stand Easy Memorial, Leicestershire County Hall and finally, we were selling poppies at Leicester Market.

Christmas celebrations began with our Christmas Fayre in November, where we raised £27 and enjoyed our first mince pies of the season. In December, we gathered for Christmas Lunch and presents from Secret Santa at Devonshire House, Leicester.

We enjoyed an Afternoon Tea to celebrate the WRAC 75th Anniversary in April. It was a lovely get together and much reminiscing was done. A week later we were at Palmers Garden Centre for yet another eating experience. 7 of us had a super lunch and we chatted well into the afternoon.



Debbie, was excited to be invited to the Not Forgotten Association's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Her descriptions of the day painted a lovely picture for us.

Sadly, in April, we said goodbye to Joan Plummer (ATS). Joan had reached the great age of 101 years old. We were pleased to be Guard of Honour at her funeral, with Lynn Wenham carrying our Standard, much to the pleasure of Joan's family.

In June, some of us had a great day out at the National Memorial Arboretum and visited the WRAC Association plot.



We are a happy group and have lots of fun. If you live in or nearby the area, we would love you to see you. Contact our Branch Secretary Sue Slattery for details.

Sheffield- Sandy Warne

Well, where do we begin? What a fantastic 6 months we have had as a new branch. Lots of lovely new members both who served under the WRAC hat and ladies joining us as female veterans who served within the Army. We now have nearly 60 members from Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster, Worksop, Chesterfield, and Mansfield.

Our monthly get-togethers are going from strength to strength. Many friendships are being formed. Everyone is welcome along with partners. The monthly raffle is proving very popular, especially with Cheryl Jones who clears up the majority of prizes each time!

A group of us enjoyed a day out at the National Arboretum at Lichfield in May, it was the first time for many, but we didn't let the rain dampen our day.

Gina Spacey and her son Jordan took part in the WRAC Lioness 10K in Bristol and many of us sponsored Jordan, buddy!

I was fortunate enough to be invited to The Not Forgotten Garden Party and met my lovely friend Helen Lloyd who is having such a fantastic time at the RHC.

Christmas brings us a shopping trip over to Germany for the markets and the first of our get-togethers at Christmas at a party night at a local hotel (an all-inclusive bar is a bonus).

Special thanks must be given to Debbie Wainwright who has sorted us all out with organising trips and events and Cathy Munro MBE as ever, the backbone for Central Region.



London & South East

Canterbury - Jenny Smith

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 1pm, with the exceptions of May, July, August, and November this year. In June, we had a delightful boat trip from Sandwich Harbour to see the seals. This special outing was organised to honor Susan Wing, our esteemed Chair and Honorary Chaplain to the WRAC Association, who is commemorating two significant milestones this year: the 60th anniversary of her commissioning in August 1964 and the 30th

anniversary of her ordination at Canterbury Cathedral on July 1, 1994. The trip was a resounding success, with beautiful weather, great company, and the sight of numerous seals basking on the riverbanks. After our return to land, we wrapped up our celebration with a delightful lunch at the harbour café.

We are excited to welcome new members Janet Beattie, Clair Baxter (WRNS), and Joan Crossland-Page, and there is also interest expressed by another potential member.

With sadness, we inform you of the passing of Mrs. Pauline Cooper (WRNS) on June 24.

Currently, our group consists of 21 members, with 14 actively joining us when they can.



Greater London - Chrissie Mills

The ladies of the Greater London Branch continue to meet bi-monthly at the National Army Museum, conveniently located next door to the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Recently, 10 members visited the Household Cavalry Museum at Horse Guards Parade. We were treated to an informative tour by the Director, Nicola, and the Chief Guide. The museum, which serves as the HQ of the Household Division, boasts an exceptional collection of rare and unique treasures. These include ceremonial uniforms, royal standards, musical instruments, and horse furniture, all related to the duties of the Household Cavalry Regiments. We were introduced to the impressive horses in their stables by Adam, the Corporal of Horses. Up close, the horses are quite large! We even had the chance to feed them small treats, like carrots. Interestingly, the size of the horse stables corresponds to the rank of the rider. It was a fantastic day for all who attended, and we highly recommend a visit to anyone interested.

On July 2nd, the ladies gathered for a picnic lunch in St James's Park. Despite being prepared with coats and umbrellas, we celebrated Christine Hayman's birthday and enjoyed a lively game of passing the parcel after catching up. The sun finally made an appearance as we were leaving, but we were undeterred and looked forward to doing it again.

Looking ahead, we are planning a river trip on the Thames in September and a Christmas lunch at the Union Jack Club.

Invicta Branch – Wendy Staden

Well, where do we start over the last few months?

The ladies of the WRAC Invicta Branch here in Kent have been very busy out and about and one of those activities is enjoying meeting up for our monthly lunches.

We try to arrange a venue that is convenient and easily accessible for all members to get to by train or car. Our meetings are normally held in Maidstone on the last Saturday of every month. We have had a few new members join our group and lunches over these last few months which is wonderful to see. Welcome ladies...

As well as the monthly lunches, the ladies have been honoured to be involved with both the Royal British Legion in Ashford and the Not Forgotten events throughout the first half of the year.

Margaret Ahmed Mohamed and Janette Brook attended the event held in the Memorial Gardens in Ashford on 27th January 2024 along with many veterans from the Army, Navy, and Air Force to show their respects to the fallen.

Kay Styles, Eve Carroll, Jacky Elliman and Annette Erskine attended the event held at Guildford Cathedral on 1st Feb 2024. Unfortunately, Annette had a nasty fall on the way to the event, but she soldiered on and still managed to attend. Annette Erskine attended the event at the Royal Hospital Chelsea on 23rd March 2024 and thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Eve, Margaret, Kay and Annette attended the event over two days. Eve and Margaret even managed to get an autographed book and a photo with the Celebrity chef Dean Edwards. Tia Gregory attended the raising of the D-Day 80th Anniversary flag in Ashford and the Invicta ladies were invited to attend a D-Day Summer Ball held by the Royal British Legion along with several service veterans on 15th June 2024. A fantastic night had by all, and we didn't embarrass ourselves much

On behalf of the WRAC and Ashford Kent RBL, I attended four civic events on 6 June 2024 commemorating D-Day 80. Organised by Ashford Borough Council and with the Lady Mayor Lyn Studdards.

D-Day 80 flag raising at the Civic Centre Tannery Lane Ashford. I read the formal Exhortation and the Kohima Epitaph at the service of remembrance in the memorial gardens. Attended a 1940's-themed luncheon garden party at Montford House Residential home again with the mayor and other branch members. Concluding with the D-Day 80 Beacon lighting with the Mayor in Civic Park Ashford. A truly wonderful and fitting day of remembrance!



AREA REPORT - Amanda Foster

It has been a roller-coaster from the start of the year and not quite as I had planned. It's a shame as the year started well, with new contacts from the south coast and meeting some great members at the Guildford Cathedral WRAC 75 event. It was a fabulous event when all you had to do was listen to the joyful sound of chatter during afternoon tea. There were lots of smiling faces, excitement and new connections, as well as some meeting after 30 years. Having events like these is important, so that we can gather and catch up, putting names to faces. One great suggestion was to have some Popup Picnics and maybe widening our welcoming arms to more people. We might be moving out of the summer season, but when has the weather ever stopped us?

Sadly, some of our more established branches have been lost after members more senior years have moved on. However, some discussions have started about more "informal" groups, and this is to be encouraged. Perhaps we could gather once a quarter as an Area too. Groups/Branches merging has worked with the Isle of Wight joining in with the mainland, but they still have their identity and as we move forward, we need to adapt and be flexible with our approach. The key is to gather where and when you wish, but don't feel it needs to be formal.

The introduction of free membership has no doubt encouraged more to join and secure the benefits of being a WRAC Association member, so we should all spread the word wherever and whenever we can.

As the South and South West Area is relatively near to Cardiff, I do hope that we will return some good numbers at the Grand Reunion. Don't forget that if you need financial assistance to get to the location, you can apply for it. It has been mentioned numerous times, but remember, if you don't ask, you don't get.

Bristol - Judith Stinchcombe

We celebrated our Branch Anniversary this year with a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum, and an overnight stay in Tamworth. Nine of us stayed at the Globe Inn, which we highly recommend.

Having arrived, we meandered through the town to look at the shops, or so we thought. We walked up into the arcade which opens out onto Tamworth Castle grounds. Wow! We had walked into an 'Award Winning Heritage Site'. The flower beds in the park grounds were stunning, and there was a flower arrangement to the 80th D Day anniversary. We found the park café, where we had tea and Eccles cakes. On our way back we came across St Edith's, a 9th century church, and although it was closed the Tamworth Memorial Wall, commemorating WWII, stands proud.

The next day we made our way to the National Memorial Arboretum, where we paid our respects at the WRAC Association plot and laid a wreath. We have been before, but

there's always something different to see. This time, it was Army Medical Corps Day, D Day commemorations, and a new Standard was presented, followed by a parade led by Tidworth Military Band. We did the train tour, the Burma Railway talk, and the Shot at Dawn talk, then had coffee before buying something to take home from the shop. Our summer programme continues with afternoon tea in a Branch member's garden, a trip to the Bristol Air Raid shelters and a trip to the Chocolate Factory.

The Branch meets once a month, and everyone is welcome.



Plymouth - Ann Williams

This year so far has been good to Plymouth Branch.

After a fabulous Christmas Lunch at Moments Cafe we continue to meet there on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 12.15. It was here that 3 new members tracked us down from the South & South West WRAC Association Facebook page, (thank you Amanda Foster).

As Plymouth is her home town, Liza Jarvis has joined us for a few meetings explaining her work on the Female Transformation Project.

If anyone is on holiday in the area you are more than welcome to join us for our monthly meeting or on one of our outings. Give Ann a call on 01752 364481.



Portsmouth & Isle Of Wight - Val Duke



On 11th November members attended a service at Fort Nelson after which there were various talks given. The following day the branch was represented at the guildhall square parade with standard & wreath laying.

It goes without saying that this was followed in December with the traditional Christmas luncheon at the Lady Hamilton.

In February a number of us drove up to Guildford to join in the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the WRAC followed by Evensong. It was a very fulfilling and positive experience. We were not only able to meet up with members from other branches but used the occasion to forward ideas for future events meeting and befriending others.



Once again we were invited to the Mayor Making ceremony; held on the 11th May where Chris represented the branch.

The branch was presented with a model of a WRAC soldier in 1970's dress by a Mr Ian Calderwood. It was passed to him by a friend who lived in South Africa, whose wife owned it. The origin is not clearly known as the lady owner was never in the services.

Chris, Phyllis and Sally attended the D-Day service at the stone near canoe lake on the morning of the 6th June. Sally paraded the standard, and Chris marched with the veterans. It was a wonderful turn out, lots of people. On the Saturday (8th June) Sally again paraded the standard for combined forces day.

