

1983

No 2

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Vol. LVI

1983

No. 2

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>
Shopping List	49	"Aunty Jacky" goes to School	72
Staff Band Engagements	49	Unit News	73
Freedom of the City of London	50	Book Review	80
Off to the Falklands	50	UOTC	82
Presentations	51	Association News	83
Congratulations	52	Reunions	85
British Army West Nepal Expedition	53	Reunion Notices	85
Sport	57	Branch News	87
Exercise Silverhawk	59	Correspondence	91
Irish Hopscotch	61	Marriages	93
RA Range Hebrides	62	Obituary	93
Zimbabwe	63	Tributes	95
Falklands Pilgrimage	65	London Gazette	95
Expedition to East Greenland	67	Personal Column	96
Expedition Berber Break	71		

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Engagements

August Concerts — Regents Park Sunday
7-13 3 - 4.30 pm & 6 - 7.30 pm
Mon - Sat 12.30 - 2 pm & 5.30 - 7 pm

14 Burma Star VJ Parade, London

27 - 29 Town and Country Festival, Stoneleigh,
Warwickshire

A tour of Cyprus in September and October, and
numerous military commitments.

BLESMA

This year Blackpool's Bonanza Charity Evening — "Tribute to BLESMA" in aid of the Blackpool BLESMA Home of the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association takes place in the Empress Ballroom, Winter Gardens, Blackpool on Wednesday 9th November.

Former members of the ATS and WRAC have been chosen this year to form the Guard of Honour and later be led into the muster by Standard Bearers of the Women's Ex-Service organisations in the North West. The GOC North West District has been invited to take the salute at the end of the muster of Regimental and RAF Association Standards.

Admission will be £2.50, but many former services ladies have already ordered their tickets at £1.50 (parties of 6-8 can reserve a table, fee £1) from Mr David Wagstaff (formerly of the Army Medical Branch), 45 Gateside Drive, Layton, Blackpool FY3 7PN — Tel: 0253-34760. With applications and cheques made out to the 'Seaside Entertainment Appreciation Society' a SAE would be appreciated.

Cover Photograph

Off to the Falklands.

A FEMININE FORCE FOR THE FALKLANDS

The first group of WRAC to join Servicemen and QARANC nurses in the Falkland Islands left RAF Brize Norton on Tuesday 19 July.

Eighteen servicewomen under the command of Captain Di Foster were looking forward to sharing in the running of the garrison. Selected from nearly 100 volunteers, they are clerks, cooks, postal and courier operators and supply specialists. Already in the Falklands is Corporal "Becker" Taylor, serving with the Garrison Provost Unit. Their tour of duty will be approximately five months. All the WRAC are employed in and around Port Stanley.

Prior to their departure, which had been kept secret from most of the press until the last couple of days, the girls went on an intensive survival course in the mountains around Tywyn.

The day they left UK, our by now famous ladies endured a photocall at Guildford for the national press, amid much giggling at the sight of "Fred" — a dog mascot produced in a hurry from someone else's bed at the request of one of the photographers. "Fred" (real name unknown) rose to fame in the *Guardian* newspaper, reviewing the "women troops" with the assistance of a long-suffering Corporal Kay Sharman. ITN News at Ten broadcast film of the girls that evening.

FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON

It was a memorable occasion for Brigadiers Eileen Nolan and Helen Meechie when they were admitted as Freemen of the City of London at a ceremony held in the Guildhall on June 7th.

In the ceremony conducted by the Remembrancer of the City of London and in the presence of their sponsors, Major and Deputy Edwina Coven and Colonel and Alderman Sir Ronald Gardner-Thorpe they each received an illuminated scroll and also a book which is presented to all Freemen, entitled "Rules for the Conduct of Life".

The historical background of the Freedom of the City of London can be traced to the thirteenth century and it has evolved through the years to allow freemen immunity from tolls at markets and fairs, freedom from impressment into the armed forces, the exclusive right to trade by wholesale and retail within the City and the right to vote at elections.

Privileges are now of a charitable and educational nature. The newest Freemen join a distinguished roll.



Brigadier Nolan (left) and Brigadier Meechie with Major and Deputy Edwina Coven after the ceremony.



Courtesy Daily Mirror

PRESENTATIONS

BEM

On April 6th Cpl Kate Blackman WRAC Provost was presented with the British Empire Medal for meritorious service in Northern Ireland. The presentation was made by the GOC Northern Ireland Lt General Sir Robert Richardson KCB CVO CBE who congratulated Cpl Blackman for her swift reaction and clear thinking which have twice saved the lives of her contemporaries.

Cpl Blackman is a member of 24 Platoon, 181 Provost Company WRAC, serving in Londonderry. Her bravery was first noticed when the Land Rover in which she was travelling was attacked by terrorists. Despite being injured herself Cpl Blackman administered first aid to a male colleague who had also received gunshot wounds, until they reached the hospital.

A few months later Cpl Blackman was at one of the Permanent Vehicle Checkpoints on the Border when she noticed the look of fear on the face of a fuel tanker driver. Using her own initiative she hit the proxy bomb alarm and helped to clear the area before the tanker exploded.

The presentation was made at RHQ, 1 Regt RMP in Lisburn and was followed by a celebration party at Aldergrove.

Since the award Cpl Blackman and her husband have been posted to 114 Provost Company RMP in BAOR.



Cpl Kate Blackman with Lt General Sir Robert Richardson, GOC Northern Ireland.

MSM

Congratulations to WO2 Wynne Pickard who well deserves the award of the Meritorious Service Medal after twenty-eight years of loyal service.

WO2 Pickard is CSM of Headquarter and Holding Company WRAC Centre. She has a comprehensive understanding of every aspect of the Company's responsibilities, and is capable of running the Company in the absence of her officers. In addition, she willingly gives her free time to help servicewomen and raise funds for charities.

WO2 Pickard was presented with her medal by Brigadier Helen Meechie DWRAC.

LSGC

WO2 "Gillie" Gil was presented with the LSGC by Brigadier Helen Meechie DWRAC.



WO2 Gil (left) and WO2 Pickard celebrating with Brigadier Meechie after the presentations.



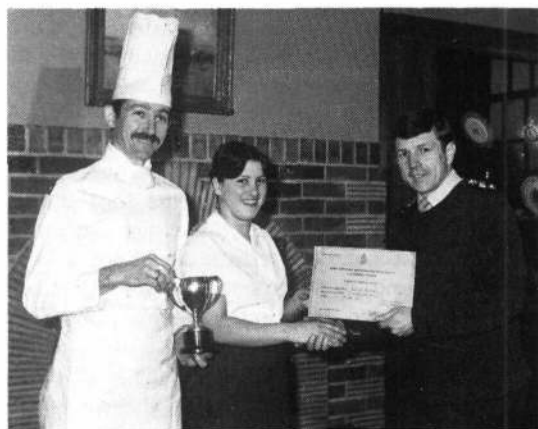
Colonel Anne Clissitt, Commandant WRAC Centre, joins in the celebrations.

CONGRATULATIONS

We offer our congratulations to:

LCpl Lorraine Illingworth, 7th Light Infantry (V) who tied for first place in the newly introduced TA Sub Machine Gun Championship at Bisley on July 11th. Her co-victor was Sgt John Alexander, 1st Yorkshires (V), and they introduced a "first" at the prize-giving by celebrating with an embrace what is probably the first tie between a man and a woman in a sub-machine-gun match.

LCpl Joan Rodgers of the Sp Regt RSA on winning the 3 Catering Region Cook and Serve competition with Cpl John McKay ACC.



LCpl Joan Rodgers of Sp Regt RSA receiving her certificate from Capt David Fitch MBE ACC. Cpl John McKay ACC holds the cup.

Miss Euphemia A Jeffrey who has recently been awarded an Honours Degree by the Open University. Miss Jeffrey served in the ATS from 1941-1946, and after training at Glencorse Barracks near Edinburgh was attached to the RAPC at York, Leicester and Bradford.

Miss Diana Law MBE who was the 1982 Disabled Woman of the Year, and has done so much in the field of stroke rehabilitation.

Lt Carolyn Caddick who won the Special Slalom and Giant Slalom races at the Joint Services Skiing Championships held last January in France, thus gaining the title of Joint Services Ladies Champion.

Brigadier Dame Jean Rivett-Drake DBE JP DL who was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for East Sussex in April this year.

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BRITISH ARMY WEST NEPAL EXPEDITION

Major K J Dyer

Party B of the Army Mountaineering Association sponsored British Army West Nepal Expedition 1982 was known as the 'trekking party' to differentiate it from the 'climbing party' or Party A who were to attempt DAKURA also known as Peak 29 (7830m). As a member of 16 strong Party B, I can now say that there is trekking and trekking. Our trek took a west to east route across the lower slopes of the great mountain massifs of HIMAL CHULI (7864m) in the west, GANESH HIMAL (7130m) in the centre and LANGSTANG and JUGAL HIMALS (up to 7246m) in the east. We made camps at several places to climb lower peaks. Moving mostly across the grain of the land we walked over 800kms (discounting the myriads of ups and downs) and climbed 24,000m (nearly 2½ Everests). For most of the time we were well above 300m in country that was either devoid of human habitation or only just supported a few primitive villages. Not until we reached the LANGSTANG area did we meet any Westerners plodding on one of the standard tourist routes (cynically known as the Andrex trail).

