

MAY
JUNE } 1940

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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HEADQUARTERS REPORT FOR APRIL AND MAY

A meeting of Council was held on Saturday, March 30th, with Chief Controller Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan in the chair.

The business before the Meeting was the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and the appointment of Standing Committees. Dame Helen was re-elected as Chairman, and the four Vice-Chairmen, Miss Davy, Miss Thompson, Miss Ireland and Mrs. Pratt-Barlow were also re-elected.

Miss W. Binks was appointed as Q.M.A.A.C. representative on the Committee of the Service Women's Benevolent Fund in place of Mrs. Fardon, who is unfortunately now too busy with Red Cross work to continue to serve. She has, however, kindly promised to carry on with the work of the Clothing Cupboard.

Miss Warrior is still a tower of strength and has undertaken to deal with the heavy work of the distribution of the Gazette without the aid of a Committee. She has been doing this since last September and the Council expressed their deep appreciation of her work.

The Regulations of the O.C.A. were considered in relation to the resolution passed at the Annual General Meeting: "That the membership of Q.M.A.A.C. O.C.A. be opened to ex-members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service." It was agreed that, for the time being, there was no question of a change in the designation of the O.C.A.

It was agreed that it would be desirable to let the A.T.S. personnel know that, on demobilisation or discharge, they would be eligible for membership and would be welcomed by Q.M.A.A.C. O.C.A. The simplest way to do this would be to inform all commandants of the A.T.S. of the decision of the Annual General Meeting and ask them to promulgate this information to all depots, camps and quarters, thus ensuring knowledge of the O.C.A. before discharge.

It was agreed that the General Secretary should draft a circular letter stating the decision of the Annual General Meeting, the objects of the Association, and the names of the President and Chairman of Council.

This has now been done. A copy is being sent to all Branch Secretaries, as well as to the Commandants of the A.T.S.

BENEVOLENT REPORT FOR FEBRUARY AND MARCH, 1940

Three cases were submitted to the Service Women's Benevolent Fund during February and four cases in March. Grants as applied for were made in each case.

One grant was to clear an account owing to a doctor. The applicant was a widow and had had much sickness.

One member received a grant from the 1935 Fund for a hospital nurse's outfit for her daughter, who was entering as a probationer.

Three awards were made for dentures.

One grant was given to enable a member to increase her stock of poultry and purchase seeds for her allotment.

One member, a widow and nearly 70, was assisted with food and clothing.

PARCELS

Miss Sanderson, of London Branch, has sent another of her wonderful contributions to the Cupboard. Three boxes full, and among the articles are two marvellous rugs, both gay and comforting, besides some beautifully knitted woollen garments. Miss W. M. Johnson also sent a very useful parcel, and our sincere thanks go to both these good Old Comrades. The Cupboard is not quite as full as it might be, but I fear that in these days of stringent economy it is not so easy for members to be so generous as in the piping times of peace.

BRANCH REPORTS

Brighton.

The Brighton Branch is still going strong. Several of us met on April 29th at Aqua House, when a very nice fish supper was served and enjoyed by us all. We spent a very happy evening. Arrangements were made to run a whist drive on May 6th. On May 8th we met Miss Kember, who is on leave from the A.T.S. The blackout and wintry conditions did not prevent us meeting several times in the winter months. Many of our members are doing war work. Mrs. Jolly, our secretary, is working very hard with the W.V.S. Mrs. Harding (St. John Ambulance), Mrs. Anscombe (A.R.P.) and many others are doing their bit. I am sure those who were unable to attend the Reunion Dinner, enjoyed reading all about it in the Gazette. Dame Helen deserved all the nice things that were said about her.

Best wishes to all Old Comrades, who were the pioneers of the A.T.S. They proved to the country that women could and would help Old England in her time of trouble and strife and will carry on.

O. AUSTIN.

Bristol and West of England.

The "high light" of the past month was, of course, the Annual Meeting and Dinner in London. This branch was represented by Miss Mountstephen and the Secretary. Mrs. Webb and Mrs. Whiting had intended to be present, but through family weddings were unable to fit in. Mrs. Whiting's daughter was the "culprit" and Mrs. Webb's nephew.

The Annual Meeting provided an enjoyable discussion on the question of the inclusion of the ex-A.T.S. It is good to have the viewpoint of all sides as long as the main question is as happily settled as in this case. The Annual Dinner was a very happy family gathering and did much, I am sure, to dispel the war fog which is apt to envelope one's outlook.

