

Old Comrades



Association

GAZETTE

GENERAL SECRETARY: Mrs. Johnston, Q.M.A.A.C., O.C.A., 5 Chesham Place, London, S.W.1.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24th, 1940.

The Twentieth Annual General Meeting of the Association was held at 3 p.m. at 5 Buckingham Gate, S.W.1, with the President in the Chair.

Minutes

The Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual General Meeting held on February 25th, 1939, having been printed in the Gazette of April, 1939, were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

Report of the Council

The Report of the Council was read by the Chairman of Council, Chief Controller Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan.

The President considered the Report very satisfactory. The adoption of the Report was proposed by Senior Leader Bilbrough, seconded by Miss Saunders and carried unanimously.

Report of the Hon. Treasurer

The Treasurer's Report was read by the Hon. Treasurer, Miss Billington.

The adoption of the Report was moved by Mrs. Powell, seconded by Miss Kenworthy-Browne and carried unanimously.

Q.M.A.A.C., O.C.A. and ex-Members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service

The discussion on the admission of ex-members of the A.T.S. to membership of the O.C.A. was opened by the Chairman of Council, who explained that Council had placed this item on the Agenda not to express an opinion, but to obtain one. She stated that it was not a question of admitting serving members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, but members who had been discharged.

The decision would not mean the sudden influx of thousands of the A.T.S. Their admission would help to prolong the life of the O.C.A.

Haines (London) considered that the Rules of the O.C.A. precluded the admission of any other Service except as Associate Members.

The President stated that she did not think that there was any body in existence which could not alter its rules and regulations when circumstances demanded it. She submitted that there had been 55,000 women in Q.M.A.A.C., with some 40,000 still serving at the time of the Armistice. They had been too busy to think of forming an O.C.A. Had they done so the membership would now be thousands and not the few hundreds. If there had been such an organisation in existence members would have been grateful for the opportunity of joining.

It was agreed that the wording of Item 5 on the Agenda was misleading.

It was moved by Miss Ireland, seconded by Miss Thompson and carried that the Resolution be altered to read: "To consider—Opening the membership of Q.M.A.A.C., O.C.A. to ex-members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service."

Designation of the A.T.S.

In reply to a question, Chief Controller Dame Helen explained that it had not been possible to give the name of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps to the Auxiliary Territorial Service. Her Majesty Queen Mary was no longer the Consort of the reigning Sovereign.

After a full discussion the President put the Resolution to the meeting: "That membership of Q.M.A.A.C., O.C.A. be opened to ex-members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service."

By a show of hands the Meeting was very clearly in favour, there being only 12 against out of 100 present. Particulars were then taken of the Branches which had sent written authority for their Representatives to vote: Against the Resolution, 44; in favour, 127. The Branches against were: Norfolk, 20; Leeds, 17; and Oxford, 7. In favour: Manchester, 24; Bristol, 27; Bournemouth, 20; and Oxford, 31. The Resolution was thus carried by an overwhelming majority.

Election of Representatives on Council

The General Secretary read the list of Representatives nominated by Branches, and the following were duly elected: Birmingham, Mrs. Powell; Bournemouth, Miss Kenworthy-Browne; Brighton, Miss Turner; Bristol, Miss Pratt; Edinburgh, Miss Davy; Glasgow, Mrs. Garrard; Headquarters, Mrs. Pratt-Barlow, Mrs. Johnston, Miss Billington; Irish Free State, Miss Thompson; London, Miss Haines, Miss Longman, Miss Saunders, Miss Bilbrough, Miss Binks, Mrs. Eager; Norfolk, Miss Batty; Northern Ireland, Mrs. Johnston; Oxford, Mrs. Grundy.

Election of Hon. Treasurer

It was moved from the Chair and carried by acclamation that Miss Billington be re-elected Hon. Treasurer. The President expressed deep appreciation of the excellent work of Miss Billington.

Other Business.—Hut for Soldiers

Mrs. Bishop (Manchester) asked if Manchester Branch could use the balance of the United Services Club money for the purchase of a Refreshment Hut for soldiers. She was informed that the matter was not one for the O.C.A.

Miss Warrior

The President regretted to inform the Meeting that Miss Warrior was in hospital. It was agreed to send a telegram of greetings and good wishes.

Vote of Thanks

Chief Controller Dame Helen proposed a cordial vote of thanks to the President for presiding and for her wonderful example of good comradeship. This was carried by acclamation.

Dame Florence expressed her appreciation and thanked Dame Helen for all the time she devoted to the affairs of the O.C.A. and included the General Secretary in her expression of gratitude.

The Meeting then closed.

REPORT OF COUNCIL, 1939

We never dreamed, when this Association was formed more than 20 years ago, that we should meet during the progress of a great war. We thought perhaps that wars were over, we scarcely imagined that our Association would live so long. And yet its life, its vigorous life, with new membership and steady enthusiasm, gives such proof of comradeship as makes us dare to believe in ultimate peace and friendliness for the whole world.

The first nine months of the year showed quiet progress. A new Branch was formed last February in Adelaide, South Australia. Last year, you may remember, the ex-Service Women's Club at Paddington, New South Wales, was affiliated to the O.C.A., and the club at Sydney, though not affiliated, has never failed to keep in touch. A new branch has been formed also at Tees-side, with members scattered along the borders of Yorkshire and Durham. General More gave his usual, much appreciated party to the Oxford Branch, and the Brighton Branch was so fortunate as to be invited to a garden party by Miss Cliff. Miss Thompson, on tour in Australia, was able to see old comrades at Auckland, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth; I attended in October a re-union of the Edinburgh Branch.

The SERVICE WOMEN'S BENEVOLENT FUND has continued to give assistance to those in need. Grants have been made for illness, for convalescence, for spectacles, dentures, surgical belts and boots. Help has been given with invalid comforts, clothing, arrears of rent, extra nourishment, and blankets and coal for the winter. In four instances children of Old Comrades who had won scholarships were provided with school outfits, and the fees were paid for a commercial course for the daughter of a widow. This girl had won a domestic scholarship, but was not strong enough for work of that kind. It is a pleasure once again to tell you that the British Legion and the Departments of the United Services Fund are doing all possible to help ex-Service women. The number of cases helped by the S.W.B.F. was 82, compared to 138 last year. From the end of August to December 30th only 13 applications were received. Winter is usually our busy time, so this probably indicates that our members or their husbands are serving again.

