

Old Comrades



Association

GAZETTE.

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BRANCH REPORTS FOR AUGUST.

Norfolk.

A jolly meeting was held on July 18th, at 23 Branksome Close, Norwich, our hostesses being the Misses Newberry and Protheroe. Although Monday is a most unusual day for us to get together, we had quite a good muster.

As usual, a most enjoyable meal was prepared for us, to which we all did full justice. Later in the evening the garden came in for inspection, and a little weeding was accomplished amid much fun. Then we wandered indoors for a last little chat, read our correspondence, and talked of holidays. Our hostesses very kindly took our Yarmouth members to the station in the car, and our Wymondham members quite home, the 'buses being very inconveniently timed to depart.

Following on our usual custom, there will be no meeting during August, but we hope to pay a visit to Yarmouth in September. Members will be notified by post.

L. W. CHILVERS.

Exeter.

In place of our July meeting we took a trip to Teignmouth, and although our number was small we had a very enjoyable day. We were very pleased to welcome Miss Butler, London Branch. I hope to have the pleasure of the company at some future date. We are looking forward to a few more outings during the summer months, and hope as many members as possible will make an effort to join us—the more the merrier. **I shall be much obliged if all members who have not paid their subscriptions will please send them along.**

M. VICARY.

Bristol and West of England.

The Bristol Branch has been keeping rather in the background of late, but we are still flourishing although our membership is somewhat smaller than that of the past few years. We are pleased to welcome to Bristol Mrs. Mello, a transfer from the Edinburgh Branch.

On Saturday, July 23rd, one of our members, Miss May Mounstephen, together with her mother and two sisters, kindly extended an invite to the membership to a garden party in their beautiful grounds at Tockington. Thirteen Waacs were present and our president, Lady Taylor, was able to join us for a short time.

It would be difficult to find a more lovely place to spend a warm July day than in this old-world paradise with its sunken rock garden, its little lily pond and family of gold fish, its "watch tower"—yielding every moment of sunshine—the walls of which are covered with ivy and honeysuckle; its herbaceous border, well-kept lawns, little winding paths and cosy corners, and, permeating everything, the scents of roses, sweet briar and honeysuckle. The tennis court was one of the main attractions, a tournament being arranged and carried out with enthusiasm, after which a match "Army v. Civvies" was

played—the Army, of course, being victorious! What if we did send a few balls over into the adjoining wood? We are all (or most of us) used to scaling barbed wire, and brambles are far more kindly to bare legs or silk stockings! Clock golf was a very rival attraction. Not the "common or garden" variety one usually meets with, but one with very real hazards such as a bed of pansies, the lily pond, and a standard of climbing roses, so that it took not a little skill to "hole in one."

Quoits, too, had its following, and, here again, we had an A1 variety—the usual board being replaced by an upright wooden fixture not unlike a spinning wheel in appearance, its pegs registering as many as 500. Prizes were awarded to the first two winners in each game. These consisted of most dainty and useful gifts, the work of our colleague "May," the presentations being made by Mrs. Mounstephen who, by her apt and humorous remarks, made the occasion one of merriment.

A very happy evening ended with a hectic rush on the part of some members, who were so loathe to leave that, at the "time of going to press," it is not at all certain that they had not an hour to wait by the roadside for the next 'bus.

Our sincere thanks to the jolly good comrade who provided such a feast in every sense of the word.

Members please reserve Saturday evening, November 12th—but more of that anon.

E. M. PHILLPUT.

Manchester.

We moved into our new quarters at Bowdon's Cafe, Oxford Road, on July 1st, and spent a very enjoyable evening there. The secretary had written to all the members who had not been present at the last meeting, and the result was splendid. There were quite a number whom we had not seen for a long while, and everybody expressed themselves delighted with the new room.

It did, indeed, look very pleasant, bright and airy, and each member seemed to have donned her prettiest frock to do honour to the occasion. We had had some vague idea of games and competitions, but there was so much chattering going on and everyone looked so happy that we let the stream of conversation flow on without interruption, that is, of course, until it was time to eat. Two or three generous members had made sandwiches and delicious home-made cakes, so, with tea and coffee supplied from the restaurant, we were quite in our elements.

The time sped quickly and we all dispersed feeling that the Club had taken on a new lease of life.

The following Friday evening we held a committee meeting at which one or two details were settled. One was that the Hut was to be given a coat of anti-corrosive paint in preparation for the winter. It was agreed also to hold our picnic at the Hut again this year.