Finally, we look forward to celebrating Marjorie's 100th birthday in July.

Salisbury - Amanda Foster

Salisbury Branch members have been rather busy and absolute stars.

January saw one of our ladies start her new life at Royal Hospital Chelsea and it's safe to say that IP Maggy Ashmore has settled in very well and is enjoying all the opportunities that come her way. A small group of us attended a rather interesting talk in the visitors' centre at Stonehenge about Trench artwork. We heard some great human stories about how artwork linked soldiers with home when they were miles away. It appears we have several budding Crown Green Bowls players. Our thanks to Janice Rowe (a high-level player) who has organised and encouraged us to take part.

Several members attended a Not Forgotten Royal Garden Party and looked fabulous. The weather came through and everyone shone in their outfits. Also, Jackie and Linda Clark had a great Bee-Keeping experience via the NFA. Founders Day in June was attended by quite a few Branch members, and it was great to see Maggy beaming away in her scarlet tunic. Thanks to Carol Martin who rallied, herded and sorted out a great trip to Bombay Sapphire Gin. It was a huge success.



We are now looking forward to an evening with Salisbury Punting. Our concern must be who will fall in. Probably me!

Branch members enjoy attending AFBC events in and around Salisbury. We would encourage others to look at Breakfast Clubs, to catch up with other veterans and show the chaps that we are not the silent types.



Wales & the West

South Wales - Deserie Mansfield

Here in South Wales, we have a growing membership. We are encouraging women from the other Services to join us, and we are fast becoming a happy band of female veterans. Happily, we have gained a new member, Claire Wheeler Kirk from the recent recruiting drive by the WRAC Association.

We meet in various locations so that we can cover the whole area fairly. Caerphilly, Newport, Swansea and Cardiff all saw a great turnout of members. We are trialling various days and times to see what works best for all.

In June, we hosted the Wales and the West Area Reunion and AGM. With my trusty team of Debbie Amphlett, Kath Smith and Marg Davies, we sorted everything out and were pleased that it was enjoyed by all. One of the loveliest moments was when Debbie Amphlett was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation, for the sterling work she continues to do for the Branch.

On Armed Forces Day, 8 of us gathered in the United Services Club in Cardiff. There was a TV crew on site and, once they realised that we were there in our own right as veterans, I was interviewed and it was broadcast later in the day. Autographs are available - for a price.

Our paddleboarding trip was blown off course, so we are awaiting a rearranged date. Also, we have plans to visit the National Memorial Arboretum in the future. We're looking forward to a busy time ahead.



Bedworth - Gina Spacey

Bedworth Branch was formed in early May 2024, after several conversations I had with Angi Trenfield.

I have returned to Bedworth after 42 years, and to be back in my hometown is lovely. Angi and I met whilst I was pushing my dad on the Bedworth Armistice Parade. Angi was pushing her husband Colin, who is a Coldstream Guards veteran. Bedworth has the biggest and most famous Armistice Parade in the country.



Our plan is to have a very informal branch, who meet for coffee, lunches, and occasional outings, whilst supporting each other. We hope to hold a lunch meet up in September, a trip to the National Memorial Arboretum in early November, and a Christmas jumper function in early December. The dates have yet to be confirmed.

By the time you read this, we will have had our first summer function at the Olde Chequers Pub in Bulkington, Warwickshire. We currently have 8 attending and that's great. I will tell you about the event next time.

I will be laying the WRAC Wreath at the Armistice Day Parade in Bedworth on Monday 11 November. It's always a mad dash for me to be there, after marching with Fighting With Pride in London at the Cenotaph.

I have been working hard in our local area to promote the WRAC Association and, of course, the free membership. It is going really well, and I have already signed up a WRAC veteran in her mid-70's. Happy days.



Birmingham – Babs Anderson

Birmingham Branch has members who are far-flung. It is therefore quite convenient that our venue is only a short tram ride away from Birmingham's New Street and Moor Street Stations. It's also in the nightclub area!

We are still causing chaos in Wetherspoons on Broad Street in the city centre at lunchtime every first Wednesday of the month. The locals particularly enjoy it when we play one of our Beetle Drives. It's bedlam!

We held our famous Christmas Jumper Bash in January and had a lovely time entertaining members of other Branches, who joined us for the fun. The next week found 30 of us at the Hippodrome Theatre, ready to giggle our way through our annual pantomime. Oh yes, we did!

Rosie Garrison and Heather Gaughran have set up the Birmingham Branch Tenpin Bowling League. They have arranged a trophy for the winner and a wooden spoon for the loser at each round. The standard has been fairly high, with nobody resorting to using the bumpers or kiddies' ramp. It looks like tenpin bowling is now a regular outing for us. If any other Branches fancy taking us on, we're up for that.

Several Brum Branch members took on the annual challenge of the Bristol 10k. We all managed to get round, within the two-hour time limit and without injury.

We are looking forward to getting into as much trouble as we can in the next few months. Keep your eye on us.



Marches & Mid Wales - Elaine Smith

Marches and Mid Wales Branch held pre-Christmas and post-Christmas lunch meetings, ate various things, shared various stories, 'won' raffle prizes, shared mirth and merriment, then went home. At our AGM we were joined by two new members, both canines, who really enjoyed the freshly roasted chicken that had been brought along as part of our Bring and Share lunch.

Thank you to Deanna Williams for her many years of dedication to the RBL Poppy Appeal. She has now stepped down from being the RBL Area Co-ordinator. Unfortunately, Deanna took a wrong step on her stairs and ended up in hospital for a few weeks, though she is recovered now. Be careful Deanna!

Several of our Branch members have been privileged to attend The Not Forgotten Association's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, Skiing in Colorado, Wimbledon Centre Court, Veterans' Lunches and Christmas Lunches with entertainment, Fun Festivals and manning a stand at The Ideal Home Exhibition.



In June, Gill Turner and Elaine Smith held a Garden Games Afternoon at their home. Games had been set out around the garden and played in pairs, but individual scoring.



It appears that most of the players made up their own rules though. Half way through the 6 games (7 if you count the Air Rifle Target Shooting that was just for fun), we all stopped for tea. This was another 'Bring and Share' event, so there was quite an assortment. We're still eating it as you read this!

Hereford- Lynda Armstrong

Last November, Miriam Unwin organised afternoon tea at The Blue Light Café in Hereford. The staff were so attentive, that it made for a wonderful afternoon. It is now an annual event.

Joyce Nicholls has been collecting filled shoe boxes, which then go to Ukrainian female military personnel, for which they are incredibly grateful.

In January, we had an enjoyable post-Christmas lunch at the Green Man in Fownhope and were joined by other Branches and Associations.

The Veterans Summer BBQ was special this year, as it was our Branch's 35th anniversary. In 1989 Jo Anscombe, Ena Price, and Mary Nicholls, along with others, had started what is now our thriving Branch, having 66 members, including 7 new this year.

We often get invited to other Association functions and already this year have had quite a few. One invitation was from Hereford & Worcester Grenadier Guards Association to their D-Day afternoon tea. Belinda Matthewman was the only member of the Branch who could attend, but Ann Stack and Elaine Simpson of Gloucester Branch also attended. They were all made very welcome and had a lovely day.

We wish one of our ATS ladies, Jo Anscombe, a happy 100th birthday back in August.

A trip to Weston-Super-Mare is possibly on the cards for September and a return visit to The Mayor of Hereford's parlour in October. Happily, our diaries are quite full already.



Gloucestershire- Ann Stack

Autumn saw a return visit to The Medals Office based at Imjin Barracks and was again a popular and informative morning. We feel very lucky to have this on our doorstep and once again we learned about the history of medals; the ribbon colours and their meanings and to learn from our Guide, that he was responsible for the design and colours of the new Nuclear Test Medal. A former WRAC Veteran who now works as a War Detective, shared the work she does along with examples of artifacts found and used to identify soldiers who had fallen, usually in The Great War. DNA, historical evidence and investigative work can repatriate those long lost soldiers to their families of today. It was fascinating, poignant and humbling.



Our first outing of 2024 was a Crazy Golf experience at the aptly named 'Putt, Putt.' We had winners and those who won a bit more! Plus, we were all given a Fortune Cookie each which yielded two free cocktails. Straws at the ready and 8 of us shared them before the fire alarm sounded, emptied the building and so we departed for a very tasty Turkish Lunch.

The lovely Frances Fairclough, who passed away in 2023, bequeathed Gloucestershire WRAC Veteran's Branch a sum of money. In response to this, we presented a bench plaque to her family in remembrance of Frances and laid a wreath at her resting place. Her husband has since affixed the plaque to her favourite seat in their garden and he joins her on sunny mornings to remember and enjoy the flowers and plants she so loved.

With the remaining bequest, a cream tea will be organised to welcome new and existing Members in our Branch. In the spirit of camaraderie and new friendships that will be made, this feels the best way to remember Frances and her generosity.



Gloucester Armed Forces Day arrived even bigger and better. We marched to the beat of The Nailsworth Silver Band and our Parade was led by The Gurkha Rifles. We marched from The Cathedral through the City and were dismissed at The Quays. Our route was packed with well-wishers who cheered and clapped as we passed by and we had many visitors to our stall, promoting of course our Branch and The WRAC Association.

Oxfordshire- Karen Smith

Since the last Lioness we have been enjoying monthly lunch meetings, and due to increased numbers attending, we have been allocated our own room.

Jean Mills and I have now managed to sort out a bank account, which will be useful for next year, as we will be hosting the Wales and West Area AGM and Reunion.

We presented Christine Townsend with a clock and book voucher, as a thank you from us for starting the group 10 years ago.

I will be sending all our members a letter, to ask if there is anything they need from us as a group, if the details I have are correct and they get the Lioness. With members' permission, I hope to interview them about their service, and submit an article for the Lioness.

A few of our members attended the Flag Raising for the 80th anniversary of D-Day, which was not done very well. We arranged a meeting with the council to put our views across, which has forged a better relationship between us. We now receive information about civic events that concern all veterans and Armed Forces Day Flag Raising was much better organised.

We have attended a BBQ with the RAOC veterans and met with WRNS Veterans at Annie's Tearoom. I am also looking to contact Pioneer veterans in our area.

We paraded on Remembrance Sunday and decorated a Christmas tree in St Edburg's Church.

Three of our members are also members of the military wives choir, forging a stronger relationship with them.



Shropshire - Sandra Davies

Hello from the Shropshire Branch. We hope that we find you well.

Our usual contingent paraded at the Cenotaph in November. A group of us attended an International Ballet in Oakengates, where we had a wonderful time. Thanks, Pauline Hatton, for the suggestion. Also in November, we got news that we were the proud owners of a new Recruiting Gazebo. Thank you, Michelle Patterson, for organising it.