We are very delighted to welcome a new member to this Branch, Mrs. L. Skidmore, of "Mostyn," High Street, Winterbourne, and are looking forward to meeting her at our next gathering.

All our members are very busy with their war-time jobs, some doing A.R.P. work, others looking after billetees, and some Red Cross work.

Bradford.

Bradford Branch held their first meeting on April 24th. This also constituted the General Meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were read; Mrs. Goodman unanimously re-elected secretary, and Mrs. Baker newly appointed treasurer. A good crowd turned up, all keen to get back to our regular meetings, of which there had been a temporary cessation owing to the dark night and difficulties of transport; so many members live out of town.

N. A. ROBINSON.

Manchester.

The meeting, which was held on Thursday, April 11th, was a most interesting one from many points of view. In the first place, Old Members are returning in increasing numbers, so making it worth our while to get up entertainments and social evenings, etc., for their benefit. Incidentally, they are a jolly crowd, and we all get our measureful of fun. The next evening is to be a social, when we hope to entertain as our guest the Manchester District Social Welfare officer. We hope to hear of the many ways in which we can help to make the daily life of the East Lancashire Territorials an easier one with some homely comforts which we are eager to help to supply.

We have lost two valued members from the Club; they have joined the A.T.S. and have been moved to other units, but they have not been forgotten. Cigarettes have been sent to them, bought from the profits on the light refreshments, always obtainable during the Club socials. This small gift has also been enjoyed by a third member, who, although still in the district, is rather tied by her duties, and is therefore not always with us at our meetings.

I wonder if I could reach many of the Old Comrades who are not members of any of the Branch Clubs—I mean those who would like to do their "bit" to help and don't know how to set about it. Well, here is a suggestion. Will anyone collect samples of woollen materials (out of date) from tailors and post them on to the Secretary, O.C.A., Manchester Branch. It will give us something to do right away. If there are any Manchester Old Comrades who see this I do hope they will come and help us to sew and "knit the victory."

G. E. CARDELL.

Nottingham.

We Waacs attached to the East Midland Women's United Services Branch at Nottingham have, with the W.R.A.F. members, spent some very enjoyable times during the winter months at our new quarters in Heathcote Street, Nottingham. We also had a very happy Christmas Party, not forgetting the joys and mysteries of a bran tub. The rooms were very prettily decorated, and the majority of members brought contributions to provide excellent Christmas fare.

On Easter Saturday we held a whist drive. Eleven members with four friends attended. Mr. Thompson, son of a member of the London Branch, won first prize; Mrs. Bray, a W.R.A.F. member, won second prize; Mrs. Williamson (Waac) having tied with two other members cut and won third prize. I, the Waac Secretary, could only muster enough energy to take the consolation prize, which, by the way, was a very nice aluminium tankard, filled, not with refreshing liquid, but with an Easter egg!

With the lighter evenings, we are thinking of reverting to Wednesday evenings for our meetings, instead of the alternate fortnightly Saturday and Sunday afternoons. So roll along, members.

N. OSLER.

North Staffordshire.

It is with great regret that I have to notify the loss to our Branch of Florence Colclough, who died of pneumonia at the beginning of January. She was with us at our December meeting and was looking forward to coming to our New Year party.

Miss Colclough came out to France at the end of 1918 and was first of all at the Officers' Club at Rouen and later at the Place Capecure at Boulogne. After being demobi-

lised she trained as a nurse, and after having various posts settled down quite near here at the Hornchurch Open Air School. We shall miss her very much, for she was always ready to help us and was one of our most loyal members.

In January we had a very jolly party at Mrs. Ashworth's house, where twelve members had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. Mrs. Ashworth had taken great pains to provide games and competitions, and had given lots of prizes, to say nothing of a real Staffordshire tea. Our grateful thanks are due to her for the hospitality shown to us. I also took the opportunity to gather in subscriptions, quite a few of which were forthcoming.

H. CLOUGH, Hon. Secretary.

Edinburgh.

Once again Old Comrades (Q.M.A.A.C. and W.R.A.F.) gave Dame Helen a hearty welcome when she visited the Club on March 26th. We are grateful that, in spite of two strenuous days with the A.T.S. in Edinburgh, she made time to visit us.

Dame Helen explained the motion passed at the Q.M.A.A.C. Council Meeting on December 6th last, re the admittance of ex-Service members of the A.T.S. to the O.C.A. It is indeed a happy idea and comforting to feel the O.C.A. is assured of a longer life than would otherwise be possible.