The ANNUAL DINNER was held on Saturday, February 25th, 1939, with 581 members present. General Sir Walter Kirke was prevented at the last moment by illness from replying to the toast of His Majesty's Forces, and Major-General Andrew Thorne most kindly took his place.

Many of our activities have been affected by what is officially known as "the period of the present emergency." Mrs. Rollinson, even before the war, was too busy with territorial duties to remain a member of the S.W.B.F., and was replaced by Mrs. Fardon, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Oxford Branch are serving and so are the Secretary and at least three members of the Northern Ireland Branch. The Secretary till a few days ago of London Branch is serving also, but she miraculously continues to deal with Branch business and to attend reunions. The S.W.B.F., and with it our General Secretary and her office, moved last autumn to Southport, but, to the general satisfaction, they have lately returned to 5 Chesham Place.

The GAZETTE, too, has been adversely affected: there was not enough material to justify publishing in October or November, so three months were combined in the December issue. For the present the Gazette will appear every second month at the old price of 3s. 6d. a year. It is greatly hoped that all members who can possibly do so will continue to subscribe, and will help the editor by furnishing material for publication.

The British Legion arrangements for the Cenotaph Parade and Festival of Remembrance were cancelled, but on ARMISTICE DAY a wreath was laid by Senior Leader Bilbrough, who was accompanied by Haines, Binks, Saunders, Rogers, Heyward, Watson and Lewis.

The MEMBERSHIP of the O.C.A. at the end of the year was 1,334, 46 less than in December, 1938, the greatest decrease being in London Branch, which has lost 42 members.

Many of our members are serving again, giving the benefit of their experience to a young Corps. Strange though it may seem, they sometimes come across old comrades who did not know of the O.C.A. and whom they are able to guide into the fold. Old and new, we send them our good wishes.

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1939

Having read the Balance Sheet, I would like to explain that the Expenditure exceeds the Income by £11 12s. 4d., which is, however, £13 18s. 0d. less than last year, the expenses for the year, I am glad to say, are £30 16s. 5d. less than 1938, but unfortunately the receipts are £16 18s. 5d. less. The largest decreases are shown under the following headings: Donations, £11 12s. 3d. less; Capitation Fees, £1 17s. 0d. less; Subscriptions, £2 7s. 6d. less; Profit on Sale of Badges, 5s. 10d. less.

We should like to express sincere appreciation to the London Telephone Service, who once again have sent a donation to the Benevolent Fund of three guineas; to Mrs. Hay for a donation, also to the Benevolent Fund of 8s. 6d., being the profit on the sale of her book entitled "On Waactive Service"; to Bradford Branch for a donation to the Benevolent Fund of 20s., and to Norfolk Branch for 10s. from their "Copper Box." Leeds Branch sent in January, 1939, their share of the Leeds Festival of Remembrance, which I mentioned in my report last year, and subscribers to the Augmentation of Funds who sent in during the year £28 2s. 3d.

The total membership is 1,320 members. Annual members 820 and Life members 500, which is 46 less than last year. I was hoping the membership would be higher than for several years; it had every appearance of being so, but unfortunately owing to the outbreak of war, my hopes were dashed to the ground. During the year 110 new members joined the O.C.A., and 32 lapsed members have rejoined, and since war was declared two new Life members have joined the O.C.A., one living in America and the other in New Zealand, and 23 badges have been sold. The strength of the respective Branches, according to my records, is as under:—

Branch	Annual	Life	Total
Adelaide	10	—	10
Birmingham	29	3	32
Blackpool	4	—	4
Bournemouth	10	8	18
Bradford	21	—	21
Brighton	22	9	31
Bristol	20	7	27
Cheltenham	3	5	8
Edinburgh	57	29	86
Exeter	—	2	2
Glasgow	23	9	32
Headquarters	92	152	244
Irish Free State	14	6	20
Leeds	12	15	27
Liverpool	20	6	26
London	295	207	502
Manchester	10	14	24
Newcastle	11	2	13
Norfolk	20	1	21
Northern Ireland	22	3	25
Nottingham	11	1	12
North Staffs	12	—	12
Oxford	29	9	38
Plymouth	—	2	2
Shoreham	30	—	30
South Wales and Cardiff	7	4	11
St. Leonard's and Hastings	10	4	14
Tees-side	22	1	23
Transvaal	7	1	8
	823	500	1,323

Grand Total 1,323
Less three members belonging to two Branches 3

1,320

No capitation fees have been received from Exeter and Plymouth Branches for annual members, 1939.

Gazette Fund

The receipts exceed the expenditure by £8 11s. 9d., which is much better than 1938, when it was only £1 4s. 5d.

New and lapsed subscribers numbering 71 started taking the Gazette again, but here occurs the same thing as with annual subscriptions; only 526 members took the Gazette in 1939, as against 582 in 1938: that is a decrease of 56.

H. M. BILLINGTON, Hon. Treasurer.

ANNUAL DINNER REPORT

The annual Re-union Dinner was held on Saturday, February 24th, at St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster. Two hundred and thirty members were present.

The Dinner this year was of a more informal character, due to war conditions, and no guests were present or invited.

It is rather surprising to report that several "first timers" were there. We trust it will remain a happy memory and we look forward to welcoming them at our next.

To those who, through the "fortunes of war" or for other reasons were not able to attend, we remembered you and missed you, too. Our thanks are due to the management of St. Ermin's for the excellent fare provided and general arrangements which so helped towards the evening's enjoyment. Also especial thanks to Miss Binks, who, at short notice, undertook to deal with the application and distribution of tickets, arranged table lists and plan, printing, etc. She certainly did the "lion's share" of work.