Early December saw a large group of us in Solihull for a Not Forgotten Christmas Lunch, where we had a wonderful time. We held our Branch only party in mid-December, with good food and wonderful company. Then, later in December, we paid our annual visit to the panto, and we were all in stitches, as usual.



At the end of February, we held our post-Christmas lunch in Shrewsbury. The food and company were excellent, again. In March, we played host to the first visit of the NFA to Shropshire. The planning that went into it was well worth the time and effort. Photos of the event appeared in The Shropshire Magazine.

Our new Branch Recruiting Gazebo had its first outing on Armed Forces Match Day at Shrewsbury Town FC. It's awkward to put up, but well worth the effort, as we recruited 3 new members. Chris Powell organised a trip to Llandudno in March. It was rather breezy, but the sun shone for most of the time. Edith Spragg organised a free trip to the Penderyn Whisky distillery, which was well worth the visit. A small group of us did some sampling, which we thought was our duty. And finally, 6 members attended a NFA garden party at Buckingham Palace. It was a marvellous day all round.



Tamworth - Chris Whitehead

Tamworth and District Branch has a steady membership of around 24, with a regular group of 8 to 10 attending get-togethers. We now hold alternate meetings in Tamworth, whilst holding the others at various locations around the area. We are also trialling an evening meeting in August.

Since our last report, we have been manning the RBL Poppy stalls, marching in the Remembrance Day parade in Tamworth and meeting up for a lovely Christmas lunch.

I was able to attend the WRAC Association AGM in London on behalf of the Branch and the very interesting 'Soldiers' Stories' event at the National Army Museum the previous evening.

We met up with Sheffield Branch in May, then Birmingham and Manchester Branches in June at the National Memorial Arboretum. We enjoyed the camaraderie.

Nicola Scott was lucky enough to be invited by The Not Forgotten to attend the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May. She had a very special and memorable day.

Tamworth Branch member, Debbie Walker MBE was proud to take part in the Guard of Honour commemorating 40 years since the murder of PC Yvonne Fletcher. A newly refurbished memorial was unveiled at the event.



Elaine Hanson took part in the Supporting Wounded Veterans Ocean Challenge and was also selected for training with the GB Para pentathlon team. We wish her well in her endeavours.

We miss our members who are unable to join us for meetings and wish them speedy recoveries.

Worcester - Jane Griffin-Ash

My approach is simple. I select a pub in Worcester, ask if they can cater for 20 or so crazy women, pick a midweek date and time, then go out via Facebook and WhatsApp to get numbers. Worcester is fairly easy to get to, with good transport links, so we welcome people from several surrounding counties. We don't need to raise any funds, as everyone pays their own bill. We don't even have a raffle to organise. All we have to do is turn up, chat and eat lunch. That's our laissez-faire approach.

We have met up several times since the last Lioness, with hardly a hiccup. However, there was one occasion, when I had made the arrangements with a pub, only for them to have forgotten the booking. It left us trotting round Worcester, trying to find somewhere suitable for a large group of women at lunchtime. But we managed it and still had a lovely time. The Army taught us to be resourceful.

If you are considering setting up a group like ours in your area, I am enthusiastic to share my experience. Please feel free to contact me. When I formed the Worcester Branch, my aim was absolutely clear – 'Ladies that lunch'. There would be no bells and whistles, and no stress or responsibility. I wanted to bring veterans together in a relaxed environment, where they enjoyed each other's company, felt they belonged and went home feeling that they had spent time with comrades.



North East

Cleveland - Suzanne Allan

Cleveland Branch is a small Branch, with only 8 members, ranging in age from 56 to 90. But we are a happy bunch. We generally meet every 4th Wednesday of the month at The Dovecote pub for lunch and an exchange of information about WRAC Association matters, but in August we go on an outing to somewhere exciting. This coming August, the bus to Whitby will cost one of us £2 each way, but it's free for everyone else, as they all have their Older Person's Bus Pass.

We are looking forward to the day and a sneaky ice cream.

One of the things we are looking into is the laying up of our Branch Standard. Many years ago, our old Standard was laid up in one of the local churches and we hope to do the same with our current one shortly. Getting hold of the vicar to make the arrangements is the difficult bit. Once we have a date, we will have a special event to mark the occasion. In the meantime, our present Standard Bearer, Ann will continue to carry it, while she is able.

One of our favourite meetings in the year is when we gather to celebrate Christmas. Last year was a lovely occasion and we all had a good time. We are planning to do the same this year. Why not come and join us?

East Riding & North Lincolnshire - Dorothy Mitchelmore

January saw members from East Riding & North Lincolnshire branch keen to get the 2024 calendar off to a good start with lunch at Wingfield Farm near the iconic Humber Bridge. We set about plotting our calendar for the first half of the year.

In February we crossed the Humber Bridge into Lincolnshire to meet up with members south of the Humber and went for a lovely Sunday roast at the Nelthorpe Arms in South Ferriby and in March, our ladies got together for lunch at the Ferguson & Fawcett pub in Walkington.

In April (as a change to our pub lunches!) we decided on an oriental theme so booked a Thai restaurant in Beverley, it was a nice change and experience for us.

All the chatter couldn't hide the excitement that our branch had been very fortunate to receive an invitation by The Not Forgotten Association to the Buckingham Palace Garden party, what an immense privilege and honour for our members and their guests. By May all the hard work and logistics were in place, the outfits had been sourced and what a beautiful sight we were as we travelled to London on trains and automobiles (no planes!).

What a military operation it was. The weather was dreadful all week, but Mother nature certainly delivered sunshine on the day. All who attended had an amazing day at the Palace meeting celebrities and having their photos taken with them. We thank all at The Not Forgotten for our wonderful day.



Lincolnshire Wolds and Coast - Betty Gash

Our branch has been formed to cover the Lincolnshire Wolds and Coastal areas, following a meeting of Lorna Jackson, Lesley Lewis and Betty Gash in May 2023. It was agreed that future meetings would be held in Alford, which is within easy reach of the Wolds and Coastal Towns. It was suggested that further meetups could also be at the Skegness AFVBC every other Saturday.

In May, Lesley Lewis and Betty Gash attended the Commonwealth War Graves Commission event at the Scartho Road Cemetery, Grimsby. It was an informative event and pleasing to see that part of the talk now includes the 26 ATS Servicewomen killed in Great Yarmouth, in a bombing raid on 11 May 1943. Private Ivy Moore and Private Roma Pearson are laid to rest at the cemetery.

Our May meeting was at the Museum of Rural Life at Alford Manor House. Lunch was followed by viewing the gardens and scarecrow display. A new member, Audrey joined the group and then Tracey from the Skegness AFVBC in June.

Betty ran in the Bristol 10k in May and was the first WRAC Association member to finish.

We had a fabulous day at the Armed Forces Day event in Cleethorpes on Saturday 29 June. It was lovely to bump into members of other Branches on the day.

Members of our Branch are due to attend the Not Forgotten 'Fun Fest' at Normandy Hall, North Lincolnshire on Monday 8 July 2024.

It is hoped that the Branch will grow to attract more members from the area now.



Red Nose Day - Lorna Jackson, Betty Gash, Lesley Lewis, Sharon McNicol

Leeds - Michelle Gibbs

Leeds is an informal branch with around 9 active members currently. No pomp and ceremony, just good old camaraderie and a welcome for anyone who would like to participate in their activities. Michelle arranges a brunch meet up around every 6 weeks at the Merchant pub in the city centre, which she posts on the WRAC Association Leeds Facebook page. Other events and get togethers are organised throughout the year, including joining friends across the female veteran community at the annual WRAC Dinner Club weekend (for those who are members). You can find Michelle's contact details at the end of this section of the Lioness, so please spread the word to any fellow veteran in and around Leeds, who may want to join in and make new friends.

On 29th June, setting out on a rainy day in Yorkshire, the ladies of Leeds set off for Derbyshire. Their destination was Chatsworth House, gardens and parkland. Heading south, the sun started to come out, which was a very welcome sight. They had packed up a fabulous picnic lunch, to be enjoyed in the parkland, where they would watch the Chatsworth Ladies cricket team play against a WRAC veterans' team. It turned out to be a beautiful day all round.

Ruth Kerry from the Branch, was honoured last year with an MBE for her dedication and commitment to significantly improving services for victims. Your fellow Branch members are very proud of you Ruth, as is your Association.



Newcastle - Tanya Hall

Newcastle had a healthy number of members on the books but not many had been able to attend meetings, for various reasons. The usual way to let people know about monthly meetings is through our Facebook Group then members will then let me know if they are able to make the meeting or not. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel some meetings, when only two of us were available.

However, since the WRAC Association membership became free, we have gained at least 10 new members and there has been more interest in getting together. We have also started having occasional meetings at the weekend and have managed to gather 10 members together in TGI Fridays for cocktails, lunch, putting the world to rights and more cocktails. Those present had such a good time that they wanted 'to do it again', so we decided to meet up again on 10 August. We are hoping that some of our WRAF and WRNS friends will also be able to join us.



On Armed Forces Day, Lesley Roberts, our North East Area Co-ordinator and I popped along to Stanley, County Durham to join other veterans to celebrate the day. It had been hoped that we could set up a stall to advertise our WRAC Association, but the legal hoops we had to jump through were off-putting, so we just turned up in our uniform and milled about. We had a great time anyway.

Why not join one of our meetings sometime?



BRANCH DIRECTORY

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Area Co-ordinator - Janette Deans
scotland.ni.area@wraca.org.uk

Aberdeen

Contact: Sandra Lemmon
Email: huggles46@btinternet.com

Fife & Tayside

Contact: Debbie Coupland
Email: debbiecoupland14@gmail.com

Stirling

Contact: Liz Dixon
Email: liz_m_dixon@yahoo.co.uk
Phone: 01786 474315

Edinburgh

Contact: Robbie Knox
Email: robbieknox55@gmail.com

Ulster

Contact: Sylvia Connachan
Email: conna2312@gmail.com
Phone: 07484 142194

Glasgow

Contact: Joyce Steele
Email: steele_joyce@hotmail.com
Phone: 0141 322 5639

North West

Area Co-ordinator - Dawn Hawker
northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Cumbria

Contact: Dawn Hawker
Email: northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Lancashire

Contact: Gail Newsham
Email: gaildkl@talktalk.net
Phone: 07939 505485

Liverpool

Contact: Pat Brown
Email: pat-br@hotmail.co.uk
Phone: 07896 486171

Manchester

Contact: Pip Flegel
Email: pipflegel2009@gmail.com
Phone: 07375 095532

Oldham

Contact: Kath Kirtley
Email: kathleenkirtley@gmail.com
Phone: 07910 925070

Wirral & Chester

Contact: Sharon Broderick MBE
Email: sharonbroderick139@sky.com
Phone: 07784 068826

Eastern

Area Co-ordinator - Lyn Hatch
eastern.area@wraca.org.uk

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire

Contact: Chris Barrett
Email: 78chrisbarrett@gmail.com
Phone: 0750 8322 989.