One ex-W.A.A.C. was accompanied by a Sub-leader (A.T.S.) daughter which, maybe, was a bit of a jar to those who have any illusions as to the passage of time. We were proud, however, to meet a Waaclet who is carrying on the old tradition, and she was immensely proud of having been spoken to by her Controller-in-Chief.

We know our Branch Members will be very sorry to learn that Miss I. Anderson, our Gazette correspondent, has been seriously ill. We are happy to state, however, that she is now making really good progress, and we wish her a speedy convalescence and the best of good luck.

It is with infinite regret the Executive Committee of the W.U.S. Club in Drumsheugh Gardens has decided to close the Club. The Club has been running, at a loss, for some time, and is not in a position to stand the strain of war conditions. It is hoped, however, to re-open, in the near future, on a new basis, and the Committee trust ex-Service Comrades in Edinburgh and elsewhere will then give it their support as hitherto.

Sydney, N.S.W.

We read all the news in the daily papers eagerly, and often see news of the Women's Corps in England, and I think each and every one would like to join them.

All the members are busy knitting, and we are sending the knitted articles through the Red Cross to the merchantmen in England. To date we have sent two caps, twelve handkerchiefs, 25 pairs socks, two cardigans, and two pullovers, and I think Mrs. Peachey is preparing another parcel this month.

Most of the members have attended A.R.P. and First Aid lectures, and one day a month we take over the Anzac Buffet run by the Returned Soldiers' League for the troops in Sydney, so we keep in touch with everything. We read of the intense cold overseas, and here it is uncomfortably hot; rain is badly needed, having had no good rain for nine months.

I have written to N. Z., and I hope you get news of the ex-Service women over there; they are doing a lot of good work.

The members here are all anxious to keep the Gazette in circulation, as it is the only means we have of hearing news from overseas, but I know how difficult it is with so many joining up again.

Our meetings are well attended. Last month we had a whist drive and next month a lantern lecture, which usually attracts a good roll-up.

ETHEL MILLS.

Blackpool.

Blackpool Branch is experiencing a great revival of interest, and the members turn up in great force at the whist drives and social evenings, which are now held fortnightly as in pre-war days. At one whist drive which we had about four weeks ago, there was a turn-up of nearly 70 members and friends! We were swooning all over the

place as they kept rolling up, and wondering what on earth was to happen to the sugar ration at refreshment interval. Fortunately, the room was large enough to hold the assembly, but we had to get out of the archives the packs of playing cards which had been laid away as having earned a well deserved rest.

The whist drive, which was held the fortnight after this one, was given by a member in her own home, and she was in fear and trembling lest another huge gathering should appear, in which case she would have to request the neighbours to open their doors and give them temporary refuge. She asked the Committee to keep it strictly among members and intimate friends only, in case the walls of the house caved in. About twenty came to this one, and she was able to breathe again. We are trying now to organise a trip into the country some warm Sunday, but if we go on as we are doing we shall have to have a fleet of coaches! I feel sure as time goes on the Blackpool Branch will have many more bright interludes as the members, far from being lethargic, are becoming more active and keen, each meeting suggesting new measures and offering new ideas for the continuance of the Club.

We have another new member in Mrs. Currie, formerly of Manchester. Old Comrades will remember her as Hurst, of the Signal Section, Boulogne, France. Pat Mulligan has joined the W.A.T.S. and paid a visit to Fry whilst on leave. She looked very smart indeed in her uniform, and one hopes she will soon have a few stripes up.

Fry was thrilled to hear the song she sang in the W.A.A.C. concert party (in Etaples) resurrected, and wonders who has revived it after all these years. "Oh, Johnny, Oh" was the song she brought out in 1918 in the "Modern Eves" Concert Party, B.E.F. It seems strange to hear it after twenty-two years.

The Blackpoolites all wish the members of the O.C.A. a long and happy continuance of their Clubs, Gazette and friendship. Life seems to have taken a new lease, and there is no time now for middle-age spread, rheumatism and other kindred complaints of the "Veterans' Corps." We have to brighten our ideas to show these A.T.S. there is plenty of life in the old dog yet, although (let it be whispered) it was very nice sitting round the fire with a book and few chocolates, and a good many many joints were inclined to creak when we had to bestir ourselves to give help in this new war.

K. FRY.

London.