Messages and telegrams were received from the following: Members of Bradford Branch; members of Irish Free State Branch; Mr. Haworth, who regretted very much that he was unable to be present; members of Blackpool Branch; members of Liverpool Branch; members of Glasgow Branch; members of ex-Service Women's Club, Sydney; Miss Warrior, absent through illness; Miss Daisy Menzies, Auckland; Mrs. Amy Jeff, U.S.A.; Madge and Bee, Signals; Roddie; Blanche Armitage; Fluister, Croydon; Nowlene, Manchester, Sec-Leader Bottomley (Pearly White); Fox; Miss Ireland; Cliffe Tow; Regan, Calais and Audruicq; Harrison, Havre; Molly Miller; Ibbie, Rouen; Sallie Wheelhouse; officers and other ranks, including Chambers; Hall, Signals; Scudding, Exmouth.

Thus ended a happy evening, adding one more link to our "Old Comradeship."

B. HAINES, L. SAUNDERS.

SPEECHES AT ANNUAL DINNER

Held at St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster, S.W.1, on Saturday, February 24th, 1940.

After the Toasts of "The King" and "Queen Mary: Our Commandant-in-Chief" had been given, an additional toast was proposed by Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, as follows:—

DAME HELEN GWYNNE-VAUGHAN:

This toast I am going to give you is a toast which we have annually at the Overseas Officers' Dinner. There won't be any dinner this year, and I should not like a year to go by without that toast, so I give you: Our Comrades who were killed or died on Service.

Dame Helen then read the various telegrams and messages received.

Toast: H.M. FORCES.

Miss E. H. PRATT, O.B.E.

Dame Helen and Old Comrades: I have the honour to propose the toast of His Majesty's Forces. That toast speaks for itself, doesn't it? It doesn't need to be commended to any of you. But I think in these critical days we would none of us like to-night to drink that toast in just a formal way. I think we would like to set aside a few minutes to think about it, as it were, and so I shall try to be brief, but I am going to try to make one or two general remarks about it, knowing that while I do so you will be making your own contribution.

We all have our own special experiences in the last war and in the present war, and many things come to our mind when we hear that term—His Majesty's Forces.

Now in this country we have a deeply-rooted respect and affection for His Majesty's Forces. We recognise them as the sure shield and the sure defence they have been to us through all the past centuries. But it seems to me that in our time we are developing a new attitude towards them and a new regard. Twice in our lifetime—and not just in our lifetime, but in the working lifetime of those of us in this room—twice we have seen our country engaged in a major war, in a life-and-death struggle, which has meant the mobilisation of every resource. So the call from the Services has gone home in one form or another to every household in these islands and His Majesty's Forces are to-day part and parcel of the nation in a way that I think has no parallel in the past. I am not going to labour that point, but perhaps I can bring it home by just relating what happened to me yesterday. With some other proud Devonians I gave up my lunch hour to cheering the good men of the "Exeter." (Applause). We have always loved the "Exeter" in Devon and saved up our pennies to give her silver plate and other adornments, and one man in my party yesterday, as he looked at that seething crowd on the Embankment, said: "Well, she was always **our** ship, but to-day she is **everybody's** ship!" And that is true of the Forces, isn't it? There has been this wonderful interweaving of civilian life and Service life, and the Forces are everybody's Forces.

Now though we have this new attitude and this new regard, we do not forget our old regard for them, do we? We cannot list the many reasons we have for honouring them, but whenever we hear that term I think there are two or three things that rise at once to our minds. We think perhaps first of all of courage—not only of valour and courage in attack, but the courage of enduring hardships and surmounting difficulties. And we think, too, of high professional standards, not only efficiency in offence and defence, but we think of the attitude of the Forces as human beings. We are proud to think of them as clean fighters and honourable opponents and we are just as proud, aren't we, of the things they will not do as we are of the heroic things they do do. (Applause). And we think of them also as progressive Forces; we think of them as moving with the times. We realise that very well in this room when we remember how in the last war the Army first, so to speak, called the Waacs to the Colours, and we see them progressing again in this war by putting our—I don't know whether to call them our god-children or our descendants, the A.T.S., on a still better footing. We see progress going on everywhere in the Armed Forces. We have only to look at those charming battle-garments the soldiers wear, or to see their new barracks, to be sure they are moving in every direction with the times.

Well now, when I sit down, and you will be relieved to hear that I will be doing that quite soon, when I sit down, Dame Helen is going to respond to this toast. She is going to respond to it because she is the senior officer here to-night of H.M. Forces. (Applause). We are very proud, are we not, that she should be a Military Director and that she should be ranked with a Major General. (Applause). It seemed beyond our wildest dreams in the Waacs. And I want to say, on that, that we are very glad of this, not only for Dame Helen's sake, because it crowns her great achievements in the Services, but we are glad of it for the sake of the women under her command, because it means they are on the footing on which we would like to see them and which we have so long desired.

Now I am going to say a few more things about Dame Helen, whether she likes it or not, though, as a mere civilian, I don't mind telling you that I feel rather nervous, with A.T.S. to the right of me and A.T.S. to the left of me, not to mention W.A.A.F.s in front; but at any rate it is no good proposing this toast unless one is courageous, so I am going to say one or two more things about the Chairman. When I said that in thinking of the Forces we think of things like courage and high professional standards and a progressive outlook, when I said that I want to follow it up by saying that I think Dame Helen typifies

those things to us. (Applause). We have many reasons to admire her leadership, but those of us who have worked with her perhaps would pick out specially her courage in tackling new situations and the patience and perseverance with which she solves difficult situations. We all know the high regard she has for professional standards; we know her high standing in civil life as a professional woman and we know she has brought those standards and coupled them with her military service. So that we can say to-night that she is standing to us for those qualities which we admire so much in H.M. Forces.

Now I know the Chairman likes things done decently and in order, so although I am trying to be brave I don't quite like to go so far as to ask you to couple her name with the toast. Still, you can say it under your breath, can't you? And so I am going to ask you now, Old Comrades, to rise to the occasion and raise your glasses and drink to the health of His Majesty's Forces and think about Dame Helen. (Applause).

Reply to the Toast of H.M. FORCES and

Toast: THE OLD COMRADES' ASSOCIATION.

Chief Controller: DAME HELEN GWYNNE VAUGHAN,
G.B.E., D.Sc., LL.D., F.L.S.

(Dame Helen was greeted with prolonged applause and cheers).