Colchester

Contact: Kerry Warnes
Email: kerrypam@hotmail.com
Phone: 07763 122474

Norfolk

Contact: Lyn Hatch
Email: wracnorfolk@aol.com
Phone: 07929 070665

Suffolk

Contact: Liz Ives
Email: lizives@hotmail.com
Phone: 01473 807099

Central

Area Co-ordinator - Cathy Munro
central.area@ wraca.org.uk

Derby

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

Doncaster

Contact: Veronica Hanson
Email: maisanyin@gmail.com
Phone: 01226714757

Grantham

Contact: Susan Goodes
Email: suegoodes482000@outlook.com
Phone: 07825 577486

Leicester And Nottingham

Contact: Sue Slattery
Email: central.area@wraca.org.uk
Phone: 0116 2592743

Lincoln and District

Contact: Sue Smith
Email: central.area@wraca.org.uk
Phone: 01636 671874

Peterborough and District

Contact: Vivien Hamilton
Email: vivienhamilton1@gmail.com
Phone: 07783 412278

Sheffield and Surrounding

Contact: Sandra Warne
Email: sandra.warne@btinternet.com
Phone: 077132 52521

Buckinghamshire District Branch

Contact: Cathy Munro MBE
Email: central.area@wraca.org.uk
Phone: 07786 260988

Rutland and District Branch

Contact: Cathy Munro MBE
Email:
central.area@wraca.org.uk
Phone: 07786 260988

Northamptonshire and District Branch

Contact: Cathy Munro MBE
Email:
central.area@wraca.org.uk
Phone: 077862 60988

London & South East

Area Co-ordinator - Amanda Foster
southeast.area@wraca.org.uk

Canterbury

Contact: Susan Foulks
Email: suefoulks852@gmail.com
Phone: 01843 613552

Greater London

Contact: Chrissie Mills
Email: chrissie.mills@hotmail.co.uk
Phone: 07505 199653

Worthing

Contact: Carol Hill
Email: cazhill6cazhill6@hotmail.com
Phone: 07790 922110

Invicta

Contact: Karen Radford
Email: radders67@gmail.com
Phone: 07702 651045

South & South West

Area Co-ordinator - Amanda Foster
southwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Bristol

Contact: Judith Stinchcombe
Email: wracbristolbranch@mail.com
Phone: 07837 455352

Plymouth

Contact: Ann Williams
Email: m_ann1@blueyonder.co.uk
Phone: 07714216592

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

Contact: Sally Watson
Email: sally1882@gmail.com
Phone: 02392 799028

Salisbury

Contact: Amanda Foster
Email: SalisburyWRACVets@gmail.com
Phone: 07788 316596

Torbay & Area

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

Winchester

Contact: Herme Emary
Email: winchester18.wrac.sec@gmail.com
Phone: 01962 880212

Wales & The West

Area Co-ordinator - Ann Stack
wales.west.area@wraca.org.uk

Bedworth & Surrounding Area

Contact: Gina Spacey
Email:
gina.spacey@forcesemployment.org.uk

Birmingham

Contact: Babs Anderson
Email: babs.blay@gmail.com
Phone: 07921 832094

Gloucestershire

Contact: Ann Stack
Email: anndewsnip@hotmail.com
Phone: 07842 831364

Herefordshire

Contact: Lynda Armstrong
Email: lynda.armstrong1960@gmail.com
Phone: 01443 837592

Marches & Mid Wales

Contact: Michelle Boyden
Email: midgeymoo.1963@gmail.com
Phone: 07812 037191

Oxfordshire

Contact: Karen Smith
Email: bobandkaren650@btinternet.com
Phone: 01869 321393

Shropshire

Contact: Chris Powell
Email: chris.powell3@mypostoffice.co.uk
Phone: 01743 241646

Tamworth

Contact: Chris Whitehead
Email: chris_wol@hotmail.com

Worcester

Contact: Jane Griffin-Ash
Email: janebgash@icloud.com
Phone: 07880 732245

Bradford

Contact: Lee Guthrie
Email: lee.guthrie@sky.com
Phone: 07909 961188

Cleveland

Contact: Suzanne Allan
Email: suzanne_allan416@hotmail.com
Phone: 07801 571528

East Riding & North Lincolnshire

Contact: Dorothy Mitchelmore
Email: mydeluxe06@icloud.com
Phone: 07897 449920

Lincolnshire Wolds and Coast Branch

Contact: Betty Gash
Email: bettygash1959@gmail.com

Grimsby

Contact: Gail Davy
Email: gaildavy240@gmail.com
Phone: 01472 347868

Hull & East Riding

Contact: Janet Mitchell
Phone: 01482 508087

Leeds

Contact: Jayne Maitland
Email: jayne849@msn.com
Phone: 07904 084491

Newcastle

Contact: Tanya Hall
Email: tanyalouise4472@gmail.com
Phone: 07590 323497

Introducing the new Branch News Editor: Babs Anderson

We hope you are enjoying our new look to our branch news pages. Babs Anderson is the new editor of this section, which is basically a great excuse for her to pick up the phone to our members all around the country and have a natter about what everyone is up to – she didn't need asking twice!

We hope to encourage more groups to send in their news. We have heard that some of our branches don't think that their meetings are interesting, or important, or have enough people attending to be featured, but we disagree! We would like to print details of meetings large and small, taking group outings or meeting in the local cafe. By sharing your news, you will be letting other members living nearby know what you are up to and encouraging them to join you for future meet-ups: you might inspire another group to try a new activity, and of course you are giving members all around the UK and the world the chance to see photos of old friends.

We are keeping branch news reports to 250 words and a couple of high-quality photos. We can flex a little, but the final decision will be for Babs to make – so send her bribes in the form of sugary treats. Every branch now receives a telephone call to gather their reports, so even if you don't think you have much to say, we will winkle it out of you and show our readers all the wonderful ways we are keeping camaraderie at the core of what we do across the UK.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue and to Babs for this wonderful new look and feel.



You told us... We listened

The WRAC family is simply the best - we understand each other - camaraderie and preserving traditions

Our Members' Survey was launched in Lioness and online in September 2023, a big thank you to those of you who responded. We received 204 responses which represents 7% of our members at the time. A 'good' survey response rate ranges between 5 and 30% so this was a little lower than we would have liked however we received some really interesting answers.

We asked you all what your main reason was for belonging to the Association. The top responses were all around friendship and camaraderie, but it was also really great to see that you valued our events, support services and Lioness.

1. Companionship/camaraderie/belonging
2. Esprit de corps/pride in serving/being part of a group of like-minded people
3. Friendship - keeping in touch with those I served with/old friends/to reminisce and making new friends
4. Socialising/events/reunions/trips
5. Keep up to date with Association news
6. Support
7. Lioness



I joined up to give me something else whilst nursing my terminally ill husband. I have since attended events and met other ex-WRAC ladies.

What would you like the Association to offer

- 
01. More social events
 02. Organised trips to historical sights
 03. Financial aid and support
 04. Regular updates and news letters
 05. New younger members, new people and friends
 06. News on fundraising activity and opportunities

Responses to the question "What would you like the Association to offer" were really varied, many of you said that they were happy with how things are which is lovely to hear, but we also had some brilliant suggestions which came up several times. Some of these are things which we already offer so we will look at how we might be able to make them more widely advertised and available. Others are ideas to look into for the upcoming year!

- More social events/tickets/discounted rates
- Organised trips to battlefields, sites of historical interest
- Financial aid and support
- More regular news/updates / online newsletter
- Form new groups
- New, younger members, new people, new friends
- News on fundraising activity and opportunities

In response to the question "What sort of Association events would you be interested in attending?" it is clear that the majority of our respondents are very keen for more to do locally, so we will look to work with our Area and Branch coordinators to see what could be implemented. The most popular responses were:

- Music events/concerts
- Meals out locally
- Day trips locally
- Remembrance
- Sporting activities locally



I have a sense of belonging and access to some wonderful events. Camaraderie and The Lioness magazine which just gets better!

We are pleased to see that music events are so appreciated and we are excited to have the Yorkshire Military Band join us for our Summer Event in Wigan, our Guildford Remembers Weekend in October and the Grand Reunion next March!

For Remembrance this year we have been assigned more tickets than ever before so it was wonderful to be able to offer them to everyone who applied. (Don't forget to let us know if you'd like to go next year!)

I am a member to connect with former colleagues and to keep abreast of what's happening because I am proud to have been in the WRAC.

Other responses told us that -

52% of respondents would be willing to provide support within their local area

35% of respondents would be interested in volunteering for the Association

90% of you were aware of the Benevolent Fund but only 70% of you knew how to access support from it, so if you would like to find out more please see our piece about the Benevolent Fund on pages 48-51. This also shares details about our Membership Support Grant and how it can help make it possible for more members to attend our events.

90% of respondents use Facebook and find this the best way to engage with us so we continue to use this as our primary social platform. However, a quarter of you use Instagram too so we will aim to start sharing more on there as well!

Thank you to all of you who took part in our survey, and we look forward to inputting your thoughts and feedback into our plans going forward.



WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS DINNER CLUB

Application for Membership

Please complete the form in BLOCK LETTERS

Full Name: Known as:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Tel No: Mobile:

Email:

WRAC/Armed Forces Service From: To:

Army/Service No:

Surname(s) when serving:

Trade/Job when serving:

I wish to join the WRAC Dinner Club and enclose £20 for 5-year Membership
Cheque/Postal Order must be made payable to: **WRAC Dinner Club**

**To pay by Bank Transfer the Account Number is 16974260 and the Sort Code 30-98-90.
Please put the Applicant's full name as the reference**

Signature: Date:

Please return the completed form to:

**Heather Bradbury, WRAC Dinner Club Membership Secretary
107 Canaan, The Pastures, Lowton, Warrington WA3 1EG**

Email: heather.bradbury@icloud.com

A 2nd Class Postage Stamp would be much appreciated. Thank you

(WRAC Dinner Club Membership Secretary to input Membership No:)

100th BIRTHDAYS

Jo Anscombe
Joyce Foster
Isabella Hamilton
Mary J Johnston
Marjorie D Marsh
Grace Taylor
Rosetta May Zurovcik



Congratulations to all of our members who have had birthdays since the last issue of the Lioness, especially to our new centenarians!