A very successful whist drive was held at the Club on April 18th and the sum of 32s. was raised for the funds. We were pleased to welcome Miss E. M. Hobbs of Tiverton, Devon, known as "Johnny" and served at Cleethorpes, who was on a short visit to London.

Re-unions are being well attended although there are many faces that we miss very much, but we know they are doing a "real job of work" otherwise they would be with us.

In reply to our letter stating that London Branch had adopted the 10th Middlesex Regiment, for the purpose of supporting the Comforts Fund, the following letter has been received from Lieut-Colonel Cook, M.C., "Will you please convey to your Committee my very sincere appreciation of their kindness in adopting this Battalion. They may rest assured that any comforts supplied will be of great value to this unit, and we are extremely grateful for their promise of help."

We were very pleased to welcome still another new members to our Branch, Mrs. Elliott, served as Hayes, and we wish her many happy years of comradeship with us.

Make a special of June 20th, and reserve this date and bring along your friends for the showing of Canadian Films (see special notice), and do not forget the special appeal for the "Comforts Fund."

"Comforts For The Troops" 10th Middlesex Regiment.

Will all those willing to knit or help with gifts of knitted goods or money, send in names and addresses and offers to Miss L. Saunders, 16 Rosehill Gardens, Sutton, Surrey, or at the Club on Re-union evenings.

Rope in your friends or any one who is willing to help swell the number of our Comforts for the Regiment we have adopted, so as to make our Contribution worthy of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps O.C.A., London Branch.

If each member would be responsible for even one garment we should have 500 garments to start with. Prizes will be offered at the end of the year for those collecting the most knitted garments.

All the wool is provided but it has to be bought, so we shall be glad of any help.

Books and novels will also be very welcome.

Show what the O.C.A. can do twenty years after.

On Thursday, June 20th, at 8 p.m. prompt, the Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity have very kindly consented to give a screening of Canadian sound films at the club re-union, so please come along with your friends and show your appreciation in the usual way. You will also be given an opportunity of helping the Comforts Fund during the evening.

B. HAINES

Norfolk.

By kind invitation of Mrs. Paston, our monthly meeting was held on March 27th, at "Roseholme," Thunder Lane, Thorpe St. Andrew. Unfortunately it wasn't quite a moonlight night, so that Mrs. Rumbold was not able to join us from Great Yarmouth. We regretted too, the absence of the Misses Newberry and Prothero due to the Easter holidays. The branch extends their sympathy to Taffy who has recently lost her Dad.

The evening was bitterly cold and we were glad to gather round a lovely fire and have a good chat. There was plenty of correspondence to read, and of course news of Old Comrades met at the Annual Meeting and Dinner in London. Members were very interested to hear news of Miss Thompson, Miss Baron and Mrs. Clarke, also of Mrs. Robinson our new member, to whom Mac especially sent greetings.

We were all delighted when Geraldine and the twins—Lavender and Marguerite—came in to see us. What bonny girls they are for 14 and 9 years old! The twins seems to have grown up so much this year—it seems such a short time ago since we travelled to Tasburgh and saw them one evening in their cots, when only a few months old. They are all very interested in collecting foreign stamps, so that if any of our members have any to pass along to them they will be delighted. Miss Howson brought them some along to the meeting. They each have their own little garden too, and it was lovely to see the bulbs coming through, heralding the approach of spring.

During the evening, a delightful meal was served, and Geraldine stayed with us, ministering to our needs. How lovely it is to see our Waaclets growing up so bonny, even though it makes us all feel very ancient.

Soon the evening had slipped away, and voicing our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Paston, we wended our way to the bus, fortunately a very late one in that direction for the city. We certainly had a very happy evening together.

L. W. CHILVERS.

Liverpool.

The Liverpool Branch of the Women's United Services Club suffered a tragic loss on the 5th instant, by the sudden death, after an operation, of Miss Florence M. Bragg, a member of the Club since its inception, and its secretary for nine years.

Miss Bragg, at the outbreak of the last war, was a member of the V.A.D. in Liverpool, but found that she required fuller scope for her energy. In 1917 she joined the Q.M.A.A.C. as a motor driver, and on the formation of the W.R.A.F. transferred to that Corps, continuing to serve at Netheravon, on Salisbury Plain, until 1919.