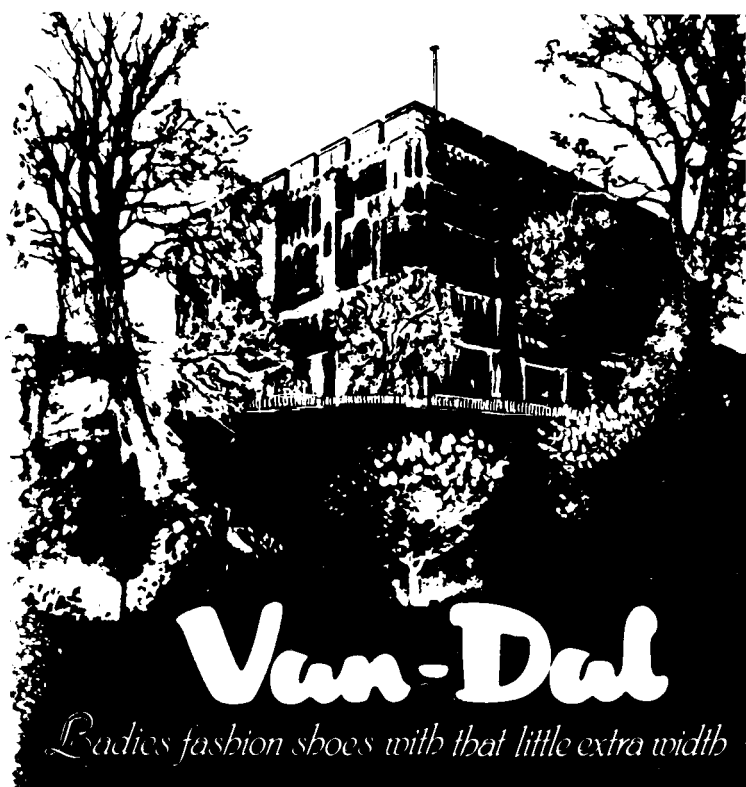
Our start on September 12th in KATHMANDU, capital of Nepal, was fairly disastrous. Neither our climbing equipment, tents and special clothing nor our money had reached the city. We spent nearly a week buying new gear with money borrowed and begged from all possible sources. Then on September 18th we (Party B) went by bus to DUMRE village, 80km west of KATHMANDU, on one of the very few motor roads in Nepal. For the next six days we walked up through villages and terraced fields accompanied by late monsoon rains and leeches, gradually leaving the subtropical temperatures. We had 20 porters who were to remain with us throughout the next eight weeks, and these were supplemented as necessary by locally hired porters. Our chief porter or sirdar was called Jagat Man — an intelligent and reliable Nepalese.

At 4500m we made our first base camp in

snow and mist. Altitude sickness began to affect most people, and bodies in sleeping bags complained of severe headaches, diarrhea and vomiting. Some people, including myself, were experiencing a disconcerting inability to speak long sentences or move quickly over short distances without having to stop and take deep breaths of the thin air. Over the next four days we explored the rocky peaks climbing to 5200m and eventually established a group of six fit climbers (known as the climbing party) at a high camp at DUDH POKHARI lake (4570m). From there they were to climb two peaks, one of 5700m and 5900m, then catch up with the main party who were moving on to the RUPINA LA pass (4740m) to the east.

The main party including myself, climbed up and down alpine ridges using so-called passes of around 4570m, eventually reaching the spectacular RUPINA LA pass. We set up camp on the snow field just to the south of the top of the pass and sent our porters over the northside into the CHULING valley, where they would be warmer and could find wood for fuel. It was very cold with mist every afternoon and the occasional flurry of snow. But by rising very early we were able to explore peaks of up to 5320m. The altitude was still affecting most people and uphill progress was very steady with plenty of rests. To the north the views of the nearby snow covered ridges and glaciers of HIMAL CHULI and BAUDA (7000m) were enthralling, while to the south, ridge upon ridge of blue mountains merged into the foothills of KATHMANDU valley. At these high altitudes my sleep was light and erratic and I spent long hours listening with anxiety to the 'Cheyne-Stokes' breathing of my tent companion. This breathing, often noted in terminally-ill patients and common amongst healthy people at altitude, is characterized by a period of shallow rapid breathing followed by a long, long pause, before more rapid breathing is resumed. Waiting for the breathing to start again is agonizing for the listener.

On October 7th, having been joined by the climbing party from DUDH POKHARI lake, we followed the porters down into the CHULING valley. Their camp site was almost idyllic lying at the bottom of a huge glacier-hung amphitheatre formed by the ridges of BAUDA and HIMAL CHULI. The ground was covered with aromatic azalea bushes. But we could not wait here. For the next two days we descended eastwards down the CHULING valley, crossing the



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mile wide and debris-strewn CHULING glacier and following shepherd tracks along the steepening valley side through alternate alpine pastures and forests of ancient pine and hemlock. We emerged at last into the major river valley of the BURI GANDAKI river, with two problems. The first was that we had had to leave behind one very sick climber with suspected typhoid, and a support party including our doctor and four porters. The second was that due to various reasons including the first problem we had no more food. As rations officer for the Expedition and Party B, I had arranged for a food dump to be made at NYAK village, the first village we should meet in the BURI GANDAKI valley. However, on reaching NYAK I discovered that our food was a day's march further down the valley. So that night we ate local and relished the taste of fresh food after nearly a month on compo and dehydrated rations. That memorable meal consisted of pumpkin soup, beans (dahl), a few curried potatoes and tsampa which is ground roasted barley mixed with tea.

Next day we descended southwards to our food dump at SETIBAS village (1500m), where we set up camp in a field recently employed as a dung heap. Access to fresh water in the mill-

race on the edge of the field kept us on this unsavoury but welcome area of rare flat land. The houses of the mountain villages are built of stone with hand hewn planks of wood or large flat stones on the roofs. Fifteen to twenty houses make up a village and every available piece of the steep land is terraced for growing crops of wheat, barley, finger millet, some maize, peas and beans and potatoes. A few cattle are kept to plough the land. Life is hard and primitive. Men, women and children carry everything in large conical-shaped baskets suspended from a tump line on the forehead, and loads of up to 40kg are common. By now we were fully aware of the realities of load carrying in these terrains – every 300m of height gained means an ascent of 900m and descent of 600m on narrow and sometimes exposed paths. Now our party split again. An advance group of six went on eastwards to explore possible climbing areas on the shoulders of the GANESH HIMAL. Three weakened members volunteered to stay in the camp, whilst I went with two companions to explore the SHYAR KHOLA valley to the north east. I was running a seed collecting project with the aim of gathering agricultural seeds from remote areas for several agricultural research establishments

and companies. Several of these had donated money to the Expedition and by far the largest grant had come from the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources in Rome (part of the Food and Agricultural Organization).

For three days we climbed up and down the steep sides of the SHYAR KHOLA valley in a seemingly SHANGRI LA environment of ancient pine forests, small terraced fields, rushing glacier rivers and snow covered peaks. But the poverty of the villages was appalling, and one wondered if the various relief agencies in the relative comfort of KATHMANDU ever really ventured forth. We reached CHUKUNG village (3110m) which lay in a bend in the valley and here members of a Nepalese police post prevented us from proceeding further. The snow peaks on the south side of the valley lay on the border between Tibet and Nepal, and the upper reaches of the valley are jealously guarded against unwelcome visitors. We made our return trip in nine hours as our porters were keen to leave this uncivilized valley. My toes and knees suffered from the rapid prolonged ascents and descents. Back in the main camp at SETIBAS village we discovered that the helicopter rescue had been made safely although by then two people were ill and had been evacuated. The helicopter flew the distance between the casualty camp and KATHMANDU in less than an hour; it had taken our runner nearly 4 days.

Next day, October 15th we packed up and followed after the advance group towards the GANESH HIMAL. For the next few days we struggled across the grain of the land, climbing upwards, until on reaching a col at 4190m we found the advance group.