We hope you all enjoyed the card and flowers we sent you. Jo Anscombe certainly did, as we can see from these great photos. Joyce Nicholls writes:

One of our Branch founder members, our first Branch Secretary and ex ATS Mrs Jo Anscombe, turned 100 on the 7th August. Jo's army journey began on the 13th Feb 1942 when, along with 3 friends, she went to Guildford for initial Training. Jo was then attached to 40 Searchlight Battery at Newark, and after being demobbed in 1946 she went to live the peaceful village of Lindfield, Sussex.

Jo joined the WRAC Association 1985 in Brighton and eventually, after moving home to Hereford, Jo with Mrs Mary Nicholls, Ena Price, Joan Lloyd and I started Hereford Branch WRAC in 1989.

I was kindly invited by Jo's family, round to visit her to wish her a Happy Birthday. Jo was inundated with flowers and cards and some lovely ones were sent from Hereford Branch and Association HQ. Very many happy returns Jo



We love to see photos of our members with the flowers we send, so please send them to us here: editor@wraca.org.uk

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT THE VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

SATURDAY 16TH MARCH 2024, 14:00

The Following is a Precise of the Minutes of the AGM outlining the main points agreed and proposals approved. A full copy of the AGM can be found on our website at www.wraca.org.uk

Trustees Present:

Fiona Gardner CBE (FG) Chair and Vice-President
 Monica Jones (MJ) Chair of Benevolent Fund Major Grants Committee
 Timothy Savage (TS) Treasurer
 Barbara Johnson
 Dawn Munday
 Helen Merrington-Rust MBE
 Shân Veillard-Thomas
 Shelley Whitehead

Area Coords Present:

Janette Deans
 Lyn Hatch
 Dawn Hawker
 Lesley Roberts
 Nina Smith
 Ann Stack

Online:

Rowena Naile MBE (RN) Chair of Membership Council
 Cathy Munro MBE

Apologies:

Amanda Hassell
 Sue MacKenzie
 Isabel McCord
 Amanda Foster

In Attendance:

Paula Rogers (PR / CEO) Chief Executive Officer
 Jane Winfield (JW) Finance & Governance Officer (minutes)
 Liza Jarvis, (LJ) Female Veteran's Transformation Project (FVTP) – Guest Speaker
 Hannah West, Female Veteran's Transformation Project

Item	Notes
1	Chair's Opening Remarks - FG. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting in The Victory Services Club. Guest speaker Liza Jarvis of the FVTP was welcomed.
2	Apologies for Absence – FG. Apologies received from Amanda Hassell, Sue MacKenzie, Isabel McCord and Amanda Foster.
3	Confirmation of Minutes of 18th March 2023 AGM Meeting – FG The Minutes of the previous AGM held in March 2023 were published in the "Lioness" 2023/2 were approved.
4	Matters Arising – None
5a	Election of officials Proposed and approved: Fiona Gardner to stand for a further three-year term as Vice President. Rowena Naile to stand for a further three-year term as Deputy Vice President & Chair of Membership Council.
5b	Governance – FG The Trustees met 3 times this year. Isabel McCord stood down as Chair of the Benevolent Fund last July and was replaced by Monica Jones. Helen Merrington-Rust stood down as Deputy Chair of the Benevolent Fund Grants Committee. New Trustees are Dawn Munday and Shelley Whitehead. Two new trustees are being sought over the next year. Organisational Review As per Trustees Board meeting on 20th November 2023 the staff roles below that of CEO have been revised. Amanda Hassell, Sue MacKenzie and Barb Johnson led the review. Julie Winks is in role as Grants Officer and Jane Winfield is in role as Finance & Governance Officer. Two roles are being recruited for: Communications & Engagement Head And Membership & Volunteering Coordinator
5c	Treasurer's Report – TS Following legal advice, the Trustees took the decision in November 2023 to merge all the Association & Benevolent Funds into one fund. The Charity Commission will be informed with regards to what has been done.

Item	Notes
5d	Governance (continued) - FG. To inform future expenditure now funds have been amalgamated Trustees have agreed the following Principles for funding: Grant giving remains aligned to military charity sector norms. Association funding to be aligned to our strategy. Association funding to be frugal on administration and operating costs; spending what is required to deliver our outputs in a reasonable and efficient manner. Association funding is to be for the benefit of our members in accordance with our objects. Association funding in support of camaraderie and support is to be localised (within branch areas) and must not veer into activities that could be deemed a luxury. Members are expected to make a contribution to specific events. The Guidance for Funding is: Expanding Membership and Supporting Branch activities
6	Membership Council Report – RN (via Zoom) Helen Jephcote has stood as Area Coordinator for Scotland and NI and Janette Deans has filled this position. Cathy Munro is returning as the new Area Coord for the Central Area. Events over the past year included: “We will remember Her” campaign, held in 26 locations simultaneously. Royal Hospital Chelsea - presentation of a silver statuette. Summer Event held in Worthy Down. Remembrance Events, Guildford Cathedral 75th Anniversary event. We continue to identify items that provide support to members such as wheelchair blankets and coffin drapes. Formal contingents will be marching at the Cenotaph and in Guildford. Apply via HQ if interested. With regards to the Constitution one of the changes we want to make is a change to include the word Women. The Membership Council proposed reducing subscription costs to zero and the Trustees have agreed. Those present were asked to vote on reducing subscriptions to zero and this was passed by a unanimous vote.
7	Benevolent Fund Report – MJ. Grants offer a hand up not a handout. The Grant giving criteria is regularly reviewed to support those most in need. A partnership with the Veterans Charity meant that immediate support could be provided. Long term support and non-urgent items are still submitted through SSAFA or RBL. Details of how to apply for grants is available on the website and published in the “Lioness”.
8	Influence report – FG. We continue to be engaged and consulted on issues around female veterans. We play an active role in the Cobseo Female Veterans Cluster. Both Paula Rogers and I sit on the Executive for the FVTP. Members encouraged to read Ali Brown’s report in the last Lioness with regards to the Etherton review. We are not the pre-1992 WRAC. As an Association we focus on camaraderie for women who served. We welcome every former member of the WRAC to join their comrades and participate in our events and draw on mutual support as proud female veterans.
9	Annual Report – TS Benevolent grants increased from those awarded last year. Investments have recovered from the previous challenging year. The Charity remains financially healthy and will support members as long as required. Our Auditors, Rothmans found the accounts to be in good order, with no outstanding actions. We are meeting Charity Commission guidelines and are well-managed. The Lionesses led by Wendy Hooton raised funds and paid for fleece wheelchair blankets. Marg Davies’s walk and Pip Flegel’s sponsored scoot also raised funds for the Association. We are very grateful for legacies and this week received £90,000.00 from the estate of the late Susan Penelope Richards. Our main income stream comes from our investments. Trustees approved Brewin Dolphin to remain as our fund managers. A reminder that subs already paid this year cannot be refunded and future funds received will be treated as a donation.
10	Resolutions – FG No resolutions had been received. We did issue in advance, in accordance with our Constitution, proposed changes to the Constitution. These changes are simplification of language, bringing our Constitution in line with current recommendations by the Charity Commission. Of the changes, the one of substance is the one mentioned earlier by Rowena, which was adding the word “women” into our membership criteria.
11	Guest Speaker Introduction by Ali Brown Ali Brown introduced Liz Jarvis who outlined the work of the FVTP .
12	Any other business – FG No other business tabled or raised.
13	Dates of Next Meeting – FG AGM is on Saturday 22nd March 2025.
Full minutes and accounts available at wraca.org.uk	

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

Debbie Amphlett

Debbie has been a stalwart member of the WRAC Association Branch since the instigation of the Cardiff Branch in 2017. Despite her many commitments of job, family and personal health Debbie has remained constant, attending all meetings. She stepped up when the previous coordinator (Karen Frances) stepped down and she allowed herself to be “volunteered” to take over the role. Despite her misgivings and frequent protestations that she wasn’t right for the role and she wasn’t suited to the job, it was Debbie who kept the whole organisation together, becoming Secretary and all things admin on top of her role as Treasurer.

It is probably with great relief that she handed over the role of Secretary and she continues to wholeheartedly support Deserie (Current Secretary) in endeavours to regenerate the group, increasing its membership and coordinating events and experiences for the ladies of the group. It is safe to say that Debbie is central to the success of the development of the “WRAC Branch South Wales” and its sister organisation “Women Veterans South Wales”.

In her “spare” time she handcrafts beautiful raffle gifts to help with fundraising, particularly for Marg Davies’ 100 Mile Charity Walks and to raise money for the branch.

Debbie’s attitude and enthusiasm for the success of the WRAC Association and her continued support for individual members of the group are second to none. She does so without reservation, (particularly when a physical recce is called for – be it a pub or hotel! Lunch or refreshment!)

She is a star who is thoroughly appreciated and deserves to be recognised.

Thank you, Debbie.

***Nominated by Deserie Manfield - Secretary of:
WRAC Association South Wales Branch***

Debbie is a very capable, highly organised and giving person and she gives of her time generously to The WRAC and Female Veteran Branches in South Wales. Debbie’s support has ensured the continuation of a Branch and enabled another to grow. Whilst she remains very modest and prefers to stay out of the limelight, her contribution over the last seven years cannot be underestimated and it is the foundation on which South Wales thrives. Debbie very generously donates handcrafted items she makes to those fundraising and many have benefited from her generosity. Debbie is a huge asset to The WRAC Association and WRAC South Wales and exemplifies our motto: ‘Gentle in Manner. Resolute in Deed.’

This is a well-deserved nomination for a thoughtful, kind and hardworking WRAC Veteran.

By Ann Stack – Wales & The West Co-ordinator



Wendy Hooton

Wendy has been a member of the WRAC Association for over 30 years.

During this time, she served for 11 years as the Area Coordinator for the Eastern Area, supporting branches, and coordinating and encouraging members to get involved with their local groups.

Wendy is passionate about raising funds for the Association, and in 2013, the first 10K was run in Manchester with 10 runners, which laid the foundations for this annual event. As the years have gone by the number of runners/supporters has increased and in 2019 the WRAC Association’s centenary, 140 runners/walkers completed the York 10K. The funds raised from the York 10K saw the wonderful WRAC statue in our memorial garden at the NMA, a permanent memorial to women who served in the WRAC. These annual 10K runs are still being organised by Wendy.

Throughout the year Wendy has also encouraged members to help at the annual Bury St Edmunds Beer and Cider Festival, which results in a donation for all the hours worked by the team. She runs a Tombola store in Bury St Edmunds on Armed Forces Day, also ensuring that the Association is being recognised and remembered.

Over the years Wendy has given her time freely for the good of the Association.

In recognition of all her work and dedication to the WRAC Association, Wendy is deserving of a Certificate of Appreciation.

Nominated by Lyn Hatch – Area Co-ordinator of the Eastern Area



Pip Flegel

Pip is a great member of the Team, she set up the Manchester Branch at Barton Grange Aerodrome in Manchester to support the Ladies in the area.