Old Comrades: I should like to thank Miss Pratt for the really magnificent way in which she has proposed this toast. I should like especially to thank her for not having coupled my name with it, because I was feeling terribly bad about the fear that I would not be able to drink it, and she let me out.

I do want to say to you that it seems to me a very marvellous and very unexpected occasion that at this Dinner of Old Comrades I should have the honour not of proposing, as I have once or twice, but of replying for the toast of H.M. Forces. (Applause). And I would like to tell you what I think we here all know, that the new generation is coming along finely and is going to be a credit to those of its fathers and mothers and uncles and aunts whom we knew in the past. I have seen a good deal, as I have gone round inspecting the A.T.S., I have seen a good deal of other parts of the Forces. I will say nothing about the Navy, to which Miss Pratt has already referred in such eloquent terms. That and the Air Force have been having all the meat up to now, and very splendidly they have handled it. They have handled it independently; they have handled it in co-operation, and that pretty, if irregular, and perfectly magnificent episode of the "Cossack"—(applause)—is one of the prettiest and clearest examples of co-operation. Well, those men of the Navy, those magnificent lads of the Air Force, have been living up to their standards.

But I do want to emphasise that not less has the Army been living up to its standards and in what is often an extremely difficult way. We all of us knew last September that this winter was going to be a very severe test of discipline; we realised there would be little fighting, because the Maginot Line is almost too strong to attack, and that other line on which one hangs one's washing has also a certain strength. We knew at the War Office that it was going to be a winter of waiting, a winter of being on the watch, a winter which both overseas and at home would be a test of discipline. February has come, and the Army has stood the test. (Applause).

As you know, I was overseas in December, on very different lines of communication to those on which some of us learned our soldiering so many years ago, and it was brought home to me what an extraordinarily difficult war it is in which things don't get used up in the front line: the hospitals, waiting with unoccupied specialists masquerading as subalterns and captains, the ammunition waiting and piling up with little means of utilising it; can't you see? And the thing that to me was almost the most impressive thing—it came out in the Press, did you notice?—about the men who were on guard in the front line in that extreme cold and might not even stamp their feet because of the vibration. It just shows you what a difficult thing it is to keep watch when nothing is happen-

ing. And think of all the Anti-Aircraft people at home here, on the watch day and night and nothing happening. I can tell you, they positively enjoy it if they get news of an enemy machine.

And, as Miss Pratt has said, we have our share in this. Those young militia men who belong to so many of us are splendid stuff, and their Commanding Officers tell me, and I can see for myself as I go round, the way they are picking up the drill and picking up the technical work is just magnificent. They are as keen as mustard, as smart as you please, and, in addition, the education meted out to the young now as compared with some years ago, is proving worth while from the Army standpoint.

Then there are our own descendants. I hesitated to prepare a speech this evening because I did not know the way my Old Comrades were going to treat my new comrades. Well, I am terribly glad that you have taken them under your wing—under our wing. (Applause). I am terribly proud, because I know it has meant a sacrifice, I am terribly proud that you should have decided to do it, and I know, too, that these younger women who will be ex-Service women some day are learning to respect and admire and to look up to the Waacs of the last war. It is one of my pleasant duties, in every Cadet Course for Officers, and every time I go round to the Reception Depots and see the new recruits, to tell them something of the traditions of the old Service, to tell them how Waacs always reported punctually for duty whatever happens—(laughter and applause)—well, the Waacs once did after an air raid, you know!—to tell them how "we do not thank soldiers for devotion to duty, we do not propose to treat these women differently," to tell them this story and that story about the good work you did and the great tradition that you laid down for them to follow. And they are learning. Don't expect us all to be perfect. There are more thousands of them than it would be proper for me to mention, even though there are no reporters here, but when you run to thousands you cannot keep that shining perfection which each of you, of course, individually find it so easy to achieve! But, after all, my dears, if you really look back with a clear mind, even the Waacs weren't perfect! I can remember one or two tales against you, and you can remember one or two tales against each other, which show us—though we don't propose to tell the A.T.s so—that there was sometimes a little rift in the lute and sometimes a little flaw in the glaze. But, after all, we learned; we learned to get better and better as we went on, and one of the heartening things about this new Service is the extent to which it has been possible for it to get the benefit of what you did and of what you learned, partly because there is a very heartening proportion of old Waacs in the new ranks—(applause)—and I don't mind telling you that these impertinent youngsters regard it as a sort of mascot, a sort of bit of good luck, to have an old war-horse in the Platoon. You may be amused to hear that one of our Vice-Presidents, whose apologies for absence I ought to have made, by the way—Chief Commandant Pratt-Barlow—used to be known at the School of Instruction as "the galloping war-horse" because of a certain rapidity of movement. I have no doubt they are most disrespectful and impertinent to us, but all the same, that is one of the ways of expressing the fact that they are really rather proud and when it comes to a story or two about the old days (but not too much of it, mind you, not too much of it; because, after all, they didn't have the chance of being there, poor things! but just every now and then) they are terribly thrilled by it. You can see their faces light up, you can see a little bit of stern resolution coming around those youthful mouths, and you know that the example of our old Service has gone home. Well, I can wish these new Service men and women, men and women of H.M. Forces, nothing better than to be worthy of the old Services of the last war. (Applause).

We know how magnificent those Services were. We know how the line was held in 1914 and even better, because we were there, we know how it was held in 1918, how near a thing it was and how it was just the magnificent sticking power of our men and their splendid discipline—and a little tiny bit, perhaps the fact that the Waacs were so near behind—it was that that held the line

until all was well and our troops could begin to advance.

And because we know, Old Comrades, because of what we have seen and experienced, **we know** that this war will end in victory. (Applause). And we know that victory will mean kindness and good comradeship for friend and foe. Though some of the foe will have a thing or two to learn before they are worthy of good comradeship, because they have been very badly educated in the last seven years or so, and we have to be sorry for them; but all the same, they will have to learn.