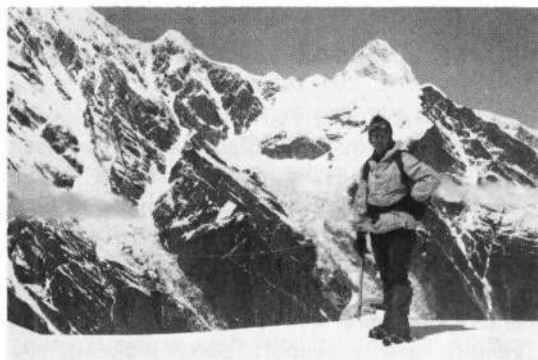
They had just decided not to climb in that area, because of the unsuitable terrain and were planning to move on eastwards to a peak called PALDOL (5900m). We all agreed that small parties were better so we gave the advance group a day's start before following ourselves. By October 24th we had reached the head of the MAILUNG valley at the base of PALDOL. We had climbed some splendid ridges and despite the very cold, snowy and misty weather had managed to catch glimpses of the peaks of BAUDA and HIMAL CHULI, now far to the west. Peak 29 to the north west of HIMAL CHULI was also visible and we wondered how Party A was faring in the wintry weather.

We found the advance party temporarily camped in some stone huts of a pilot mine project at 4040m, at the head of the MAILUNG

valley. We set up a base higher up near the end of a glacier at 4570m and then established a high camp (5500m) of two tents on the east glacier of PALDOL. Using the high camp we all managed to scale PALDOL East (5820m), being prevented from reaching the main summit (5900m) by steep ice and rotten snow. It was bitterly cold, and I had the worrying knowledge that because of our equipment problems my clothing was scarcely adequate for a winter's day in the Scottish highlands. I was immensely pleased to reach this height and gaze at the disordered world of jagged peaks stretching in all directions. The high altitude made every physical effort a mental feat and I recognise more and more the achievements of the famous Himalayan climbers.

Over several days small groups climbed several other peaks of up to 5790m and during this period we were joined by the now recovered, if thin, members of the party who had been evacuated to hospital.

On October 31st we descended to lower altitudes to pick up our second and last food



Major Dyer at about 5000m above the Rupina La pass. Peak Himal Chuli (7864m) is in the background.



Camp at Rupina La pass (4740m).

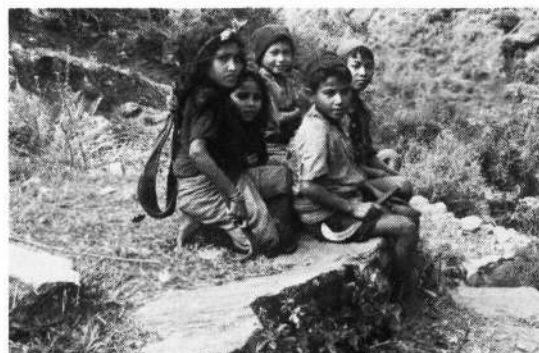
dump which to my relief was intact and undamaged. Then we all moved eastwards to the TRISULI valley where we joined a tourist route into LANGTANG valley. Now we had to guard our possessions carefully as contact with Westerners had tainted the honesty of the mountain villagers. Towards the head of the LANGTANG valley, our party was struck by a virulent stomach bug that incapacitated over half the group. My low morale was not helped by finding the expedition doctor lying across the path, too sick and exhausted to stagger the last couple of hundred metres to the next camp. Still, the sickness did help my rations problems.

We planned to leave the scenic LANGTANG valley by climbing the GANJE LA pass (5730m) on the south side of the valley. Several porters objected and to cut a long story short, we ended up with our small group of permanent porters and ourselves. After several days sickness, it was no mean feat that most of us carried our 15kg ruck sacks for four days, up and over the snow covered GANJE LA pass. Our struggling porters needed a helping hand and fixed ropes on the steepest sections. On the far side of the pass we had expected a relatively easy if long descent to HELAMBU district and thence to KATHMANDU. We should have known better. It snowed heavily, creating difficulties of route finding and problems for the porters. We had loaned them our precious spare clothing and shoes and in the biting wind wished we had not. Eventually we reached warmer climes, where the rice harvest was in full swing and river washing became a more pleasant experience. After a final climb over the hills surrounding KATHMANDU valley, we descended to SANKHU village 10km east of KATHMANDU (1300m) on November 14th.

We had lived for eight weeks in the mountains, away from the security of our civilization on a trip that had been physically and mentally exhausting. You could count our rest days on one hand. We were all very tired. Some of us were suffering from stomach problems, some had sore throats and hacking coughs, most had fleas and we had all lost weight. From Lt Col to LCpl the feeling was the same — please let the bus come and take me to KATHMANDU for a shower and real food.

In KATHMANDU we learned that Party A on Peak 29 had failed to establish camps much higher than 5900m due to sickness, bad weather and technical difficulties. They had abandoned their attempt. After several tiring days on

administrative matters, we flew to DELHI and then to London. Whilst I now look back on the Expedition as a marvellous experience I have to admit my one wish on reaching England was to see my nice, clean, pure smelling bathroom again!



Nepalese mountain children.

ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

LCpl Jane Whelband and LCpl Pamela West are staff car drivers serving with the MT Troop at HQ Western District, Shrewsbury. They were thrilled to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party on July 13th.



LCpl Jane Whelband (left) and LCpl Pamela West holding their prized invitation.

Courtesy Shropshire Star

SPORT

1983 INTER-SERVICES LADIES' FENCING CHAMPIONSHIP

Lt C A V Aitchison WRAC

The 1983 Inter-Services Triangular Fencing Match (Foil) was held at the ASPT Aldershot, on the first hot day of the year — Derby Day. Competitors sweltered in the gym in their layers of jackets and the stifling mask.

Hitherto the Services had fought as teams, but this year competitors fought as individuals. Four from each Service, twelve in all, formed a "Pool Unique".

The competition began with much heavy breathing interspersed by the electric buzzers and flashing lights which have replaced the graceful admission "touche". On the other side of the gym the men were finishing their epee, foil and sabre events, the Army fighting their way to second place.

It never occurred to anyone, competitor or

supporter, that the WRAC might win. On past form we stood a chance against the WRNS, but the WRAF were considered unbeatable. Apart from the triple tie in 1976, the WRAC had finished no higher than second in thirteen years.

To cries of "Be aggressive", "Show aggro" and "Attack, Attack" we went into battle. We fought eight bouts each, and each bout the best of nine hits, a maximum of seventy-two hits each, which put a premium on stamina and thorough training in basics.

We all lost most of our early bouts, but as the afternoon grew warmer and the sweat poured off us the scoreboard began to change. Our loyal supporters' vocal efforts increased and we went successfully over to the offensive. Stamina became the crucial factor.

After three hours the neutral civilian Presidents and the nine judges totted up 48 bouts. The WRAF had won 12, the WRNS 16 and the Army an unbelievable 20. We had won. Everybody was incredulous. It could not be possible, but to the now silent gym it was announced that the WRAC had won the 1983 Women's Inter-Services Fencing Championship.



The winning team!

L - R: Cpl Leeann Relf WRAC (won 4 bouts), Capt Eileen Frank QARANC (won 6 bouts), Lt Susan Reid QARANC (won 5 bouts), Lt Camilla Aitchison WRAC (won 5 bouts). Capt Jane Ripley WRAC (not in the picture) was reserve.

THE DEPOT REGIMENT RA MARATHON NEWS

Cpl A E Soakell

WRAC CORPORAL TAKES WORLD SKI TITLE FROM ITALIAN CHAMPION

Corporal Lauren Jeffrey WRAC of Bewdley, Worcestershire has won the "Ten Kilometres World Nordic Ski Lowlander Championship". The gruelling event took place in sub zero temperatures in Sweden last January when Lauren sprinted the last kilometre to snatch the title from the current Italian champion by just one second.

Corporal Jeffrey, who is a PT instructor at the Army's School of Intelligence in Ashford, Kent said after the race, "I couldn't believe the scoreboard when the results came up. I have a fast finish but I thought I had chosen the wrong ski wax".

She attributes her success to keeping herself motivated and the support she has received from her unit and CO.



A victorious Cpl Lauren Jeffrey.

As a member of the WRAC stationed at Woolwich, I have cultivated an enthusiasm together with Sgt Johnstone, for marathon running. When I learned last December that I had been accepted for the 1983 London Marathon, I decided that serious training would be required.

As part of the final objective, a half marathon was undertaken. The Depot Regiment Royal Artillery Ladies Team entered the Elmbridge Half Marathon on March 6th. We were all very pleased with the result, being the winning ladies service team.

Having gained some experience at the shorter distance, our next target was then in sight, and the training programme stepped up further.

The day of the London Marathon was wet, and whilst this was perhaps better than too much heat, we would have been happier if the morning had been fine and dry. The event itself was a huge success, with many humorous aspects emerging.

The encouragement and enthusiasm of everyone concerned assisted us considerably, with the result that Sgt Johnstone and I managed to stay the course, and complete it in four and a half hours.



Two successful marathon runners!

INTER SERVICES SKIING LA PLAGNE

La Plagne in the French Alps was the location of the 1983 Women's Inter Services Skiing Championships, hosted by the Royal Air Force.