The Branch started with just four members and has built up the Group to the success it is today.

She has worked tirelessly with the Branch to bring it to the standing it is at present.

The Manchester WRAC Branch are invited to many civil ceremonies within Manchester and Pip has made a great friendship with the outgoing Mayor of Manchester and is well thought of within the community.

Despite working on the Development of the Branch and her local community she also suffers from MS and is partially sighted.

She uses her wheelchair when necessary but prefers to use her Sticks to get around on.

Last year Pip decided that she wanted to give something back to the WRAC Association and therefore came up with the Hairbrained Idea to do a 'Mobility Scooter Challenge' and decided to go from where she signed her papers to where we as The WRAC did our basic training. This is a roundabout journey of 150 miles. Considering she was unable to travel on the motorways and was stuck only on A & B roads she started planning this journey.

Before the event, she was interviewed several times on her local radio station and was called by them regularly to see how everything was progressing.

In July 2023 Pip travelled from Coventry to Guildford Queen Elizabeth Housing Estate and then onto the Cathedral. Over five days the challenge was a stress on Pip due to her MS but she persevered and needed to rest every night. She was a media sensation covering BFBS radio interviews every day along with the BBC interviews. She started the journey at Coventry Motor Museum and met the Mayor of Coventry who saw her on her way. On her arrival at Guildford Cathedral, she was greeted by lots of WRAC, military groups and dignitaries. The evening was finished off with a reception at Guildford Fire Station.

During the Challenge a vast amount of money was raised and this was split between several charities, one being the WRAC Association. The other is all military charities.

Pip has gone above and beyond for the Manchester WRAC Branch and supports the ladies in the Group every day that she can, nothing is too small for her to do and she is like a mother hen with her chicks, every one of them is special in their way.

We as the Manchester WRAC Branch have now been 'Twinned' with Birmingham and have been asked if we could 'twin' with another branch that is newly forming to give them support.

Pip has built so many relationships with different Groups & Branches in the WRAC Family throughout the country where she is well respected and contacted for her wisdom and friendship. She sends daily messages to most people and encourages us when it is needed. If you are struggling Pip is there with a listening ear and a helping hand.

Pip is an inspiration to us all and, as mentioned previously, despite her disability, she soldiers on every day to strive to do her best for the WRAC & Manchester Branch.

I think a nomination for a Certificate of Appreciation could not go to a more deserving person.

Whilst I am the Area Co-Ordinator for the Northwest Area, my first and foremost venture with the WRAC Association was within the Manchester Branch where we attended several WRAC events and this, with a little push from Pip, is why I thought I could bring something back, just like her.

Nominated by Dawn Hawker - Area Co-Ordinator for the Northwest Area



If you like to nominate
someone for the certificate
of appreciation,
please contact your
area co-ordinator





Doris Sagar

My memories, my war *17 May 2024 I was in the army, the ATS.*

I used to go shopping with my mother in Lowestoft; it wasn't far from home, and we'd catch the bus. Then one day, I went to Lowestoft on my own, to the army recruitment office, and signed up. My mother was okay with it; she had brothers in the army. My dad was a man of few words and never repeated himself. He said, "You might find it is not what it is cracked up to be. You'll get a few shocks. Be prepared." He was right. However, when I look back on the army, I don't want to talk about the horrors of war; I want to remember 'My War,' a young girl on an adventure.

An army notification arrived, and I was to go to Victoria Station in London. I had never left my home before. I was quiet and shy, like a church mouse. There were so many people there, lots of young girls like me, and we did not know where we were going. We were segregated into groups, and I had to go to Brighton. After basic training near Brighton, I was posted to Windsor. Whenever I was posted, I didn't question it; you were not expected to say 'No'. Sometimes we would be told just to stand in a spot. You did not question it and did not worry because you knew that those in charge always knew where you were. You made some great friends in the Army, girls from all over the country. However, no sooner had we become best friends than we were all separated, time to move on - we didn't grumble.

I was very lucky to be in Windsor. We regularly saw the young princesses riding their horses. If we went to Windsor Castle, they were always about. Sometimes I felt like we were barging into their home. We didn't engage with them; they were just there. I remember it fondly; I was having the time of my life - not under parental control. Obviously, in the army, you could not do as you would like but did as you were told. I loved it, away from home, with no one watching me. I never had a minute of fear, perhaps a few close calls! There were always planes over the castle as if they were targeting the Royal Family; I suppose



they were. It felt safe though; we were going out of our way to protect them. After Windsor, I was posted to Combined Operations in Whitehall. My boss was Lord Louis Mountbatten. I was billeted in a house in Sloane Square. I was trying to get home there when an air raid struck. We got used to it to a certain extent, but on this occasion, I knew I had to move. Oh my God, I had to put a speed on, running up the street. I was so relieved to get in the front door, to just get off the street.

Even though our army pay was only about ten shillings a week, we still managed to go to the cinema and have tea out once a week. On our day off, we used to go to St Martin in the Fields for a snack and a cup of tea and homemade cakes. We had a lot of fun. I remember being in Lowestoft too, shopping with my mother when there was a bombing raid. We had to dive into a big shop. We didn't panic, but I do remember wishing my mother would hurry. She could not move as fast as me and was slowing us down. I can't remember D-Day. I was a Drawing Office Assistant. We were drawing up plans for beach landings. There were maps of beaches all over the Drawing Office walls. I remember in the combined 'ops' meetings Normandy being mentioned on several occasions. We knew they were planning something because we were asked to work very long hours as it got closer. However, it did not concern me - the D-Day planning was at a higher level. I recall what seemed like lots of important people driving up Whitehall and Marble Arch and lots of Americans.



Combined Operations Headquarters 1943
Lord Louis Mountbatten & HM King George VI

I met my husband in the army when he was posted to the drawing office at Combined Ops. He was from Yorkshire. It took a long time for me to find out his real name. His family called him by his first name, Herbert, but he



preferred 'Ken,' short for Kenton, his middle name. We had three daughters: Marilyn, Caroline, and Jacqueline. After we were married, one of us had to be posted away; we weren't allowed to work together. I was posted to Ripon to continue my Draughtswoman training. Then I was posted to Perth in Scotland, and that was where I was when peace was declared. I came out of the army first, demobbed they used to say. I had to travel from Perth to a military dispersal unit in Northampton.

My mother was pleased I came out. She had lost a son, Harold William Culham, my brother. He was an Army fusilier; he was killed at sea on a troop ship when it was torpedoed. He was buried at sea. I don't know how you ever get over losing a child. He had two children, so a son to carry on the family name. I had a sister too, Violet Ann. She never joined the army; she farmed the land with her husband all through the war. They were real country people. Looking back, my ATS days were some of the happiest of my life. My adventure. Although we were living in a man's world, we were still treated like ladies. Everywhere we went, we were treated with kindness. The do's and the don'ts of army life just became our new way of living.





Obituaries - Their Final Salute



BARBIE MAJOR (NEÉ BRYANT)

23rd April 1923 – 8th March 2024



Barbie Major, who died on 8 March aged 100, spent her war years in the Women's Land Army (WLA) having previously worked in a bank.

She wrote 'In December 1941 unmarried women began to be conscripted for war work, in the forces, factories or on the land. Having been to boarding school, I didn't want the discipline of the forces, so I joined the Land Army. We had to get up at 4 am and wash with cold water. A change from my previous life!'

Working on a chicken farm in Surrey, Barbie drove to London weekly with day-old

chicks, delivering them to all the London stations to be sent to other farms. *'A driving test was not required during the war and there was very little traffic on the roads, so it was great fun until the doodlebugs started to arrive!'*

Barbie was very proud of her time in the WLA, and it meant a lot to her when the British Government announced in 2007 that survivors would receive a special Veteran's Badge. In 2000 the WLA were invited to march past the Cenotaph and Barbie attended two Remembrance parades there.

In 2022 she joined the WRAC Association contingent at the Cenotaph, accompanied by Lt Col (Retd) Mary Woollard MBE, and laid a wreath on behalf of the WLA.

Barbie was born in Cobham, Surrey, the third daughter of four. Her father Francis Bryant was a great sportsman playing Football for the Corinthians and Tennis at Wimbledon in 1908 and 1911. It was a privileged upbringing. Barbie did well at school although sport and singing were her main interests, and she was an accomplished tennis player.

The war changed everything, and Barbie was soon in the farming world. In September 1945, Barbie married John Major who was serving in the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Within days John was off, bound for Japan, but following the bombing of Hiroshima, he was sent to Alexandria.

A year later they were at last together until they reached Port Said where John had to follow the regiment to Palestine. At 22 years of age, Barbie found herself alone abroad, having never left England before. But luckily, she soon found her feet: *'Father's cousin invited me to Cairo. I had a lovely time there staying with him in the Heliopolis Palace Hotel. We went to the races, to the Turf Club for meals as well as visits to the Pyramids'.*

Based in Ismailia, Barbie joined John in Palestine in December 1946. Keen to work, she volunteered at the hospital, however, the Director Jack Suchet (David Suchet's father), said 'I don't want amateurs in my hospital!'

Barbie returned to England in 1948. *'In Palestine, I couldn't keep my driving licence up, so had to take a test - in Guildford! My eldest son Jonathan was about to be born so the instructor couldn't wait to get it over as quickly as possible!'*

Following the birth, she joined John in Germany. In 1951, when John was in Korea, her second son was born, and a daughter followed in 1952. They moved to N. Ireland in 1954 where a daughter was born and back to Germany before her fifth child, a boy was born. In total Barbie and John moved home over 15 times but were fortunate to be left her godmother's house near Godalming where they lived for 20 years before settling near their eldest son in Ruthin, N. Wales in 1989.

When asked about her life, typically Barbie would paint a rosy picture of tennis tournaments and parties at the Officers' Mess! *'Unlike today, our General, Sir Gerald Templer didn't want any of his' wives working. It suited me!'* But she was a loyal officer's wife and would have been very involved within the army community.

As it was, Barbie had her work cut out with her five children who, even with help, were a full-time job!

The church was an important part of Barbie's life, living in Church Street, Cobham and attending church every Sunday (where she first caught John's eye when they were both 15).

At 100, Barbie was still driving two months before she died. 85 friends and relatives attended her 100th birthday lunch at Woodlands Park Hotel, near Cobham, a house built by her great uncle in 1885. She returned to Wales to entertain another 100 guests at home. Well-over 100 birthday cards are still proudly displayed at home, with her card from King Charles to the fore.

Barbie is survived by her five children, thirteen grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren - and she knew that two more were due shortly.

'I've been lucky and had a happy life - not spoilt but never short of anything'.