Miss Bragg proved herself the ideal secretary, with a great gift for organization and detail, and an even greater sense of loyalty and duty to the position she occupied. No member was allowed to drift away for lack of reminder and encouragement from the secretary. In all weathers, and in all circumstances, she never failed to

attend the meetings, and her greatest joy was a New Year Party given by the Club, for sixteen years, to ex-service men from the Liverpool Ministry of Pensions, which was eagerly looked forward to by the soldiers, who counted themselves lucky to win a ticket in the ballot to attend the festivity. The party was always a masterpiece of organization, and a delight to everyone present.

Mrs. Bragg died only a short while ago, and at the last meeting of the Club, after a two minutes silence for their late secretary, a vote of sympathy was passed for Mr. Bragg, who had often proved himself a kindly helper in the Club's activities, and who had been bereaved of his wife and daughter in so short a time.

The new secretary is Mrs. E. Edwards, a V.A.D. in the last war.

SHANGHAI CAMP

Alas! Shanghai is no more.

At the annual general meeting of the Camping Club, it was decided that owing to war conditions, and so many of our members being away, it was impossible to carry on. It was therefore agreed that we should try and sell the camp, or failing this, let it for the season. Fortunately we were able to dispose of it at a favourable figure.

Many of us are feeling sad at parting with our beautiful camp by the river. We must console ourselves with the thought of the five very happy summers we have enjoyed down there, and the knowledge that the Club was an entire success.

Will any Founder Member (that is, member who had shares in buying the camp) who has changed her address since the founding of the club, and has failed to advise the secretary, please do so. The secretary is Miss W. Binks, 72 Harold Road, London, S.E.19.

In conclusion, I would like to thank officers, members of the Committee and all members for the support they have given the Club.

D. PORTER,

Chairman, Shanghai Camping Club.

CORRESPONDENCE

From Mrs. Harriet Rumney, 1456 N. Washtenaw Avenue, Chicago, Ill., U.S.A.

I suppose you will be surprised to have this letter from me. I was a W.A.A.C. in the world war, and a member of the O.C.A. Sunderland Branch, being on that committee for five years. I was also a member of the Sunderland War Pensions Committee for five years, being a voluntary investigator for ex-Service men and their dependents. I was also at one time president of the Comrades of the Great War before it changed to the British Legion, Women's Auxiliary.

I have been out here ten years, and, of course, would like to have some news of what you are all doing. In fact, if the O.C.A. Gazette is still in circulation I'd like to have it sent on to me. I was wondering also if I couldn't get a branch of some kind going out here, with a view to getting material help to send to the mother country. I am a member of the "Daughters of the British Empire" here in Chicago, "Prince of Wales" Chapter, and a member of the Order "Daughters of St. George," "Windsor Chapter." I joined the American Red Cross, and have graduated as an instructor in surgical dressings. Since England declared war last year, I have put in 250 hours' voluntary work on war dressings, and local dressings for charitable hospitals, and headed a committee group that collected \$1,000 for Red Cross funds. I realised that to create a sympathetic attitude towards England, the best plan would be to start out helping American causes, gaining confidence, and spreading propaganda in friendly gatherings. We need the good will of the American people on our side, and the best way to get it is to start out helping causes dear to the average man and woman in the street. No doubt you will have an idea that this is a "cosmopolitan people," and a very large quota in Chicago is German born, or of German descent. There is also a large

body of British, and it takes one quite a time to get around to them. I believe I could round up a substantial group of ex-Service women and nurses to form an O.C.A. club, and God knows every little help gained thereby would help a lot back home. My husband is a partly disabled ex-Service man, and he is a member of the Canadian Legion here in Chicago. They have no women's auxiliary. I have a daughter 13 years old, a professional dancer, and I am preparing to have her dance to raise funds. There are many ways we can do things here. I attended a meeting where an agent for British war charities spoke, and said what was being raised in New York under that heading, and I'm sure if I get the necessary permission from home to charter a group, I could raise money, make dressings, get knitters together and work for home. My people and all my husband's people are there, in Durham County.

Miss M. M. Low, Roker, Sunderland, was in charge of the O.C.A. Sunderland branch, but it is many years since I heard from her. I served as a general clerk in England at Newcastle and Folkestone (under Miss Ireland) and France. I served at Tours and Bourges with American Records Office, under Miss Horniblow, and later Mrs. Lloyd. For reference, my Service number is 42023. I got your address through writing to a one-time president of O.C.A. in Montreal, Canada, but their group has ceased to exist. I will be very glad to hear from you. We are all anxiously awaiting the outcome of this naval battle we have news of along the coast of Norway.

So with the wish "God bless the British Empire."

ADVERTISEMENTS

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