But don't forget there is a long road to victory. Don't forget that it is going, like this last winter we have just come through, to be a test not only of courage, but of discipline and you, Old Comrades, who have not got the good luck to serve, you who have other duties, don't feel you are out of it. You are in it just as much as anyone else. After all, we are the lucky ones who are back in khaki or even blue. We are the lucky ones, and we know it, and will try to be worthy of you. But remember, whether you are doing a civilian job or whether you are in A.R.P. or whether you are running a home—I don't say "whether you are in the Nursing Services," because we all know they are ahead of everything—but whatever you are doing, don't forget that you are in it, too, and that your discipline and your lighthearted facing of inconveniences, not just to-day or to-morrow, but right through the time when it gets difficult, when we are tired, when the butter ration is smaller, those are the things that are going to be essential to victory; and therefore when nowadays one returns thanks for the toast of H.M. Forces one really means everybody, and it becomes doubly appropriate that I should end by proposing the toast of this Old Comrades' Association. It is a great pleasure to me to couple it with a name that is very appropriate because of the work she has done for the O.C.A., the name of our friend and Old Comrade Saunders. I give you the O.C.A. and Saunders.

At this point Dame Helen read further telegrams and messages which had been received.

Reply to the Toast of the O.C.A.

Miss L. SAUNDERS.

Dame Helen and all other Old Comrades: I would like to say thank you. Nothing I can say in amplification of those two simple words can express more forcibly our appreciation of your presence here to-night and for the cheering words you have spoken to us. We are delighted to see you in the Chair, for your presence reminds us that our Old Comradeship, which we value so highly, is not to be a thing of the past, but an inspiration for the future. Not only were you our leader in the olden days, but now, as Chief Controller in the new Army, we are confident that under your guidance all will be well—(applause)—and that never-to-be-forgotten spirit of comradeship, which your leadership fostered, will be continued. May this new Army develop the same spirit that we all knew and cherished. If we can pass on that spirit of goodwill our work will not have been in vain.

We may be twenty years older in body, but our spirits are as young as ever—(hear, hear; applause)—and should the country need us in any capacity we can supply everything that is required. In our ex-Services ranks we have A.T.S., Red Cross, St. John's, A.R.P., Land Army, Canteen personnel and all other National Defence Services. Above all, we are all as willing to serve now as we were in 1916.

We look forward to the end of the war, when all the people of the world can meet together in our happy comradeship.

We have only one regret to-night—that our President, Dame Florence Simpson, is not with us. You have heard her message this afternoon; we know her thoughts are with us and, knowing her sterling merit and sympathetic understanding in the old days, I know you will rise with one accord and drink a toast to Dame Florence Simpson, our President. (Applause).

Miss THOMPSON.

(Miss Thompson was received with cheers).

Dame Helen, Old Comrades: I am feeling very important to-night because I have just been asked to reply

to the toast of the President. Dame Florence asked us this afternoon to explain to those of you who were not at the General Meeting that she does not really feel up to coming out in the evenings during the winter and the black-out and also she has to take some care of herself these days. She was very amusing about it, and when Dame Helen congratulated her on her extraordinarily youthful appearance she said, "You don't know what a lot of trouble it takes to go on looking like this." But she is doing a good deal of work now in connection with the National Camps Corporation and she does have to take rather special care as her heart is not very strong. She asked us to tell you she is thinking of you all to-night and she is glad you were able to arrange this dinner.

Miss Ireland also asked me to say that she finds it a very long journey in the dark to get down to Richmond, where she is now living, and she also has to take care of herself if she is to carry on with her work. They both know you will realise how much they wish they were here, had it been possible.

I know you would all like me to say how grateful we are to the three very energetic members who have arranged this dinner for us. (Applause). Miss Saunders, Miss Haines and Miss Binks, with much enterprise have collected this really wonderful gathering that we see here. They had a good deal of cold water thrown on them. People weren't quite sure whether they ought to enjoy themselves, or whether other people ought. But I am sure they will be rewarded by the fact that some 250 of us are enjoying ourselves enormously. (Applause). Personally I have seldom had a better evening at past dinners. I have sat next to Field Marshals, I have sat next to Marchionesses, I have sat next to Matrons-in-Chief, and I have always had a good deal of difficulty in keeping the conversation going, but never before have I sat between the Chairman and the Secretary, and I feel extremely honoured and hope you have all had as good an evening as I have.

And now I think we should all like to drink a toast to those three people who have done so much for us to-night—Miss Saunders, Miss Haines and Miss Binks. Good luck to them. (Applause).

LONDON BRANCH GENERAL MEETING, FEBRUARY 15th, 1940

The General Meeting of London Branch was postponed owing to the war and was held on Thursday, February 15th, 1940, at 6.30 p.m.

Miss Thompson was unable to be in the Chair, but this was taken by our Vice-Chairman, Miss Ireland, supported by Dame Florence Simpson, President of the O.C.A., the Committee and about sixty-five members.

The membership this year had decreased by 43, being 502 for the year 1939.

Re-unions had been held every first and third Thursday of the month and even after the war started, although the attendance was smaller, quite a number came along.

A special social had been arranged on February 2nd, 1939, by Mrs. Giles and Mrs. Rose. Seventy-four members had been present, including Dame Florence, and it had been very successful.

Miss Roberts had run a successful whist drive on March 2nd and Mrs. Jackson a beetle drive on April 20th. Both had been much enjoyed, and members were again clamouring for whist drives.

In December, 1938, the Roamers had again given us some Christmas carols, but we had had to forgo them in 1939.

Mr. V. C. Buckley gave a most interesting lecture on "Happy Countries" on February 16th.

An American Sale organised by Miss Rogers and Mrs. Fardon had raised a nice sum for Branch Funds.

Some members had visited a margarine factory at Purfleet and the Kodak Works. The former had proved very interesting, but the latter too technical.

Interesting films had been shown by the Canadian Government last May, and it was hoped to have a showing of some more this year.

The inter-service Spelling Bee, organised by Miss Saunders with Captain Garrard as Spelling Master, had

been a great success, the W.R.A.F.s and W.A.A.C.s tying for top place. Two W.R.A.F.s and two W.A.A.C.s were chosen to spell until eliminated one by one. The W.A.A.C.s were declared the winning team.

Fifty members and friends visited the Royal Tournament on May 26th.

Thirty-five Old Comrades visited the Royal Kitchens at Buckingham Palace on May 6th.