Jeremy Major
Son



PEARL PENNY (NEE WARR)

18th February 1927 – 18th October 2023

Pearl was born in Bournemouth and enlisted into the ATS at Southampton in December 1944. She was posted to the Isle of Man in March 1945, where she was part of a team that intercepted coded messages from German units and U-boats which were then relayed to Bletchley Park. After a period at the War Office she was posted to Iserlohn in Germany before being demobbed at Aldershot in December 1947.

She then worked as a civilian telephone operator before marrying Peter Penny, an RAF telegraphist. They enjoyed postings to Hong Kong, Norway and Holland and had two sons, Nick and David. Pearl later moved back to Bournemouth and did voluntary work for the Girl Guides, Libraries at Home, the WRVS as well as researching her family history. She marched with the WRAC Association contingent in the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph in London for many years.

Pearl spent the last three years of her life in Seacliff Care Home. She was a lively and popular resident, and was often asked to share memories of her military career. She remained a prolific reader to the end. She was a staunch member of the WRAC Association Bournemouth Branch for many years.



Pearl Penny in wheelchair in May 2023

*Nick Penny
Son*

CHRISTINE MACDONALD

11th November 1948 – 8th January 2023



My Mum, Christine Macdonald, was born in 1930 and brought up in Dunfermline, Fife. She left school at 14 and went to work at Rosyth Dockyard to do a secretarial job, before joining the ATS in 1947/8.

A few years later she met my dad who had recently come down from the Isle of Lewis looking for work, they married in 1954 & settled in Dunfermline.

My father was never really happy there, always hankering to be back in the Highlands & Islands so in 1972 they made the huge (for my mum) decision to move up to Stornoway where my dad built a home for us all. It was a huge decision for my mum as she had to leave all her family & friends behind, but she made

the most of it by joining clubs.

She enjoyed acting in the local dramatic society, singing in the local choir and playing Bowls & Bridge. She also did a course on journalism where she would write pieces for the local gazette. She particularly loved to sing, she had a lovely voice and in her later years would sing at the local retirement centre every Friday, also volunteering at various charities & doing a little stint at the local radio station, Isles FM. She was still driving right up to her death.

She passed away peacefully in Western Isles Hospital, Stornoway on 8 January 2023 with all her family around her bedside from as far away as Texas (son), New York (granddaughter), and Australia (daughter) as well as me and family from Dorset and Hampshire and a cousin from Glasgow. Mum always spoke very fondly of her time in the Service and would be thrilled to know her obituary would feature in Lioness.

*Catherine Macdonald
Daughter*



DIANA MARGARET LIDSTONE

22nd May 1924 – 5th April 2024



Diana Margaret Lidstone was born on the 22nd of May 1924 in Chesterfield, and her life took an interesting turn when she joined the ATS at the age of 18. She began her service in February 1943 at Guildford and underwent basic training for three weeks. After that, she went on to complete a 6-week cookery course at Knutsford, Cheshire and was stationed in Old Harlow near Epping, where she cooked for members of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (R.E.M.E). This period was one of the happiest days of her life in the army, and she celebrated her 21st birthday here, rising to the rank of Lance Corporal.

When the 'doodlebugs' began to fall north of London, she was sent to Hadley/ Hadleigh to cook for the Gunners, who were doing their best to shoot down the flying bombs. Her next posting was to Luton, Bedfordshire, where she was put in charge of cooking for the Officers' Mess at H.Q Eastern Command. From there, she was posted to Bedford and St. Neots before moving to Dunstable, where the Officers' Mess was situated in the White Hart Hotel! In 1949, Diana arrived at the Canterbury Officers' Mess, where she remained until 1950. However, a nasty accident with a knife forced her to leave her cookery duties, and she had to reallocate to office clerk in Moore Barracks at Shorncliffe until her demobilization in August 1951.

She met her future husband, David, at a dance while working as an office clerk. They got married in 1952 in Leatherhead and later had two children, Catherine and Andrew. Even after leaving military service, she continued to cook and run a restaurant in Cranbrook, Kent with her husband. Later, they moved to Luton where they

opened a shop called 'Biscuit Barrel' making scones, cakes, and many other delicious treats.

Diana was a staunch member of the WRAC Association Luton Branch until it sadly closed, and then along with her children Catherine and Andrew, she joined the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Branch of the Association. She could always be spotted wearing her signature red lipstick, come rain or shine! She enjoyed spending time outdoors, tending to her garden, as well as taking great pride in her home. It was so very sad that she missed her Centenary by a matter of days.

Catherine Lidstone
Daughter



DORIS MCCOY

19th September 1925 – November 2023



Doris was born in London on the 19th of September 1925. She left school aged 14 and worked in an office as a junior clerk until 1944 when she joined the ATS where she was assigned to clerical duties! She enjoyed her work and was posted to York and Hastings. Whilst in Hastings she met Les, a carpenter. He was sent abroad and they kept in touch until he came home ready for demobilisation; Doris was also demobbed around the same time. They got married in March 1948 and Les brought Doris down to his home city of Plymouth. They had two children, Brian born in 1949 and Brenda in 1951.

Fast forward twenty odd years and sometime in the late 1970's / early 1980's Doris became friends with a neighbour who told her about the WRAC Association Plymouth Branch, and so she became a member.

Doris was a real stalwart of the Branch and over the years she became our Standard Bearer and Chairman and was our President up until her death in November 2023. She really enjoyed her time with us and we miss her so much - she was always happy, always smiling, often singing songs or little ditties

to us. She remained cheerful and chirpy right to the end even when she had to rely on Brenda to bring her in a wheelchair to our meetings.

Ruth Jennings



ELSIE ROSINA BLANCHFLOWER

8th April 1924 – 19th January 2024



Sadly, the Norfolk Branch has had to say a fond farewell to our last Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) member, Elsie Blanchflower, on 19th January 2024. Elsie was always cheerful and full of life. She was a real character, and her funny stories and anecdotes were certainly missed if her daughters couldn't get her to our monthly meetings!

Elsie's granddaughter asked her to write about her experiences serving in the ATS. Elsie's first paragraph shows that the memories of her service days were still alive and cherished by her. 'When my granddaughter told me that the subject of a forthcoming history lesson at school was to be the Second World War, I was shocked to think I was now considered to be HISTORY. The years I had spent in the Forces, which still seem so real to me, were to the young generation, a fleeting moment in time in the country's past. I might, I told myself, be on a par with Cromwell and Napoleon!'

Elsie joined the ATS at Martineau Hall, Norwich in July 1941 when she was seventeen. After a month's training at Glen Parva Barracks, Leicestershire, she and her colleagues were sent to Hall Camp, Oswestry, where they were part of 473 (M) HAA Battery, 135 Regiment RA. In her training, she learned how to use instruments such as the Predictor, Height Finder, and spotter instruments, as well as telephone communication.

After a brief training period, she was sent to Tycroes Firing Camp in Anglesey for firing practice. This involved shooting at a sleeve being towed by an Anson plane and if the shell burst too close to the plane, the women were in big trouble. However, there was jubilation all around when the sleeve was hit. Once their training was completed, the group was posted to their first site in Tyneside, where Elsie remained for the next three years. During this time, she became a gun-layer, which meant guiding the guns by radar.

In 1943, Elsie was stationed at Linwood, near Paisley in Scotland, before being transferred to Bishopton in 1944. During this time, the planning for D-Day was being kept secret.

One night, Elsie and her battery were sent to Winchester, where she witnessed an incredible sight. She saw all the Horsa gliders carrying thousands of airborne soldiers over to France and Holland. Elsie said that this was something she would never forget.

Elsie's last gun site was in Hurlingham and when the war ended, and the artillery batteries were being disbanded, she became a technical store woman at a vehicle reserve depot in Aberford, Leeds, servicing and respraying troop carriers, jeeps and trucks.

Elsie was sad when her service days came to an end, and she was discharged in April 1946, with an exemplary record. However, she always cherished her Ack colleagues. She was a valued member of the Norwich Branch of the Royal Artillery Association and was held in high esteem by all who knew her. Elsie's passing has left a huge gap in the lives of her beloved daughters, grandchildren, and all those who had the privilege of spending time with her. She will be greatly missed.

Lyn Hatch

VIOLET BROWN

27th December 1934 - 18th May 2023



Violet Brown was born on December 27, 1934, in Kensington. At the age of 14, Vi passed her medical examination for the Army, completed her initial training, and then went on to complete her driver training. Following a series of postings, she was stationed in Wrexham in 1958, where she was promoted to Sergeant and took responsibility for several TA Centres across North Wales.

Vi was then posted to Aldershot, where she was in charge of training new recruits. It was there that she was promoted to Sergeant Major. Her next posting was to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Vi was subsequently commissioned and quickly promoted to Captain. Her final posting was in Telford, where she served as Second in Command.

After her discharge from the Army, Vi moved to Staunton on Wye for a couple of years. In 1985, she relocated to Bobblestock, Hereford, where she lived until she passed away on May 18, 2023.

Vi was a dedicated member of the WRAC for at least 17 years.



MARY TORRENS ADAMS WILSON (NEE HILL)

16th January 1928 - 16th March 2024



My Mum, Mary Wilson, was born on the family farm in Antrim, County Antrim, Northern Ireland on 16th January 1928. She was the middle child of Ellen and William Hill. She had an older sister and a younger brother, and her early years were spent on the farm, helping her sister in the office of their father's road contracting and quarry business.

When Mum's older sister followed their Mum's example of joining the Army (she had been in the QMAAC during WW1) she wanted to do the same but was too young. So, being adventurous and determined, and not wanting to be left out, she joined the NAAFI in 1944 at the age of 16, based in East Belfast (now the George Best Airport).

In 1945 she was finally able to join the ATS and was posted to the Royal Army Pay Corps at Aldergrove attached to the US Air Force where her duties included processing wages and general accounting duties. She was also stationed in Glasgow and Shrewsbury during her service.

Mum left the Army in 1949, with a glowing discharge testimonial ~ "trustworthy, honest, reliable, with a very pleasant manner with good conduct." After her discharge, Mum went to work in the Braid Valley Hospital in Ballymena, using the accounting skills she had gained in the Army in her new job.

In 1959 Mum married my father; they had two children, myself and my brother. In 1960 Mum had to give up work as it wasn't acceptable for married women with children to work in the Health Service in those days, so for 10 years, she was a full-time wife and mother. In 1970 the rules changed, and Mum returned to work in the Health Service until her retirement at the age of sixty-five.

After the death of my father in 1989, Mum took time adjusting to being retired and being on her own, so she enthusiastically took on several charity fundraising and volunteering roles for the Northern Ireland Hospice, Action Cancer, and Oxfam.

She was a founding member, together with my father, of Action Cancer. She continued to donate her time and energy to these charities, raising thousands of pounds through charity events, street collections, and volunteering in their shops until 2018 when she finally retired.

She also loved to travel and explored many countries across the world, including Thailand, Australia, Egypt, Singapore and many others, with her friends.