Another point which came up for discussion was the Treasurer's report. We felt that if we had a report every quarter instead of once a year it would keep us more in touch with the finances of the Club, and this the Treasurer agreed to do.

Summer holidays are, of course, thinning our numbers just now, but when these are over we are looking forward to good attendances every Friday night.

H. FOSTER.

London.

There is very little news of activities these days—we are having a rest this year and I expect next year we shall burst forth with renewed energy. Although there is little news, many readers of the Gazette look forward to that little and, judging by my mail this month, they were a wee bit disappointed at the non-appearance of the familiar heading in the July number. I apologise herewith for disappointing my members and hasten to assure those kind folks who wrote to enquire after my well-being that it was pressure of business and not ill-health that was responsible for the miss of the usual chat.

Our children's outing was, as usual, a brilliant success. We got a most wonderful afternoon for once and the children gathered at the usual meeting-place for the outing long before the time for departure. After the roll had been called they were bundled into the 'bus and away they sped in high glee to the camp—a place which seems to have become their very own property in their minds. Ask each of them why they go to Shanghai Camp and they will tell you it is because mummy was a W.A.A.C., and the camp belongs to the W.A.A.C.s—to the W.A.A.C.s who have no children of their own, as one fair maiden told me in confidence. Our drive down to the camp is never without some adventure and this year was no exception to the rule. What fun! the busman did not know the way, and there we were, all hanging out of the window telling him which way to go. The 'bus that took the wrong turning. What a thrill! Anyway we got to the camp in very good time where there was a ripping tea all ready to be eaten, prepared with loving care by Miss Horniblow and her helpers. The 52 children fell on the bread and jam, cakes, jellies, etc., immediately, and silence reigned supreme until they had somewhat refreshed themselves and appeased their hunger some. Several helpers travelled down to camp especially to assist in the entertainment of the children and they were kept pretty busy passing round the good things which were eaten up in much less time than it took to prepare them. After tea, games on the lawn were played by the youngsters and the usual more serious game of chasing them down the bank from the water commenced for the grown-ups—how they love that river and that boat. It nearly breaks one's heart to keep turning them out, but it must be if they are to be delivered to their parents at 9 p.m. Several of the older children were taken to explore the island a little, just for a treat, and some even went so far as the lock to buy sweets. One small boy was very carefully taken over gates and the very narrow pathway over the water to the lock cottage to buy sweets by "Auntie Bobby." The sweets were purchased satisfactorily and immediately "Auntie Bobby" turned her back he completely disappeared. Consternation set in at once and a thorough search was made of Mrs. Spokes's garden but no boy could be found answering to our lad's description. One agitated look at the river and a bolt for camp and there was our truant, calmly sitting in the tea ring, looking as innocent as a lamb. We were thankful to see him there and so forgave him for coming home without leave. The small and big boys love the driver and conductor of the 'bus and the greatest hit of the outing seemed to them to be allowed to wear their caps. How they love the uniform! The men took the boys off our hands, for which we were duly thankful. They played cricket and all sorts of games with them, and the boys seemed well content. And what a treat to stand on the conductor's platform and pull the bell occasionally—turn about for that each way. At seven o'clock we collected our family, brushed them up a bit, supplied them with milk and something more to eat, then

on our way homeward. A rousing good cheer for Miss Horniblow and a scuffle for the best seats in the 'bus followed and amid cheers and singing we are off. We have to thank the people who sent donations for the benefit of the bairns, it is appreciated. Montreal Branch was represented. All the way from Montreal came a donation from Mrs. Reid; I wish she could only see just how much these kind thoughts mean to us—although the cash means much, the thought means very much more. Mrs. Jerrett supplied the rock, as she usually does, and I shudder to think what an outing would be without rocks or jellies, these two well established goodies. It's no small job to make and carry down to camp some fifty jellies and Miss Lewis does this each year without any fuss. It's really great fun travelling with the kiddies and I wish more could do it. They stretch their young lungs to the utmost, cheering, singing and shouting all the way to the camp and all the way back again. They never tire; the nearer home they get, the more and louder they shout; and when they see their parents waiting for them there's no holding them in check, they simply must let loose any surplus energy they have left. Another outing over and each little and big family handed over to parent who thanks the O.C.A. most gratefully for giving their children the chance of a few hours extra sunshine.