Twenty members visited the Houses of Parliament and spent a most interesting afternoon under the guidance of Mr. Bracken, member for North Paddington.

The visit to Shanghai in June was much enjoyed.

Thirty-one members and friends visited "Hiawatha" on June 21st.

Seven members went to Hitcham to visit Mr. Howarth and had a delightful day there on July 16th.

Christmas parcels were sent to thirteen Old Comrades in 1938, but it had not been possible to send any in 1939.

The Hon. Treasurer's report showed a balance of £55 11s. 11d., slightly more than the previous year.

Miss Sanderson's report showed that the year began well, and the usual workers worked very hard for the cupboard, but the work had slackened off after the war had started, as so many members were engaged on National Service. The last parcel to Headquarters had been sent in July and contained 269 garments, of which 12 were new. Mrs. Johnston said that while she was up North, Miss Sanderson sent parcels direct to addresses she sent and they were much appreciated.

Miss Ireland said that she regretted that Miss Bilbrough found it impossible to continue to act as hon. secretary to the Branch owing to her work in the A.T.S. Miss Haines was nominated and carried unanimously. Miss Hayward and Miss Roberts were both re-elected as hon. treasurer and assistant honorary secretary.

The following were elected for the Committee: Misses Porter, Robinson, Billington, Saunders, Binks, Bilbrough, Mrs. Fardon, Mrs. Rose, Mrs. Courage, Mrs. Eager. It was resolved "That the Members constituting the present Committee should continue in office for the duration of the war with power to co-opt."

The following were proposed for Headquarters Council subject to the approval of the General Meeting: Misses Longman, Saunders, Haines, Bilbrough, Binks, Mrs. Fardon and Mrs. Eager.

Members expressed a wish for the reunions to be continued on the first and third Thursdays of every month and some other entertainment given when possible to be left to the Committee.

Miss Ireland expressed her thanks to the Officers and Committee for their work during the past year. Mrs. Johnston proposed a vote of thanks to Miss Ireland for taking the Chair. This was carried unanimously.

LONDON BRANCH NOTICE

Dear Members,

It has been suggested that we might like to make personal contact with a regiment and help with the Comforts Funds in some form or other, preferably knitting.

The 10th Middlesex Regiment has been proposed, and there appears to be very good reasons why we should support this proposal. The 10th is a Home Defence unit, all men are over 35 years of age, and ninety per cent. served in the Great War. Their chief duties consist of guarding vulnerable points "somewhere in England"—the next worst job to being in the front line. The C.O. and 2nd C.O. are Territorial Force officers and (this is a secret, of course) well over military age.

So many of us are on Home Defence, aren't we, and inclined to think we are being overlooked. Well, let us see to it that these men do not feel that way.

I am sure that both the C.O. and Mrs. Carter, who has undertaken to act as Chairman of the Fund, would be most grateful if we adopted them if only for one winter. Any suggestions are welcomed.

Yours most sincerely,

B. HAINES, Hon. Secretary.

HEADQUARTERS REPORT FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH

There is very little to report from Headquarters, as there was no Council Meeting in January, and the March meeting will not be held until the 30th, when the Gazette will already be in the hands of members. All the great events, the Annual General Meeting and the Dinner, have their own special place in the news, so are not included in the H.Q. Report.

A Meeting of the Council was held on February 10th to make the final arrangements for the Annual General Meeting and Dinner. Twelve members were present—Miss Thompson, Mrs. Powell, Senior Leader Bilbrough, Miss Saunders, Miss Haines, Miss Longman, Miss Pratt, Mrs. Fardon, Chief Commandant Mrs. Pratt-Barlow, Miss Billington and the General Secretary, with Chief Controller Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan in the chair. Miss Ireland, Miss Batty, Miss Rogers and Mrs. Grundy sent apologies for absence.

Parcels. We have to thank London Branch, through the wonderful agency of Miss Sanderson, for three splendid parcels. Now that the O.C.A. Headquarters are again back in London, the General Secretary will be delighted to receive parcels once more.

Mrs. Fardon is very busy with Red Cross work, but she has kindly promised to spare a few hours in the mornings to pack up parcels for Old Comrades who have applied for clothing. This is much appreciated, as Mrs. Fardon is very expert in finding the right things for each member of the family and it would not be easy to replace her.

BENEVOLENT REPORT FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY, 1940

Three cases were assisted by the Service Women's Benevolent Fund during December, 1939.

One grant was made to clear debts for a widow.

One member was given a small weekly grant until pension granted.

One award was made for maintenance and insurance while ill.

In January, 1940, six cases were assisted.

One grant was made to clear a small balance for Hire Purchase of furniture.

One grant was made towards legal expenses.

One maintenance grant while unemployed.

One member received a grant for arrears of rent and clothing.

One award was made for clothing and blankets for an invalid. (This case is one in which the B.L. and U.S.F. are giving a weekly grant for 52 weeks).

One grant was made for coal for winter and clothing.

Owing to the removal to London, the cash book was not available to give exact amounts disbursed, but the above cases received the amount of grants as shown.

LETTER FROM THE WAR OFFICE

The following letter which has been received from Lieutenant-General Sir John Brown, Deputy Adjutant General (T), the War Office, will be of great interest to all Old Comrades, and it is hoped that Branches will co-operate wholeheartedly with the Social Welfare Officers in their districts.

The War Office, London, S.W.1.

March 18th, 1940.

There are many and valuable ways in which members of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, Old Comrades' Association, can help to promote the welfare of the Army and, in particular, to further the activities of the Social Welfare organisation.

The Secretaries of Branches which are willing to help should place themselves in touch with County Welfare Officers. The addresses of these can be obtained from County Territorial Army Associations (which will be found in the telephone directory), from whose offices County Welfare Officers generally do their work. Branches and Welfare Officers acting in collaboration should be able to draw up a useful programme.

The work may consist in arranging transport for troops on leave, running information bureaux in or near large

stations, organising concert parties, or in providing and arranging local hospitality for troops by giving them meals, or the use of bathrooms or gardens. Many people are willing and, indeed, anxious to help in this way, and Old Comrades of Q.M.A.A.C. might prepare a register of such people in each locality to ensure that the work might continue where individual units or detachments were moved. Branches could do valuable work by ensuring that only desirable people are on the register; it need not be emphasised that if such work were undertaken it should only be entrusted to persons of the greatest tact and responsibility.