A team of five skiers competed, which included Lt Bridget O'Hara (8 Sig Regt), Sgt Bernie Rimmer (RMP Berlin), Pte Anita Burns (68 Sqn RCT), Lt Carolyn Caddick (2 Inf Div HQ & Sig Regt), and our team manager, Capt Val Wright (JHQ Rheindahlen), who also participated as an individual in the Championships.

The first week was spent race training and exploring the sixty or so runs which radiated from the residence at which we stayed. The second week was mainly concerned with the racing itself and attending very sociable evening race meetings.

We won 1st position in the Slalom, but the WRAF dominated the race by securing 2nd to 8th places, thereby winning the Slalom Team event.

In the Giant Slalom (one very long run) we managed to secure 1st, 6th, 8th and 11th places. Unfortunately this was not enough to win the Giant Slalom Team Event, which was won by the WRAF team; so at the end of the Championships the WRAF team had won the overall Team Event convincingly with the WRAC a close second and the WRNS bringing up the rear. The WRAC managed to secure the individual Inter Services Cup for another year, with Lt Caddick taking 1st place in the Giant Slalom and the Slalom.



The WRAC Ski Team.

L-R: Lt Caddick, Pte Burns, Lt O'Hara, Sgt Rimmer.

We were then left with just two days to enjoy our skiing and relax after our intensive training and racing over the previous ten days. However, Capt Wright, still in the competitive spirit, entered a local Langlauf race and came in 3rd against a field of international competitors.



Team Manager Capt Val Wright competing in the Langlauf Race.

EXERCISE SILVERHAWK

Lt D H Miller WRAC

On March 31st I set out from RAF Brize Norton at the start of Leg 11 of Exercise Silverhawk. The Army Air Corps celebrated its Silver Jubilee during 1982 and as part of that celebration a sailing adventure training exercise was organised. The aim was to sail a Nicholson 55 to the Caribbean and back in as many legs as possible. Fortunately I had been lucky enough to join the crew sailing from Annapolis to Boston during April. The crew of twelve, skippered by Major Mike Humphries REME was made up of nine men and three women.

We flew into Dulles International airport on April 1st to find the sun shining and a beautiful warm evening. We spent the first evening in Annapolis and the crew all went out together for a seafood meal and to acquaint ourselves with the attractions of the city.

The following days were spent working on "British Soldier" to make her ready for the journey ahead. This included such jobs as anti-fouling the bottom of the boat and scrubbing and painting the decks. My job was to anti-foul the boat which resulted with more paint on me than anywhere else! On April 4th the boat was put into

the water and final preparations were made for our trip. In the evening we held a cocktail party for the Americans who had been most generous and helpful with assistance. This proved to be a very enjoyable evening although most of us regretted it the next day when we went to sea.

April 6th saw us at Little Creek, a US Naval Base, and here we tried to sort out the problems we were already experiencing with the radio. In the evening we all went to another seafood restaurant where I had my first American lobster.

The following day we left Little Creek for Bermuda. The "watch" system on the boat was 4 hourly with two watches, port and starboard. SSgt Sharon Hope WRAC was the port watch leader and Major Ian Johnston REME was starboard watch leader. I was a member of the latter watch and as the trip continued there was the usual banter and rivalry between the two.

At midday on April 7th the skies opened and it poured with rain. Thunder and lightning continued for the whole of the starboard watch, and then suddenly we were becalmed and thick fog appeared. It was quite frightening as we were unable to see further than fifteen yards ahead where ships were frequently passing. The only noise that could be heard were the "watches" cries to get the fog horn working!

The next day the fog cleared, the wind picked up and the sea became quite rough. Of course it would have to be my turn to be "galley slave" for the day. The strong 30 mph winds continued until April 10th when at last the sun came out again and the whole crew appeared on deck, stripping off layers of clothing as quickly as possible in case the sun disappeared. The good weather continued and as we neared Bermuda the water turned a clear blue. This was a day I shall never forget as I was sent up the 75ft mast whilst at sea to correct the flag at the top of the mast. Unknown to the skipper I was petrified of heights, although he soon found out when all that could be seen and heard was a screaming body swaying from side to side at the top of the mast. Apparently there are still marks in the mast where I would not let go!

Finally we arrived at the Royal Yacht Club, Bermuda which was a welcome sight after 5 days at sea. Unfortunately we lost one of our crew members here. Of all people, our doctor, Captain Lyn Thomas, managed to pull a muscle in her back and had to be carried off the boat to hospital in Bermuda. The first priority for the remainder of the crew was showers, followed by a quick tour of the shops.

That evening we were privileged to be invited to the Governor's residence for cocktails. The acting Governor Mr Mark Herdman and his family entertained us very hospitably and the evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



Royal Yacht Club Bermuda.

The following day was spent working on the boat and preparing for a cocktail party at lunchtime. Again this was to thank the people of Bermuda who had been so hospitable to us. The crew all turned out in "skippers rig" white trousers and white shirts, and all trying to show off their suntans. The afternoon was spent on the beach, swimming and coral diving.

All too soon April 14th arrived and we had to leave. One of our crew members celebrated her birthday so we drank champagne as a final farewell to the island to which we had all become so attached. The weather was very rough with strong winds and rain but the skipper insisted that it was excellent sailing weather!

Two days later two of us decided to go swimming off the boat as the weather was warm and the wind had dropped. However, it was decidedly cold and after a few minutes of swimming, and several supposed sightings of sharks, we decided it would be prudent to return to the boat.

Sunday brought a day that I will not forget in a hurry. I had managed to get very cold and wet on the previous watch and was very tired after some hard work on the foredeck. On changing watches I began to feel extremely cold. Unknown to me I was suffering from hypothermia and thanks to the quick thinking of the crew and skipper I recovered quickly.

We reached Marthas Vineyard the next day and had an evening meal together as a crew. We woke to the sounds of the wind blowing up to 30 mph and decided to move. The journey to Cape Cod will be vividly remembered by the port watch who were on duty at the time as 70 mph winds were blowing during their four hour watch. Thanks to

the experience of the skipper and the watch, the boat survived these horrific winds! That afternoon we took shelter in "Refuge Bay", an appropriately titled haven, before continuing to Boston.

Then it was boat cleaning and preparation for handover to the next crew. We spent an unscheduled two days in Washington DC while waiting for our flight home on April 25th. The exercise was an invaluable experience and taught me many things, not least that living in close proximity with twelve people for three weeks requires great tolerance.



The Crew

L-R: LCpl Trevor Moore, WO1 John Evans, WO1 Ian Reid, LCpl Sean Constance, Col Malcolm Parry Davies, Maj Ian Johnstone, Flt Lt John Loader, WO2 John Masterman, Maj Mike Humphries, Lt Denise Miller, SSgt Sharon Hope, Capt Lyn Thomas.

IRISH HOPSCOTCH

L Cpl K A Forder
181 Pro Coy WRAC

"How would you like to go for a boating trip, Cpl Forder?"

There's an annual sailing exercise for troops based in Northern Ireland and I was offered the chance to join in the first leg of Ex Hopscotch. As a total novice in matters "sailing" I volunteered straight away in the hope of changing all that. A boat trip sounded like fun.

On April 16th I flew in a "Herc" with the rest of the crew (all members of 26 Sqn RCT) and eventually reached Gosport and boarded HMS

Sabre, a 55ft Nicholson's yacht. The skipper met us there. On the first day we were issued with our "oilies and wellies" and our rations for 12 days. The next day we spent sailing round Portsmouth, getting used to the yacht and the sea. The plan to sail to Cherbourg that evening had to be changed because of bad weather, but the next morning at 5 am the skipper got us organised. We were divided into watches — port and starboard — and I was allocated to the port watch. Then the work began — 4 hours on and 4 off. We spent most of our first watch changing sails, feeding the fish and getting soaked by sudden waves!

In Cherbourg we did a thorough "recce" and after dinner on deck, with lots of French wine, we went to the bowling alley we had discovered.

Next morning we were up at 6.30 am and by 5 pm we'd arrived in Jersey, the home of one of the crew. After we'd tied up and had a badly needed shower, we went round to his house. His Mum provided us with a lovely meal and plenty of lager and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

It took six hours to get to Guernsey and we arrived at 10 pm the following evening. After we'd tied up, we made the skipper his tea and prepared for the next stage. It took about 3 days to reach the Isle of Man and we got used to getting up at 4 am! At that time in the morning it was freezing cold in the cockpit but hot soup and high morale helped us to survive until the next changeover at 8 am.

At the Isle of Man we tied up alongside another yacht. Their skipper was invited to come on board to look round. He spent the evening below deck with our skipper and the other officers, swapping sailing stories until 3 am.

We were able to spend the next day exploring some of the island. When we returned to the yacht at 6 pm the OC had a surprise for us. There were balloons everywhere and, after a candlelight dinner, he gave us each a small present. I received some dolls' clothes and the OC explained that he thought they might come in handy since I could never find my clothes in the mornings!