I promised to write an account of Graham's wedding last month and did not do so. Here it is now. I never enjoy attending any function so much as I do a wedding because I know that one more member of the branch has changed her mind about being a bachelor woman all her life. A few of the bride's W.A.A.C. pals, all dressed up and looking the part, wended their way on the fateful morning to St. Paul's Church, Herne Hill, to see the last of Clare Graham and the first of Mrs. Bickell. It was just a most perfect morning for a wedding, early as the hour fixed for the ceremony was, the sun shone brilliantly on our bride; clad in a dress of white satin, her veil of lace held together with orange blossom, she made a very pretty picture as she came out of the church, her bouquet of roses giving that most charming touch of colour to the picture that everybody loves. Of course everyone was at the door of the church waiting for the battle of rose leaves that followed the ceremony and the bride and bridegroom were very glad to find themselves tucked inside the car I guess, because they were pretty well bombarded from every side. Just before the bombardment started one of the W.A.A.C. party boldly walked up to the newly wedded pair and stuck a small horseshoe, with white heather attached, on to the bridal frock—"just for luck" she murmured—and if white heather and rose petals can bring them luck, then they had it all that day. The guests assembled at the house of the bride after the ceremony for refreshments, and also to drink the health of the bride and bridegroom and a right jolly assembly it was. There were photos to be taken before they left for the honeymoon and each one of the family were busy one way and another. The presents had to be viewed, these were pretty and useful—W.A.A.C. friends who subscribed will be pleased to hear that Graham's choice (she was Graham then) of wedding present was a supper cloth and table napkins and she was very pleased with the one purchased from Messrs. Peter Robinson's for her. After the health was drunk and the speeches made, the bride disappeared upstairs to change her frock, very soon to re-appear, clad in a two-piece costume of scarlet crepe de chine and ready to take her place at the wheel of the new car presented to her by her husband, in which she intended to take him touring Devon on his honeymoon. With many good wishes they drove away in good style, and with the usual collection of symbols of good luck, chief of which was a great shoe tied to the back of the car. Graham, being her absent-minded self to the last, forgot her case and was calmly about to start just as she stood up. A sudden call from one of her sisters gave the alarm that all was not right for the start, a patter of feet upstairs and the case was produced and pushed into the car amid many giggles at the idea of our friend forgetting her wardrobe, then a rousing send-off and they were safely away from all the good natured jokes of their friends, and we all wish Mrs. Bickell the best of luck in her new life.

Will members please note that the honorary secretary has changed her address and any correspondence which requires an immediate reply should be addressed to: Miss R. S. Andrews, 90 Brook Green, W.6. **Don't write to the Club.**

The re-union meetings will still be held on fourth Thursdays in the month at this address, instead of the Barnes address. There is much more room and I hope that we shall have some jolly evenings here.

There are still outstanding subscriptions for 1932.

R. S. ANDREWS.

GOLDERS GREEN GOES TO "SHANGHAI."

To the uninitiated that looks like a geographical and rather alarming upheaval. It really means that this Branch paid a visit to the camp on the Thames on July 9th. And what a week-end it was!

Wonderful weather, however, is not the only ingredient for a successful visit, and the others were not lacking—jolly companionship and perfect management.

"Shanghai" always was a happy place, but the improvements now effected and Miss Horniblow's active presiding genius have made it better than ever.

It is some years since several of us went and we feel rather ruefully that the loss is our own.

As I understand the Editor is glad of copy, I am going to say some appreciative things which the committee can scarcely say themselves and give a little detail for the benefit of new or undecided visitors at risk of boring the "habitué," who, after all, need read no further.

To be perfectly truthful, the walk from Datchet is rather trying in hot weather, but it can be avoided in three ways: (1) By arranging to be met by some of our very willing rowing members; (2) By hiring a taxi. (The Camp Secretary would supply particulars); (3) By arriving in style via a motor launch obtainable most reasonably if you are a party.

All roads lead to "Shanghai" apparently to the taxi and boat men, but Waacs have a knack of getting known! A warm welcome awaits you on arrival—indeed, our day visitors, who included one intrepid male, were greeted with tea and cakes straight from the oven, but possibly that was one of Miss Horniblow's own little "spoilings." After a rest, one's bed is selected and made—strange, how enjoyable one finds this relic of army days with its familiar dark blankets, but plus sheets, etc., procurable, if desired, at a small charge. And then the time flies. Those yearning for quiet may find a deck or lounge chair and a book in a shady corner of the lawn, or, if more interested in the world at large, which the passing river life from a seat on the landing stage.