I hope that all branches of Q.M.A.A.C., Old Comrades' Association, will get into touch with Social Welfare Officers and that much benefit will accrue from their co-operation in this great work.

NEWS OF OLD COMRADES

Mention was made in the last Gazette of a sick comrade of ours from Rouen, but before the Gazette was even published, **Mrs. E. Lang** passed away very peacefully on January 14th at her home in Liverpool, and we send our affectionate sympathy to her young daughter and relatives.

Mrs. Lang came to Cauchoise Billet, Rouen, from Wimereux, during the latter part of 1918, and we remember her bright and winning personality in those old days. She then acted as clerk to Harcourt Brown (Mrs. Senn), who found her always willing and helpful. One of her duties was to accompany Harcourt on her many journeys late at night to meet new drafts coming off the trains.

Unfortunately, for many weary months Lang had been in ill-health. In October last Mrs. Senn was able to visit her in hospital, and this visit greatly cheered Lang. Mrs. Senn had always kept in touch with her.

Monica, her daughter of 18, who is as interested in National Service as her mother was, has recently joined the W.A.A.F.s in Newcastle, and we wish her all success now and in the future. She was just as interested in the O.C.A. activities as her mother, and has been a regular reader of our Gazette.

Rouen friends of **Miss Dorothy Hoad** will be sorry to hear that she has been under the weather again this winter. After a bout of extreme weakness she went into Torbay Hospital in January for several weeks' rest and treatment. However, we are glad to report that she is now home again and gradually getting more strength, but this is always a very tedious business with her.

In a letter received just before the Annual Dinner, she said, "How I did look forward to being there this year. Of course, that was last year, before the war started, and it was somewhat of a consolation to think I would not be missing it this year after all." However, she thought it was a splendid idea to carry on and have a dinner this year. After all, it is the spirit of Old Comradeship that matters and the opportunity the dinner affords to bring distant ones together just for a few hours. She sent her best wishes to all her good friends, which were conveyed to the few Rouenites who were present on the 24th. These only included Machin, Dipple, Norden, Winks, Shrimpton, E. M. Brown and the writer this year, but despite the smaller numbers it was voted by many to be one of the best and most enjoyable dinners we have had. We leave it to others to give a good account of the evening, but in passing would like to send our grateful thanks and appreciation to the members of London Branch Committee who worked like trojans to give us a good time.

E. M. WINTER

BRANCH REPORTS

London.

As Old Comrades will see from the report of the General Meeting, I have given up the Honorary Secretaryship of London Branch, as I found being in the A.T.S. and away from London it was impossible to carry on. I hope, however, to attend the re-unions whenever possible. Miss Haines has now taken over the secretaryship, and I am sure will prove very able.

A Whist Drive is being arranged by Miss Roberts for Thursday, April 18th, 1940; tickets 1s. Please come and bring your friends.

It is hoped to arrange another showing of some more Canadian films on either the first or third Thursday in May at 7.30 p.m. As soon as arrangements have been made a notice will be put up in the Club.

The address of the new secretary is Miss B. Haines, Ex-Service Women's Club, 5 Buckingham Gate, London, S.W.1.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Old Comrades for all the help they have given me during my term of office, and I hope to hear at the end of the year that the 43 Old Comrades who strayed from the Branch during last year have returned and brought their friends with them to join.

M. BILBROUGH.

Brighton.

We are still carrying on, despite the blackout and severe winter weather. Several of us met at the Aqua just before Christmas for a fish supper and a chat over things in general, and to wish one another the season's greetings. We met again in January at the same place and were joined by Kimber (in the A.T.S.), who was home on leave. She looked very smart in her uniform and her experiences of service were most interesting and made some of us wish that Anno Domini did not prevent us from joining up again.

Beckenham has also joined the A.T.S. and spent three weeks training at a place somewhere on the South Coast, where cadets were in training for officers. After her training period was over she was moved, and I have had a long chatty letter from her, in which she asks to be remembered to all. Another member (White) is doing nursing service on a hospital ship, and I have had an interesting letter from her. Owing to illness and other causes, our number at the Dinner in London was smaller than usual, but those who attended report a great time.

E. C. JOLLY.

Birmingham.

The members of Birmingham Branch endeavour to keep in touch with each other by meeting at fortnightly intervals on Tuesday evenings in Lyons' restaurant. A fair number turned up on January 2nd—some civilians and some in uniform. The civilians knit comforts for friends in the W.A.A.F. and the A.T.S. We cannot all put on uniform. It needs somebody to stay at home and have their income taxed to pay for the others!

I was interested to see a photo of the Queen with Dame Helen in the "Daily Telegraph" recently.

On January 16th we squeezed around one of Messrs. Lyons' corner tables, and there were present Miss Dipple, Mabel Pearce, Mrs. Robinson, "Sammie," "Katie Pearce," Mrs. Smith, Sergt. Willetts and Sergt. Peers. All the conversation was about ways and means of attending the Re-union Dinner in London on February 24th.

E.A.R.

Glasgow and West of Scotland.

Now that the evenings are longer and lighter, we have reverted to Wednesday evenings for our meetings.

All the wool got in the autumn has been knitted up and sent to the minesweepers. A letter of grateful thanks and appreciation has been received from the secretary. Members must not slacken off in summer, as "woollies" are always needed at sea.

Mrs. Maxwell, whose husband has a farm in Dumfriesshire, writes of the terrible time they had when they were snowed up in January—no papers, post or vans for a fortnight, except those who could dig their way through. She had plenty of flour and farm produce and coal, and as she is an excellent baker and cook (having been a forewoman cook in the Waacs) she was able to keep her household going and help neighbours who were less fortunate. From her I got my first taste of "macon"! When the day's work is over she and her husband sit and knit comforts.