Mum was an extremely active and staunch member of the WRAC Association for over 30 years, holding the positions of Secretary, Chairman and Honorary President of the Ulster Branch - she so enjoyed the camaraderie and social events.

Mum had a wonderful, vibrant, eventful, and full life, and often said that her years in the ATS were among some of the most enjoyable times in her life!

Very sadly, in her last few years, Mum suffered from Dementia and had to go into a Nursing Home where she was described by the staff as 'mischievous'. She slipped away peacefully in her sleep on the 16th of March 2024. She will be greatly missed by all her family and friends.



Julienne Harrison
Daughter

CAROL EDERLE

25th November 1944 - 11th April 2023

I first met Carol in the 1960s when she was posted to Hong Kong. At that time only about 20 junior ranks lived in Colvin House, the WRAC Quarters at Victoria Barracks. We found that we only lived about 10 miles from each other's homes in Wiltshire and Dorset.

When we left Hong Kong, we kept in touch when we were both in the same area. Her mother, who was ex ATS, had married an American, and she was always very welcoming when I visited. Carol completed a full career in the London Ambulance Service after she left the WRAC.

I always told her that her claim to fame was that her great aunt Gertrude (Trudy), an American, was the first woman to swim the Channel in 1926. A new biopic of Trudy Ederle, the American swimmer, entitled 'Young Woman and the Sea' has just been released this year.

Jill Trainor
Friend



LYNN (NEE WHITTAKER) JAMES

13th October 1944 - 9th July 2024

It is with the deepest regret and sadness that I must inform you of the passing of 420424 Pte. Lynn Whittaker, formerly of the WRAC, who fought her final battle at the age of 79.

Lynn proudly passed out from Hobbs Barracks, Lingfield, in 1963, under the guidance of her Platoon Sergeant, Sgt. Colman, who she was delighted to later discover joined the ranks at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Her first posting was with HQ Scottish Command at Craigie Hall, where she worked at Edinburgh Castle as a documentation clerk. Lynn's artistic talent shone as she completed commissions for her friends, and she even posed for a photo on the cookhouse roof. She once attempted to climb the castle rock without any equipment, showcasing her adventurous spirit.

During the fashion of the time, Lynn sported a mod hairstyle, much to the chagrin of the RSM, who promptly ordered her "coo's horns" to be trimmed. Known as the guardian of the biscuit tin in the company office, Lynn ensured that only she and her close colleagues had access—no exceptions, not even for the Commander-in-Chief.

Lynn's journey then took her to Singapore, a deployment she relished. It was a tumultuous period as Singapore sought independence, but despite the frequent riots, it was the geckos and Komodo dragons that unnerved her the most. She witnessed the mortaring of the tennis court and diligently searched for IED-laden coconuts.

Lynn found solace with the "God Squad" and even sang on the radio, touching the hearts of Welsh soldiers with "Calon Lân," bringing them to tears with memories of home. While volunteering at BMH, she helped injured soldiers, lighting cigarettes for those who had lost their hands—though she asked us to keep that from Matron.

She faithfully attended the funerals of soldiers who had no families, ensuring they had someone to see them off. It was during her time in Singapore that she met her first husband, a Signal Corps member. Sadly, he convinced her to leave the Army, and after returning to England, he abandoned her. With the support of SSAFA and the padre, Lynn rebuilt her life. The Red Caps eventually found him in Germany with a broken arm, and Lynn divorced him.

Happier times followed when she joined the Sealed Knot and met Brigadier Young. Her knowledge of the ensign (not a flag) impressed him, earning her the honour of flying the colour in battle. She also had a playful streak, being "burned as a witch" on several occasions.

Lynn worked on the Morton Estate at Ranby, for Lady Mason, Lady Evelyn, and the Countess Manvers at Thoresby Hall. Her agricultural work led her to St. John classes, where she met my father. I was born in 1983, completing our family.

As dementia took hold, I comforted her with stories and names from her past, easing her mind. We cherished watching Hogmanay, Trooping the Colour, and the Remembrance Sunday cenotaph ceremonies together.

Lynn was a proud member of the WRAC Association, eagerly awaiting each magazine. The included photos show her at her best—on the cookhouse roof and awaiting her veteran's breakfast on Armed Forces Day.

A proud Lioness to the end. Miss you, Mum.

*Love, Henry James
(Son)*



Last Post



- Baker**, Mrs Patricia (nee Sanders), of Aberdeenshire, on 30th January 2024 (ATS)
Bartwett, Miss Pamela Mary, of Spain, on 25th February 2024 (WRAC)
Blanchflower, Mrs Elsie of Norwich, on 19th January 2024 (ATS)
Blewitt, Mrs Rosa (nee White), of Leeds, on 6th February 2024 (ATS)
Brown, Ms Violet Isabella of Hereford, on 18th May 2023 (WRAC)
Bullock, Mrs Betty Irene, of Birmingham, on 1st January 2024 (ATS)
Chapman, Mrs Jean Meldrum of Lincolnshire, on 22nd January 2024 (WRAC)
Collison, Jean of Ross-shire, on 8th January 2024 (WRAC)
Cottingham, Mrs Jo, of Dorchester, on 1st December 2023 (WRAC)
Davey, Ms Bernice of Plymouth, on 29th September 2018 (WRAC)
Davies, Ms Patricia, of Hemel Hempstead, on 9th March 2024 (WRAC)
Ederle, Miss Carol of Salisbury, on 11th April 2023 (WRAC)
Hendry, Mrs Mollie (nee Sparrow) of South Africa, on 26th March 2024 (ATS)
James, Ms Lynn (nee Whittaker) of Mansfield, on 9th July 2024 (WRAC)
Lidstone, Mrs Diana (nee Scott) of Luton, on 5th April 2024 (WRAC)
Macdonald, Mrs Christine of Isle of Lewis, on 8th January 2024 (WRAC)
Major, Mrs Barbie of North Wales, on 8th March 2024 (ATS)
Mowe, Ms Jean of Coventry, on 2nd August 2024 (WRAC)
Reavley, Mrs Myra, of Spennymoor, on 15th February 2024 (ATS)
Olley, Mrs Olive Joyce, of Essex, on 24th March 2024 (ATS)
Plummer, Mrs Mary Joan (nee Whatsize) of Wigston, on 21st March 2024 (ATS)
Reynolds, Shirley Margot of Isle of Wight, on 1st October 2021 (ATS)
Shields, Mrs Kim, of Hull, on 1st January 2024 (WRAC)
Stuart-Brown, Mrs Elizabeth Jean (nee Smallwood) of Harrogate, on 17th January 2019 (ATS)
Wilson, Mrs Mary Torrens Adams (nee Hill) of Saintfield Northern Ireland, on 16th March 2024 (ATS)
Wood, Ms Jenny (nee Cairns) of Leeds, on 7th June 2024 (ATS)
Wrenn, Ms Dorothea Brenda (nee Andrews) of Southampton, on 22nd March 2024 (ATS)
-
- Russell**, Mrs Joyce of Surrey, on 15th March 2024 (Gardener, WRAC Centre)



Legacies & Donations

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

- Brigid Archdale
- Joan Awbery
- Rosa Blewitt
- Ann Maskens-McIntyre
- Sue Taylor

Legacies The WRAC Association very much appreciated the legacy received from:

- Violet Isabella Brown
- Susan Penelope Richards
- Agnes Mary Doig
- Monica Mary Ellis.

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

Letters...

Dear WRAC

Just to make you smile.

I was very surprised by the confusion felt by some children. I recently had history lesson from a 6-year-old who had been doing WAR and SOLDIERS at school. He said the soldier wore big white underpants with a big flap at the back, with buttons to fasten. The flap was called "Falaise Flap"

I did my best to recreate this garment, but the lad thought help would be needed to fasten the button and there wouldn't be time - bullets etc. Perhaps the R.B.L has more information on the subject.

Thank for all you do



Dear Anonymous, It certainly brought smiles to all of us at HQ. Who said the job of opening the mail was pants?

Dear editor,

My wife and I are sorting through up to 4,000 family photos and trying to make sense of them! Some date back to the 1880s. In her parents' collection are a number of her mother serving in the Women's Forestry Corps during WW2 and later with the ATS and WRAC TA. One of the photos (attached) shows her at Folkestone (probably St Martin's Plain), with C Coy, 326 (City of London) Bn WRAC TA in the early/mid-1950s. The unit appears to have been involved with transportation and at least one picture shows a line of ambulances. We have been unable to find out anything about the unit and wondered if you hold any information about it, or could point us in the right direction.

Best wishes

Paul Oldfield, Historian & Battlefield Guide



Can anyone help Paul? Contact editor@wraca.org.uk

Dear editor,

I found these photographs in the papers of WO1 Olive A Rutter W/111976. I have been unable to identify them. If you know of anyone that could recognise them or point me in the right direction it would be most helpful.

Tony Rutter



Thanks Tony, these pictures are absolutely fascinating! If any of our readers are able to help we'll be sure to pass it on.

Don't forget to send your letters for the next edition of the Lioness to editor@wraca.org.uk

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 donate to the Association at any time. More information can be found in this edition. Donations can also be made online via the Association website or by phone on 0300 400 1992.

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, Stable belts and forage caps should NOT be worn. However, the Corps beret may be worn. 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, etc. 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 info@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 - Articles for inclusion in the next edition of Lioness must be received by **1st November 2024**.

Please email directly 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 can give names to people in a photo that would be helpful, and we will try and include them.

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.
- Medals awarded in service to an individual are to be worn on the left breast of a jacket
- 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 the service in Westminster Abbey on Remembrance Sunday, via the RBL, and Remembrance in Guildford. Tickets are open to any member of the WRAC Association who wishes to attend, prior attendance or Branch participation is 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 via letter or email: info@wraca.org.uk

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: info@wraca.org.uk

- 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 have 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 spiritual home 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 the HQ Office via letter or email: at info@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: info@wraca.org.uk or by letter only. If demand exceeds supply a ballot will take place, as with all events.

Overseas Members - Overseas members are requested to pay £15 to cover additional Lioness postage cost. Only Sterling payment can be accepted. Digital copies of The Lioness are free

Service Records & 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 218.

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.

Women's Army Officers' Dining Club. - Women's Army Officers' Dining Club Dinner will take place on **Saturday 23rd November 2024**. For more details email wracofficersdc@gmail.com or visit the Facebook Closed Group 'WRAC Officers' Dining Club'.

WRAC Association, Unit 11, Basepoint Business Centre, 1 Winnall Valley Road, Winchester, SO23 0LD

Tel: 0300 400 1992 (local rate call, including mobiles) Email: office.manager@wraca.org.uk

Benevolence: benfund@wraca.org.uk Tel: 07741 327094

Lioness: editor@wraca.org.uk

Website: wraca.org.uk