On the way back to Belfast we called in the following morning at St Patrick. While some of us went to buy the papers one of the lads tried a bit of fishing. Unfortunately he hooked his finger as well as a fish and we had to return to Belfast sooner than planned to get him to a doctor. We arrived at 4 pm and the only task remaining was the cleaning up ready for the next crew.

It was a lovely two weeks away from the Northern Ireland scene and the lads from 26 Sqn RCT were a great team to work with.

RA RANGE HEBRIDES

Captain S L Bruce WRAC

Contrary to popular belief the Hebrides isn't the Army's last penal colony. Indeed, many who are posted here regularly apply for further extensions, finding the slower life style of the islands a pleasant change from the hurly burly of city life.

The Outer Hebrides or Western Isles of Scotland lie some 50 miles north west of the mainland of Britain. They are a chain of islands stretching from the butt of Lewis in the north to Barra Head in the south, a distance of about 125 miles. The total population is little more than 30,000 of whom 10,000 live in Stornoway (Lewis) the only town of any size in the whole of the Western Isles, complete with our nearest Woolworths store, only a half hour away by light plane.

The Hebrides is the last stronghold of Gaelic, a Celtic language which was formerly spoken all over Ireland and Scotland but is now more or less confined to the isolated parts of both countries. Everyone nowadays speaks English with perfect ease, and probably more correctly than in many others parts of Britain.

Our climate is fresh but healthy. Winds are strong but snow and frost are rare. We have some of the finest beaches in the country, soft, golden glistening sands stretching for miles with only the odd sheep for company.

Our shops are few and far between and mail order catalogues rule supreme. The age of the train has yet to arrive. We hop on a plane or take a 'slow boat' to Oban. Driving requires a different approach. Roads are single tracked with passing bays every 100 yards or so. Great care is required when driving. High speeds are impossible, especially at night as blind bends and sheep are frequently encountered.

The Range provides a wide variety of activities. You can experience the magnificent underwater scenery with sub aqua diving, or if you prefer to stay on top, there is windsurfing. Fly fishing is available by arrangement on lochs on Benbecula or South Uist. Trout fishing provides excellent sport and food. Sea angling,

dinghy sailing, mountaineering and hill walking on the few peaks up to 2000 ft make the Islands a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. On Sundays, gliding practice provides a bird's eye view of the camp with the sparkling Atlantic Ocean on either side. The sea's temperature changes 2° between summer and winter, and is very, very, cold.

Our Garrison swimming pool is well supported, by young and old alike. There is a large gymnasium with excellent facilities, and badminton, indoor tennis and squash are played regularly. Training with many team sports means no problems with BFTs. People even pay to come here on holiday!

VISIT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ROYAL ARTILLERY TO RA RANGE HEBRIDES

During his annual inspection of the RA Range Hebrides in March the DRA, Major General Mike Tomlinson CB OBE met and talked with many of the WRAC girls who work on the Ranges manning RADARS.

He is pictured below talking to Sgt Jean Raynor BEM, a member of the WRAC Detachment.



ZIMBABWE

With the British Military Advisory and Training Team

WO2 E Farrand

Zimbabwe, in South Central Africa, occupies an area approximately the size of France and is situated between the Zambezi River in the north and the Limpopo River in south. Since Independence in 1980 the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) has assisted the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in the creation of a unified force and subsequently in the training of its members.

The climate in Zimbabwe is one of the best in the world. In summer, from October to April, temperatures range from 77°F to 89°F and in "winter" (for want of a better word) the temperature drops to around 68°F during the day and to as low as 32°F at night.

Two of us represent the WRAC in Zimbabwe. My job is PA to Commander BMATT, and Sgt Smith is one of the three clerks in the HQ BMATT Orderly Room which is located in the Zimbabwe National Army Headquarters in King George VI Barracks, Harare.

There are some items of food and other sundries that are not available in Zimbabwe, such as rice, tinned fish, good quality cheese, chocolate and sweets, butter, nuts, batteries and good quality soap. On the other hand we have an abundance of thick succulent steaks, enormous avocado pears and juicy mangoes, which more than compensates.

Because of the excellent climate most events and activities are held out of doors. The majority of houses have swimming pools and parties centre round barbecues (known here as braais) in private houses rather than in discos and night clubs. The Zimbabweans are very hospitable people and instead of being offered tea or coffee they ask if you would like a "toot" which means anything alcoholic.

Recently there was a shortage of petrol in Zimbabwe. People queued up with their cars for

days on end in the hope of acquiring a couple of gallons of fuel. However, the Zimbabweans seem to take these events in their stride and they made the most of the situation. On one such occasion we were invited to a "braai" on a grass verge by a petrol station, cooking whilst our hosts guarded their cars now standing in the ever increasing petrol queue!

Occasionally it is possible to take a couple of days local leave to visit the numerous tourist sights of Zimbabwe. On one occasion we decided to visit Victoria Falls which included a cruise down the Zambezi River and a trip to the local crocodile farm. The Falls were magnificent, the baby crocodiles quite cute but torrential rain ruined the trip down the Zambezi river.

Zimbabwe is landlocked so there are no seaside holiday resorts, but there are a few large lakes which are well frequented by visitors and locals alike. The nearest to Harare is Lake Mlilwane. An extremely pleasant day can be enjoyed by hiring a raft and 'putt-putting' through the water, suitably equipped with sandwiches and cool bag, but even this is not without its dangers. Apparently the mud sides of the lake are abundant with a type of snail which carries a disease called Bilharzia — a kind of cancerous sleeping sickness. The water is filthy and, harbours a number of crocodiles, although it is supposed to be safe to swim in the middle of the lake where it is too deep for the crocodiles to venture. After plunging into this murky water to cool off it is a real pleasure to get back on the raft and resist the temptation a second time!

Life in Zimbabwe is totally different from the UK, and it is very nice that we can see and do these wonderful things, whilst doing our job in the Army.

REGULAR FORCES EMPLOYMENT ASSOCIATION

The Regular Forces Employment Association is part of the Forces Resettlement Service and works in cooperation with the Manpower Services Commission. They help ex-servicemen and women to find suitable employment. Last year they placed 27 ex-WRAC in jobs.

There are 40 branches throughout the UK. Addresses and telephone numbers can be obtained from Post Offices, Job Centres or your local telephone directory.



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FALKLANDS PILGRIMAGE

Capt F E Elliot WRAC

After the war in the Falkland Islands, the Prime Minister pledged that all next of kin whose relatives had no grave but the sea or who were buried on the islands, would be given the opportunity to visit the islands. A small project committee was set up and was advised by representatives from the three services plus Merchant Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The committee worked extremely hard to complete very complex administrative and diplomatic arrangements in time for a planned Service of Dedication at San Carlos Cemetery on 10 April. Inevitably, the feelings of the bereaved varied from acceptance to total rejection of the reasons why the servicemen died, and my involvement in the planning for the Pilgrimage was to advise on public relations aspects.

It was decided that I would accompany the relatives throughout the Pilgrimage to shield them from unwelcome press attention, but also to try and keep the press as happy as possible under the circumstances. A press party, nominated by Fleet Street and provincial news agencies and including television and radio representatives, flew down separately, shepherded by Lieutenant Colonel John Mills R Signals.

As readers may recall, our journey began on a British Airways flight to Montevideo in Uruguay. The flights for 540 relatives plus their escorts were given free by the airline, and their slogan "we take good care of you" was an understatement. The crew were nothing short of wonderful with the families, many of whom had never flown or been abroad before. We made a short refuelling stop at Barbados and landed towards midnight in Montevideo, where a large battery of pressmen was waiting. The Uruguayan authorities were most helpful and whisked us away in a fleet of coaches through dark streets which had been cleared for us, to the docks. On the way we were touched to see several Union Jacks and people waving from balconies.

The Cunard Countess was a welcome sight after a 14-hour flight. She had been on trooping duties in the South Atlantic so we were prepared for a standard less than normal for cruising, but the

crew had worked very hard in less than a week of preparation and she was sparkling. We were given a sympathetic welcome by the crew who had volunteered for this job, wanting to "do their bit".

During the three days at sea the escorts, including families officers, chaplains, Red Cross and SSAFA, got to know the families well. The fact that the escorts could not wear uniform until in Falklands waters made our task more difficult and the relatives could not identify us easily, but in retrospect it was a good idea as it made us work even harder to make sure the families were aware of our presence. As you can imagine, the mood of the families varied from hour to hour and it was unusual to be amongst so many people who, although from different backgrounds, were united by their common grief. I felt humbled by the immense dignity of people who had chosen to come all this way to relive their grief and pay their last respects. Friendships were made between families whose sons or husbands had died on the same ship, the same hill, the same day, by the same weapon, for the same cause. There were times of shared sadness and private grief, but throughout, an air of quiet dignity.