Mrs. Keenan, who lives in a little village in the South-West of Scotland, is also very busy. She writes that she is proud to have been a Waac, and, like many others, wishes she were twenty years younger so as to be able to join again. She is a very keen worker, and along with the women of the village is busy knitting gloves at the moment for a captain who belongs to the village. He wishes a pair for each of the men on his ship. Mrs. Keenan

describes a thrill she had one very cold Sunday when five airmen arrived at her village. They had to make a forced landing from engine trouble, and owing to the fog did not know where they were. They were frozen stiff, as they had no sleeping bags. She gave them rugs and made them a hot supper before they went on board their seaplane for the night. All the members are busy in one form of war work or other—canteen, first aid, A.R.P., etc.

We had a re-union at the Club on Wednesday, March 20th, to "bring in" the summer season. Talk, interspersed with music and tea, took up the evening, and a collection in silver for wool amounted to £2. Mrs. Robb (née Beaton) brought Mrs. Paton (née Pickering). Both were in the Edinburgh depot during the Great War. Miss McLelland, chairman of the Club, gave some amusing experiences of her time with the evacuees in the North, and pointed out that the scheme "is not so black as it is painted." To augment the funds of the Club, a whist drive will be held on Wednesday, April 24th.

E. M. GILCHRIST.

Blackpool.

At the outbreak of this new war, Blackpool Branch had not re-commenced its activities due to its usual practice of suspending meetings during July, August and September. When the time came to begin the meetings and social evenings again we were faced with that dread bogey, the "blackout," and members were very reluctant to venture out of doors away from cosy firesides into the "unknown." Added to this great inconvenience, the members who relied on trams, trains and other means of transport were unable to catch their connections homewards, as the whist drives, etc., run to such a late hour. "Consternation" was our password, and we were in a sad dilemma. Eventually one brainy member suggested that we held our affairs once a month instead of fortnightly, and that we arranged to meet on moonlight evenings. As soon as this was settled, we started off again with our meetings and we breathed once more. The Waacs had, as usual, "pulled through."

We held the Annual General Meeting in December, this time two months later. Our sad business was to elect a new Chairman in the place of Mrs. Barnes, who died suddenly after a period of ill-health lasting about six months, which no one ever thought would result in her end. She will be greatly missed by us all and will be ever in our thoughts at all times.

The Club still remains very harmonious and hilarious, in fact, sometimes I don't think they know what they are laughing at when the bursts of merriment rend the air. We have had one or two whist drives, very well attended by members and their friends, and at the last one an intrepid soul suggested we meet fortnightly as in previous years. This (let it be said with bated breath) means one moonlight night and one black one. Anyway, we shall see how we go on. Our hearts are as brave as ever, but our feet are not so sure of finding the footpath in the dark (inclined to be tottery).

We did not parade this year to place our wreath on the cenotaph, but two members were detailed for the duty and our comrades who fell in the Great War were not forgotten. This year we had no annual dinner at Blackpool, but this again was the fault of the blackout.

We portioned £8 8s. 0d. from our proceeds last year towards various charities and still retain a respectable balance in hand, so whilst we can progress in this way Blackpool Branch can still carry on the good work.

K. FRY.

OBITUARY

Miss Janet Robertson, O.B.E., who had been for many years a member of the clerical staff of the Fife Electric Power Co., Dunfermline, died with tragic suddenness on January 22nd. Miss Robertson, who was 58 years of age, lived alone at 33 Chalmers Street, Dunfermline. Her non-appearance on Monday morning caused some anxiety to neighbours, who, later in the day, communicated with the police. On the house being entered, Miss Robertson was found dead in bed, death having apparently taken place some hours before the discovery was made.

Miss Robertson was a daughter of Mr. William Robertson, Douglas House, Kinnesswood. Her remains were interred in the West Burial Ground, Kinross.

Miss Robertson served in France in the last war with the W.A.A.C.s. For her services she was decorated with the O.B.E.

The death occurred on January 2nd of Mrs. L. M. Hockley, of Staines Road, Bedford. Mrs. Hockley was a life member of London Branch. She had a stroke in December and died in hospital, having been unconscious most of the time. She was cremated at Mortlake on January 6th.

GAZETTE SUBSCRIPTIONS

All Gazette subscriptions should be sent to Miss Billington, 5 Chesham Place, London, S.W.1. All receipts will be sent with the next Gazette to save postage.

Can any member lend her W.A.A.C. uniform to Mrs. M. Hulse, Croft Cottage, Ball Lane, Leek, Staffs, who wishes to be photographed in uniform? The size required is 34/36 and length 46. She will pay all postage charges and will take great care of the coatfrock and hat, and will take great care of the coat, frock and hat.

Miss Dolier is in the A.T.S. at Canterbury and is working in the pay office there.

Miss F. Austin, of Kettering, was serving in the A.T.S. as a cook. She has, unfortunately, had to resign for family reasons.

ADVERTISEMENTS

STORMONT, 43 and 45, Longridge Road, Earls Court, S.W.5. Misses A. Crockford and O. Mainland. Bed, bath and breakfast from 5/6. Lunch, tea and dinner optional. 6d. per night extra for bookings if less than three nights. Gas fires in rooms. Telephone Frobisher 0986.

A COMFORTABLE HOME is offered for an elderly lady or gentleman. Terms moderate.—Miss J. Henry, 49 Summerhouse Road, Bexley, Kent.

Ex-W.A.A.C. crippled by broken hip, wishes for orders for knitting; jumpers, cardigans, baby things, pullovers, etc.; copies from books, done cheaply.—E. Cockerham, 6 Gayton Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

Unusual Gifts; hand-painted wood figures; Mickey Mouse, Popeye, Snow White and Seven Dwarfs, Dutch girl and boy, etc.; beautifully made to order by two Waaclets; mounted as menu holders or calendars; prices on application to—Hon. Sec., Oxford Branch, O.C.A.

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Pure Home Made Sweets—Assorted Chocolates 4s. per lb.; Bon-Bons 3s. 6d. and 3s. per lb.; Fondants 2s. 8d. per lb.; Caramels 2s. 4d. per lb.; Toffees 2s. per lb.; Peppermint Humbugs 2s. per lb.; Finest Barley Sugars 1s. 8d. per lb.; Mixed Fruit Drops 1s. 4d. per lb., etc., etc. Postage extra.—Miss E. Cocksedge, 2 Bracken Road, West Brighouse, Yorkshire.