The more active and boisterous members row, swim, walk, or play games on the lawn. If the weather is not ideal, there is the dainty lounge with a piano and indoor games, though I have yet to meet a party of Service women who were not perfectly content just to talk!

Meals served out of doors on the scrupulously scrubbed tables not only taste delicious but are delicious, and the dishes produced with oil cooking stoves and Miss Horniblow's skill, have to be tried to be believed. No one need imagine a diet of eternal cold or tinned food.

The tables, by the way, are a passion of Billy Williams's, so if anyone is seized with a desire to scrub them while she is on duty, they must be prepared for battle. She and Hannen had a passion for work of all kinds though, and if the rest of the committee have a similar fund of energy and good spirits, we are more fortunate than ever.

There is plenty of privacy in the ablution hut and water is laid on behind (shades of the early bucket-carrying days!) After hours in the open, bed-time finds one healthily sleepy, and the morning song of the birds is the next thing one hears, and, oh! welcome sight, a cup of tea the next thing one sees.

Another day of this rejuvenating care-free atmosphere follows before one pays and departs, feeling that in these days of costly recreations, one has had the maximum of pleasure at an incredible minimum of cost.

The camp is there for us all, Waacs and non-Waacs, of all countries and counties, and I fear we shall not realise what a blessing we had till we perhaps lose it for lack of support. Our branch has arranged to return in September, when we hope it will not be too cold to sleep out, though, of course, real campers would pour scorn upon our form of it, merely taking indoor beds outdoors. Personally, I can enjoy the moon (if any) climbing higher up the sky and hearing the "chip-chip" of the first robin much better if my not-so-young body is comfortable.

We had much fun over our preparations for the night. Our President, Mrs. Newton, had promised her small daughter Margaret before she went to bed that if we slept out we would move her bed out too. Well, we endeavoured to do so, some at the head and some at the foot, but we found it impossible to get it more than half-way past the door of the little hut. Our urgent and sepulchral whispers—as we supposed the motionless child was asleep—turned to suppressed hysteria as we tried to turn the bed sideways without pitching the occupant out in the darkness. Mrs. Newton had just decided to leave it where it was when the decision was revoked by a firm voice from the bed "Take me out." There are evidently limits to the time and conditions under which sleep may be feigned.

We solved the problem by bringing out another bed from the big hut and transferring our Waaclet, mattress and all. In addition to this excitement, all the beds did not seem to be occupied by their rightful owners. However, we settled down eventually and slept well.

In thanking those who made our stay so happy, we must not forget the noble army which prepares the way by going down to make the huts habitable and weather-proof, the boat river-worthy, and the garden visible for growth.

Since they do "hard labour" so cheerfully on our behalf, it seems the very least we can do to go and enjoy the fruits of their labour and gain immeasurably in the process.

"TIGER."

The children who went to the London Branch party at "Shanghai," missed one old friend who rarely failed to play his part in the doings of the W.A.A.C. children's parties. "Tiger" was a great friend of all London members of the O.C.A., and each will be sad to learn that he died recently. Mrs. Pratt-Barlow had had this fine dog for ten years and he was her constant companion, attending all manner of O.C.A. affairs in her company—from the children's Christmas party and their annual outing to Shanghai to meetings of the Service Women's Benevolent Fund—"Tiger" was well known to all who came to Headquarters Office and is particularly missed there.

We all feel real sympathy with Mrs. Pratt-Barlow in the loss of her very good companion and faithful friend.

CORRESPONDENCE.

From Mrs. Duncan ("Wells," W. Hartlepool, H.Q., Northern Command, etc.), writes from Fort Lockhart, North-West Frontier Province, India:—

We lived a very quiet life all the cold weather—one can't do aught else with 10 per cent. cuts in pay!—but we had our golf and tennis every day, which kept us fit. Then the hot weather started and we lifted our eyes to the hills and came up here early in May. This place is about 35 miles by road from Kohat, and then a climb of 6½ miles on foot or on a mule. We are 6,700ft. up. It is only a small fort and outside it a small camp, and all is enclosed by a wall and barbed wire, outside which we are not allowed except when the pickets are out to guard us. Our bungalows are outside the fort, and there are only five, so you see we are a very small family. The compensation for being up here is that our husbands can get up at the week-ends. The view is magnificent—we look over ranges and ranges of hills, one behind the other, the furthest one nearly always capped with snow, and then on the other side, we look down on the plains. Catering up here is

more than difficult. There are no vegetables or fruit—we get what we can from Kohat, but it is the off-season for the plains, and there is very little to be got from there. Bread and butter (latter tinned) come up twice weekly from Kohat. The former is horrid—only fit for toast—so I make my own home-made bread. One sheep is killed per week and one gets a joint. It may be far too big, far too small, and not what you want, but one has to be thankful to get anything. Otherwise, we have to live on chickens, and Indian chickens have no taste, so are no treat.