Among the relatives were Nina and Desmond Keoghane of Hemel Hempstead, who had lost their guardsman son Kevin at Fitzroy. Desmond was a warrant officer in his son's battalion, 1 Welsh Guards; "Nina" (Maureen Dean) is ex WRAC and served as an ordnance clerk at Bicester in 1954-55 then at Moenchengladbach until 1957, when she left the WRAC. She rejoined as a recruiting sergeant in 1965 and served at Swansea AC10 until August 1969. She spotted my WRAC sweatshirt the first morning at sea, after I had made a futile effort to jog around the slippery deck! Nina and Des always had a smile for everyone despite their personal grief, and are a delightful couple.

Every day I received calls from newspapers, radio and television stations including CBC Toronto; fortunately the callers were sympathetic and accepted my reasons for not allowing them to speak to families unless previous arrangements had been made. The quality of the maritime satellite link was excellent so there were no difficulties in communicating with the outside world.

As we approached the Falkland Islands our mood changed to apprehension and expectation. I say "our" mood because by now each one of the escorts felt deeply involved in the relatives' sadness and had made what we knew would be lasting friendships. Two main ceremonies were planned;

one at San Carlos Cemetery and one at sea. However, it was planned to stop over the sites where ships were hit or sunk for the families concerned to pay personal tributes. As the Islands came into sight, we were joined by HMS Cardiff, sister ship to HMS Coventry. On entering the Falkland Sound the Countess and HMS Cardiff stopped over the site where HMS Coventry was sunk and the families gathered on the flight deck where the chaplains held a private service of remembrance. The ship was silent as relatives not involved in this tribute realised that this was the beginning of our purpose in coming to the Falkland Islands. I attended the HMS Coventry ceremony and was deeply moved by the bravery of the relatives as they cast their wreaths on the silent, sparkling sea.



A Service of Remembrance held at the spot where HMS Coventry was sunk.

Later, as we came closer to land in brilliant sunshine, most of us watched the hills go by in silence, each reflecting in the beauty of the landscape and comparing it to the Scottish Lowlands, Yorkshire Moors, Dartmoor or Wales. There was something there for everyone. Sir Rex Hunt, Field Marshal Sir Edwin Bramall and Major General Thorne flew on to the Countess by helicopter to greet our families.

The Countess having anchored in San Carlos Water, I crossed over to the MV St Helena which was accommodating the press party. They had wanted to interview families on arrival but understood when I explained that now was not the time — best to leave it until the following day, when the ordeal of the cemetery service was over. So they had to make do with me.

For one and a half hours I was closely questioned by the media, who included Nick Witchell/BBC, Brent Sadler/ITN, and representatives from British as well as Island press. They

were very kind and sympathetic interviewers. Lieutenant Colonel Mills told me later that the previous day the press party had gone to the cemetery and had been deeply moved by it — and had obviously resolved to be as careful as possible to be sympathetic, and not to upset the relatives. I liked them all very much and the interview went smoothly. Chris Mann of Independent Radio News taped an interview with me which he said would go out on independent radio at midnight, UK time, to an audience of 36 million.

The next day, Sunday April 10th, was the first time ashore for most people. You will have seen the film clips of the service broadcast on news programmes — I can only add to the excellent coverage of the event by recording that everyone wept without embarrassment, and with a sense of togetherness and feeling for the beautiful, remote land on which we stood. An amazing experience. After recovering themselves over lunch, the relatives split up into small groups and visited parts of the island they particularly wanted to see. Some of the press party had asked to interview Sara Jones at Darwin: She had agreed, so I flew with her and other Para families by Chinook to Darwin. They were to stay with the Hardcastle family, who greeted us with a delicious lunch. There are only four houses in the Darwin settlement — a remote, peaceful setting below the cairn and cross commemorating the fallen of 2 Para who died in the battle for Goose Green. I walked up to the memorial with Captain Colin Connor of 2 Para who won an MC. We could see both Darwin and Goose Green from this point. It was hard to believe that this stark, windswept but lovely place was the scene of a fierce battle. The wind carried the sound of sheep bleating in the distance.

Lieutenant Colonel Mills and the press arrived by Sea King and recorded an interview with Sara Jones and her sons Rupert and David in the Hardcastle's garden. She was very controlled; an admirable lady who has done much to relieve the pressure on other families by agreeing to speak to the press. She had no wish to be considered a spokeswoman for the families as her view was that each family had its own feelings about the war.

The following day was still and sunny. We really believed that someone "up there" had laid on this glorious weather just for us. Fifty-four survivors of ships sunk in the war joined us, and there were tearful meetings as mums and dads found their sons' friends who were able to give them even more details on the circumstances of their deaths. The families really wanted to know

everything — it seemed to help them come to terms with their grief. The cameras were set up above the flight deck for the service at sea, so that they were not facing directly into the congregation. The sun was pointing straight into the cameras so with the Countess's chief officer's cooperation we turned the ship slightly. All the other ships with us turned too! This was an even more poignant ceremony because there are 174 young men who have no grave but the sea. Again, the press coverage of this occasion was unobtrusive, gently and memorably done. After the service, families whom I had earlier asked to come and talk quietly to the press, assembled in one of the ship's lounges. A dignified setting. The families were pleased by the gentle questioning and the press were delighted that so many came.



Relatives casting their wreaths on the sea.

For most people the main ordeals were now over. The large Welsh Guards party had to visit Fitzroy the next day, after we had sailed overnight to Port Stanley. During the voyage from Montevideo I was given the impression by these families that they had had enough press attention in UK and would resent any filming of their visit to Fitzroy. However, the press behaved so well during the various contacts they had with the families on the Pilgrimage, that eventually the Welsh families invited John Glover of the Western Mail and the TV team to meet them at Fitzroy, to record the event "for Wales". It was a generous invitation, much appreciated by the press, who filmed and reported discreetly from a distance.

Other families visited Port Stanley as guests of the islanders during our last day in the Falklands. The garrison and the local people had pulled out all the stops to make this a memorable visit. Each British family was matched with an island family as near as possible to children's ages, or links with UK. It was a marvellous day with an incredible farewell as we left Port Stanley; ships' sirens,

crews cheering and waving; a daring low flypast by Harriers, a Phantom and a Hercules making us cheer wildly. It seemed to go on forever. Although the wind was freezing, after the farewells nobody wanted to go below, and the decks were packed with silent people watching the ships and islands and sunset over Mount Harriet, Longdon and Tumbledown as they slowly disappeared into the dusk.



Capt Fifi Elliot meeting Sir Rex Hunt, Civil Commissioner Falkland Islands, on board Cunard Countess in the Falkland Sound.

BRITISH SCHOOLS EXPLORING SOCIETY

EXPEDITION TO EAST GREENLAND

Capt Jane Eckersley WRAC

Two of the main reasons that made me decide to join the WRAC were the wide variety of jobs that would be open to me and the opportunities for travel. However, little did I realise that I would spend two months on an island off East Greenland as a member of a 105 strong expedition. When I landed in a light aircraft at Kulusuk airstrip after a two hour flight from Iceland, and took my first look at a totally alien landscape, I began to feel something of what Erik the Red must have felt when he first landed on the east coast of Greenland almost 1000 years earlier. However, it was a helicopter that took us

on the last leg of our journey to Angmagssalik, not a Viking long boat.

Angmagssalik was a shock; no seal skin clad eskimos in igloos. The Greenlanders were all wearing jeans and leather jackets and living in wooden huts surrounded by piles of rotting rubbish. Greenland is supported by Denmark but jobs are few and most of the Greenlanders are on the dole and some are frequently drunk.

As part of an eight strong advance party we were there for a purpose. We had one week to break open the metal containers in which our stores had arrived from Hull, find our inflatable boats and transport 20 tons of equipment, tents and food three miles across the fiord to the previously reced site for our base camp. Once away from the so called civilisation of Angmagssalik our surroundings were just as strange and bleak and untouched as we had tried to imagine them. One comment was that the scenery was somewhere between a remote part of the Outer Hebrides and a Tolkien landscape.

It was summer time in the Arctic but the pack ice hadn't dispersed so we had some difficult moments navigating between the blue icebergs. Needless to say we all became very blasé about steering through bergs of all shapes and sizes.

The rest of the expedition (which was still in England at this time) was made up of 22 other leaders and assistant leaders and 75 young explorers (YEs) between the ages of 16½ and 19. The YEs had each raised £1400 to come on the expedition, which was going to combine scientific research with adventurous training over a seven week period. This expedition was going to be the first stage of a two year continuous programme of research and exploration.

The advance party made good use of the 24 hour daylight and we were just beginning to see order emerge from the chaos when it was time for the main body of the expedition to arrive. However, they didn't have such a smooth journey. They first spent two days in Iceland waiting for storms to abate and then were stranded at Kulusuk when the weather closed in. We had to hire a flotilla of local boats to bring them off Kulusuk. Our own inflatables went with them but got stuck in the ice for 17 hours. Eventually we had people landing at all hours all over the island, and I ran a continuous kitchen for three days to feed the frozen as they arrived.