We expect to return to our bungalow in Kohat in October, but probably for a short time only.

"SHANGHAI" CAMP.

Thank you Ilford Branch in general and Madge Druiitt in particular, for the graceful and generous testimonial you gave to Camp in the July issue of the Gazette. Those words of appreciation, together with the kind things all the visitors at every week-end say, will encourage the members of the Camp Committee to continue their efforts to justify the permission of the Council of the O.C.A. to run the camp for another season. There is no doubt about the rejuvenating effect—as testified by Ilford Branch—of a week-end at "Shanghai." The combination of delightful surroundings, good food and congenial company cannot fail to dispel dull care.

It has been a very great pleasure to welcome several people who have not been down for eight and ten years, and others who are sampling the place for the first time this season. Almost, without exception, everyone who has come has arranged to make another visit this year. This would seem to be evidence that the time to disband camp has not arrived yet.

The London Branch party to the children on July 2nd went off splendidly. Just over 50 youngsters brought healthy appetites and did full justice to the fare provided for them. The gifts of buns, jellies, sweets, balloons, etc., were greatly appreciated. The weather was all that could be desired, and the driver and conductor of the L.G.O.C. bus which brought the children, seemed to have been specially chosen for their sympathy with young people. The way in which they organised games and played with the children was delightful.

An experiment has been tried this season by which the camp could be of use in mid-week—29 schoolgirls of 14-16 years of age and three mistresses lived for five days and nights in camp, making it a centre for educational visits and general educational activities. Everybody on the island became interested in the party, and on one evening, when country dancing and community singing were in progress, there was a large audience of campers to whom this was a novel and entertaining experience.

On the last evening the girls voted hearty thanks to those who had made the visit possible, and expressed the hope that similar visits would be allowed in the future.

Miss Gilchrist, who was staying at "Guffins," paid several visits to this "School Journey," and was most impressed with the usefulness of the enterprise. She expressed admiration for the orderliness and good conduct of the girls. The camp was left in "spick and span" order, and the Chairman of the Camp Committee, who had to visit the camp officially, felt that the experiment had been a great success.

We have also had the pleasure of a visit from Golder's Green Branch—a delightful week-end, just like old times—and they are coming again in September.

It was a pity that Miss Andrews was prevented by pressure of work from accompanying London Branch on July 16th. Quite a goodly crowd came for the Sunday—92 to lunch and 23 to tea. We could have wished more had been able to sleep on the Saturday night—having beds empty is bad financially.

To Nottingham Branch we send a message of welcome in advance, and we are looking forward to their visit on 24th September. Bring a warm woolly to wear in the evenings. We hope the members of Liverpool Branch will have had a good time during their visit in August.

And now, will everyone please make a note in their

diary of Thursday, September 15th, 8 p.m. On that date we are having a Games Competition Evening at 5 Buckingham Gate, S.W.1, in aid of "Shanghai Funds." Tickets, 1s., obtainable from members of the Camp Committee. Refreshments separate at the buffet. London Branch has very kindly allowed us to share the club-room on that night, a courtesy we appreciate to the full.

Miss Wittering, who is an adept at these things, is planning a wonderful evening's entertainment which should not be missed. Just imagine the fun of watching others "Picking up peas with two needles," and "Fishing for boot buttons with a stick and bent pin!"

Will those branches of the O.C.A. near to London make a special effort to give us their support. We want the camp season to end with a flourish. Look out for posters in the club early in September.

E. H. HORNIBLOW, Chairman.

BIRTHS.

Parbery.—At Rosedale, Bermagui, New South Wales, on June 12th, 1932; to Mrs. G. A. Parbery (nee Smith, of Calais and Audruicq), a son, Desmond John.

Barker.—On June 25th, 1932, at Waterloo Cottage, Belton, near Grantham; to Mr. and Mrs. John Barker, a son (Mrs. Barker was Nora Thomas, 2528).

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