Meanwhile the chief leader, Roger Chapman, had taken the leaders concerned on a lightning recce for the training phase of the expedition.

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It had been decided to have six separate camps — campcraft, trekking, icecraft, ski-pulk and kayaking. These were scattered about two hours walk, or climb, from base. The YEs were split into fires (so called as they sat around the camp fire) of 15 and each fire spent two days at each camp.

While the YEs were away the "base-rats" were busy preparing for the two week scientific phase. My main responsibility was for the rations. I also became head cook (but not bottle-washer) as I discovered how important a hot, well cooked meal became to everyone.

A fair amount of logistic juggling had to go on. As well as supporting the present phase of the expedition we were dumping supplies for the next, looking after the needs of various reces, and dealing with the 1001 problems that arose each day. I found I was working an 18 hour day but the two Sappers who drove our boats never seemed to sleep.

A two week scientific phase followed the ten days of training. Here we had two camps to supply. The main one was divided into four sub camps — glaciology, meteorology, survey and geomorphology. They were 2-4 hours away by boat. The other camp — life science — was one hour by foot.

We had a comprehensive radio set run by a Royals Signals captain. Some of the civilian leaders mocked the need for this, but logistically it was invaluable. It was during this phase we had a particularly bad storm. Two days of horizontal rain and 70 mph winds, recorded before the weather station was wrecked.

The final part of the expedition was ten days of adventurous training. Plans had had to be rethought due to the change in the weather. An ice cap recce party had to be lifted off the ice cap by helicopter, as there was no other way to reach them. This meant that a journey by pulk across the ice had to be abandoned but the "fires" concerned were able to ski a high level route around the island. Two other "fires" shared an adventure, one trekking across the island to rendezvous with the second who had kayaked around the coast. They then swapped over for the return journey. Some keen mountaineers found new peaks to climb.

Also during this phase a Central TV film crew brought out two members of the 1982 Polar Air Expedition. A visit was made to the spot where their leader, Gino Watkins, had drowned on August 20th 1932 and a new monument was erected.

What can I say in conclusion about Greenland? I quickly adapted to living under canvas but would dream of hot showers and not quick dips in frozen glacial lakes. I have a lot to thank the Army and the RAOC for. I hadn't received any specialised training but I was able to apply much of what I had learnt in the Army; the ability to look ahead, foresee problems, organise, not to panic (outwardly) and how to grit my teeth and smile and get on with sorting out a problem. The one thing that did make the expedition for me was the Young Explorers who were an excellent bunch of people.



Capt Eckersley at Angmagssalik.



Inflatable boats land supplies at base camps.

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EXPEDITION BERBER BREAK

2 Lt M R Wilton WRAC

On Thursday 21st April the seven members of Expedition Berber Break took off from Luton Airport for Gibraltar, which was the first stop on our trip to the Central High Atlas Mountains in Morocco. In the party, led by Major Terry Mitford RAOC, were 2 Lt Margaret Wilton and Ptes Jackie Emery and Pauline Wilson from COD Bicester. After a very bumpy landing at the airport the group was immediately whisked off by mini-bus to the hydrofoil terminal, and we left that afternoon for Tangier.

Once in Morocco we were constantly approached by people offering to guide us to hotels, restaurants, station or Kasbah, although the first aim was to decide on how to reach Marrakesh. It was established that the trains were on strike, and that we would have to take the overnight bus to Rabat, leaving at 2330 hours. All public transport timings were approximate — the buses left only when full, which could have been early or late. Our luggage was unceremoniously dumped by the bus driver on a pavement on the outskirts of Rabat at 0345 hours. Luckily a cafe was just opening nearby, so we had breakfast before catching the next bus on to Marrakesh. *From there we travelled by bus to El Kelaa via Ouarzate, arriving mid-afternoon on Saturday 23rd April.* Much wheeling and dealing took place while Major Mitford procured a small truck to take ourselves and luggage over the mountains to Bou-Thara where the walking began.

At our overnight camp-site in Bou-Thara we proved to be the objects of great curiosity among the villagers, especially the children. This trend was to last throughout the trek, and the children were delighted to be given sweets (bonbons) in return for collecting our firewood and doing the washing up in the river. It was there that Major Mitford hired three mules with their owners (all called Mohamed!) as guides.

Much of the first three days was spent wading knee-deep in cold, fast flowing water. The

scenery was magnificent, with gorges carved out of the sandstone, so that it resembled the Grand Canyon. Camp sites were chosen beside the river on the outskirts of villages, and inevitably crowds of children gathered round during the daylight hours. The sight of strangers, especially white women, appeared to fascinate them. They were most intrigued when we washed, and spent hours rinsing their hands with our soap — probably the first time they had ever seen it. One day Hadj Mohamed tried using soap to clean his teeth until he was spotted and given some toothpaste instead.

The village girls enjoyed trying out our lipstick and eyeliner, particularly as they were able to see the results in a little mirror. In return they drew marks on our faces which are worn by all young women from the age of about eleven years, indicating that they are available to be bought for marriage. We were told that each man may have up to four wives, and this is a status symbol. He must be able to support them financially but they do all of the work including carrying wood, shepherding the goats, cooking and caring for the family. The women usually dress in layers of black cloth, with coloured clothes for special occasions such as weddings. Washing facilities are limited to cold river water, boxes of Tide washing powder and rocks to beat out the dirt. The possession of a mule is almost as important as a wife, and it is considered to be of much more practical value.

Contrary to popular belief, Morocco is not always very hot. A few of us were soon sunburned, but higher up in the mountains there were snowfalls, rain, and gale-force winds which always threatened to blow the tents away at 0400 hours unless the guy ropes were weighted down with rocks. During the following weeks we covered almost 130 miles, climbing over 10,000 feet. The scenery was breath-taking with fertile, irrigated river valleys, dry lake beds, desert, gorges and sheer mountains.

The food supplies locally were very limited. Most members of the expedition will never want to see another sardine after eating 60 tins of them in the course of 12 days. We also survived on bread baked daily in the villages, fresh eggs, a few vegetables and jars of apricot jam. The Moroccan tea was very disagreeable for those who did not have a sweet tooth, as it is made with large lumps of sugar actually in the tea-pot. The preparation and drinking of tea was done religiously at every stop, and served to each of us

in turn, so that we could be watched as we drank our customary two glasses.

The Moroccans' English vocabulary was extremely limited. Berber was spoken in the mountains, and Arabic with a little French in the towns. We were however treated to a rendering of "Happy Birthday to You" by a carpet shop owner, and other people who shouted "Marks & Spencer" or "See you later a-potato" to us.

Our complete trek took us in a circle, finishing back in Bou-Thara where we stayed at the home of one of our guides. On the following evening we ate at the Hotel des Roses in El Kelaa and experienced our first hot water since we left England. During the return journey we took time to explore the Souks of Marrakesh and Tangier, and the Rock of Gibraltar with the apes, flying back into Luton on May 12th after a memorable expedition.



Pte Pauline Wilson and Pte Jackie Emery with local village girls.



2Lt Margaret Wilton on her mule.

181 PROVOST COMPANY WRAC

"AUNTY JACKY" GOES TO SCHOOL

L Cpl J A Moody WRAC

With an appeal from the Daily Express to our relatives at home, Northern Ireland was inundated with thousands of Christmas cards addressed to "A Soldier in NI". Working in the Registry of 1 Regt RMP at the time, I had the glorious job of opening, reading and displaying them. We were all overwhelmed at the kind thoughts and generosity, the result of which prompted me to reply to one or two donors to thank them on behalf of the Regiment. One such card which I selected was a home-made card from seven year old Cara, and within a couple of weeks I discovered that she had shown my letter to her class who unanimously decided to adopt me as their "Aunty Soldier" and write to me individually.

I received some thirty letters including drawings, each letter brimming over with chatty news and questions. Talk about fan mail! Through continuous correspondence with the class and the teacher, the time finally came when they wanted to see me face to face. They wrote to "Jim'll Fix It" hoping for a reply but in the meantime the wheel was turning between the Press Officer, myself, and various other people to arrange for a PR visit. The date was set for May 26th for a male member of 1RMP, Cpl Moore and me to visit the school and I wrote and told them the news.

As the time drew nearer I was informed that the visit would be covered by the "Express" and local papers and that the "Visor" would also want a scoop. The PRI decided that I should take as a peace offering a mounted WRAC Provost figurine and a plaque. The Commander WRAC suggested taking a recruiting film along and various members of the Regiment discreetly passed on letters and presents for me to give them. It suddenly dawned on me that a simple "thank you" had grown into a Regimental involvement, and not purely for Public Relations.

The day finally arrived and Cpl Moore and I drove to the school. There was no problem finding the right one as, no sooner did we turn a corner, than we heard cheers and shouts.

They must have recognised the blue light!

The whole class gave us a welcome to remember. I hardly had a chance to get out of the car before the questions were fired. I was immediately taken into their classroom and saw the notice board where they had stuck absolutely everything I had sent them. They then showered me with presents. They had planned and saved and bought me a beautiful silver necklace, a box of chocolates and a giant picture of each member of the class, together with hundreds of cards and pictures from the whole school. They also gave me two cakes which they had made themselves, even to the point of grinding the flour, which I later found out was done by stones from the playground! I then gave them my offerings, after which they went to the swimming pool where I was to meet them later. Meanwhile, I was given a tour of the school and a rest in the Staff Room where I was interviewed by the Press. The questions somewhat baffled me. What my age, or if I was planning to get married, had to do with visiting school children I'm still trying to figure out, but stardom is stardom and I was revelling in it, if only for a day!

After the interview we went to the Sports Centre to watch them swim. Had I known, I would have brought my costume and joined in. I was surprised that they were all very good swimmers. Some were even taking their bronze award and the teacher informed me that it was as a result of my letters telling them of my swimming days, so some good had resulted from that.

All too soon the morning was over and off we went to lunch. I was placed with the teachers who insisted that I come again as the food had never been better!

In the afternoon we sat in the class exchanging news and taking photos. My hat and whistle went around everyone and was duly returned at the end of the day complete with greasy finger prints! We were then signalled to go into the hall where, to my surprise, a show had been put on by the school in my honour, which explained the history of the school and included some country dancing and singing. After the show I was asked to make a broadcast on Radio West, which was very impromptu and unexpected but I survived and came out just in time to say goodbye. The day was over. That night I was taken out for a slap-up meal by the Staff.

Unfortunately my return to Northern Ireland was the 0740 flight from RAF Lyneham so I had very little sleep. I reported in at Lyneham at 0600 hours and to my surprise a farewell

committee of thirty children with their teachers and parents had got permission from the RAF to see me off and view the airport. I was escorted to the 'plane, watched by the other amazed passengers who hadn't a clue what was going on. Finally, I stood in the cockpit as the 'plane took off to wave them farewell.

UNIT NEWS

29 COMPANY WRAC

In early May, 29 Company WRAC bade farewell to their OC of nearly 3 years standing, Major Joan Johnstone, who moved to the School of Signals at Blandford. As a parting gift (and to impress the new OC) the company achieved some fine sporting results.

The company Orienteering Team led by 2 Lt Sue Mawby (now posted to 1 RTR) and ably supported by Sgt Nicky Keen and Cpl Ann Godfrey won the Army (WS) Orienteering Championships; a first for a BAOR Team. Not to be outdone, the Athletics Team won the BAOR (WS) Inter Unit Athletics Championships. This was an exciting meeting and the result hinged on the final relay won by the company. The team is training now for the Army finals in UK in July. The RAF (UK) Team visited BAOR and competed against a British Forces Germany side; SSgt Dorette Franzese, Sgt 'Birdy' Baird, Cpl Jeannie Threshie, LCpl Penny Valentine, Pte Daisy Walker and Pte Lynn Dixon represented BFG. Pte Dixon had a particularly successful meeting by raising her personal best in high jump to 1.50m.

Not to be outdone, some of the more senior members of the unit formed part of the company SMG Shooting Team and won the WRAC section of the Rhine Area Skill at Arms Meeting in May; the first time a team has been entered. Lt Bridget Collin led the team which consisted of WO1 (RSM) Carol Wells, WO2 Sheila McIntyre, SSgt Flo Wood, Sgt Ann Butwell and LCpl Karen White. SSgt Wood proved to be the champion shot of the day.

As the new OC, Major Sue Wing, is believed to

enjoy a game of hockey, the company decided to welcome her by winning the BAOR Hockey League. They had already achieved second place in the Inter Unit Championships, having been narrowly beaten by 16 Signal Regiment. Five members of the company represented the Army in the Germany Inter Services Hockey Tournament. They were Sgt Tina Keys, Sgt Liz Davidson, Sgt 'Birdy' Baird, Cpl 'Scooby' McDonald and Cpl Julie Walmsley.

Last but not least, Pte Lyn Williams had a successful Table Tennis season representing BAOR in the Inter Service Tournament.

Nine members of the company attended Exercise Snow Queen in Bavaria and found themselves on an unexpected hiking holiday due to the lack of snow. However the weather picked up (decided to freeze) and an enjoyable time was had by all.

During April this year Cambridge Soham Girls Army Cadet Force were hosted and accommodated by 29 Company WRAC. This was the first time that female ACF Cadets had travelled abroad. They were put through a very varied and intensive programme ranging from a visit to 12 Flight AAC at Wildenrath to walking by the Rhine on a German Volkes March which resulted in collecting some attractive medals. Throughout their attachment the cadets were escorted by Sgt Gill Tully whose role varied from being an instructor to mothering some of the younger cadets.

By the time this is published we shall have taken part in adventure training in Bavaria and the Nijmegen Marches.

We wish good luck to Major Johnstone and 2 Lt Mawby as they return to UK, and welcome Major Wing and Lt Littlejohns in their places.



Army Cadet Force girls training abroad for the first time.

10 COMPANY WRAC

Another varied year at 10 Coy WRAC saw a change of command when Major Margaret King left the Army to attend Bible College last September and Major Claire Weaver arrived from the WRAC Centre. More recently Captain Julia Dixon left after 2½ years as 2IC, and was succeeded by Captain Val Wright from HQ BAOR.

The Company has been involved in adventurous training activities in the Lake District, Snowdon, Scotland and Devon. Activities have included camping, pony trekking and mountain climbing. Participation in charity events has produced side benefits such as a magnum of champagne for success in the Frensham Pond Fun Run, and some members have run and done very well in marathons. Assistance has been given to the Army Personnel Research Establishment in their continuing fitness training research and also to the new WRAC recruiting film. The Duchess of Kent Barracks provided lunch and tea for the participants and guests of the Superteams Competition last May. Sgt Leslie Jephcott and her team received many deserved compliments for their excellent standard of presentation. The food was delicious too!!

LCpl Gaynor Booth won the "Hospital Cook of the Year" award in May whilst employed at the Louise Margaret Maternity Hospital. SSgt Zofia Widajweska came up with a bright idea for the results of the Bisley Shooting Competition when she was at RAPC Worthy Down in 1981 and has since been awarded £100 through the MOD Staff suggestion scheme.

10 Company had a good year sportswise, and in the District League came first in hockey and table tennis, second in squash, and fourth in netball and badminton.

49 FIELD REGIMENT RA – WRAC DETACHMENT

In April 1981 a trial started for wider employment of WRAC personnel. One of the two units taking part was 49 Field Regt RA, then based in Hohne, Germany. Ten WRAC girls of mixed trades including clerks, stewardesses and a medical assistant were to be employed with the regiment for a period of two years.

The girls spent a year in Germany, during which

they were gradually accepted into the regiment. They entered several teams in sports competitions, the best remembered was the 'volleyball' against the wives club at the "It's a Knockout" competition. Highlights of their stay in BAOR included playing enemy on a Regimental Exercise and having a tank run over them!

Since returning to England the girls have entered enthusiastically into everything that had been organised. 49 Field Regiment regularly contributed to HQ York Garrison's sports teams, although it was difficult to assess whether they were an asset or a liability!

When the day finally arrived on which the majority were to depart (three had already been posted) there were sad farewells for all. The Regiment presented the girls with personally engraved cartridge cases from 25 pdr guns, which they will all treasure. An HQ Battery social was held in the evening which as usual was a resounding success.

The girls played a very important part in the Regiment in the two years they were attached. They were outnumbered by 46-1, but the men adjusted well to having women working beside them. We hope that the trial proved that WRAC can be employed as an integral part of a gunner unit.



The AAAdjt and RSM with the girls after the presentation of the cartridge cases by Maj Gen C P R Palmer OBE. L-R: LCpl Gregory, LCpl Boakes, Cpl Twigg, Pte Wilding, WO1 (RSM) Bowater, Lt Miller, LCpl Morrison, Cpl Stead, LCpl Whitehead.

9 SIGNAL REGIMENT

WRAC WEAPON COURSE

A four day weapon course was held for WRAC serving with 9 Signal Regiment in Cyprus. The girls were very keen and displayed some excellent shooting and weapon handling to Brigadier Helen Meechie, DWRAC who was on a visit to the island.



Maj Gen C P R Palmer OBE presenting an engraved cartridge case to LCpl Boakes.



L-R: Seated: LCpl Brearley, Sgt Powell, Brigadier Meechie, Capt Mills, Sgt Herbison, LCpl Crampton. Standing: Cpl Newington, LCpl Holden, LCpl Fox, Pte Page, LCpl Baldwin, Pte Birtwistle.

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF ARTILLERY

Since we last sent news to the Lioness, various reorganisations at Larkhill have seen the disbandment of the WRAC Battery and the redeployment of the WRAC servicewomen to Headquarter Battery and 1st Battery (The Blazers) of the recently formed Support Regiment, Royal School of Artillery. Headquarter Battery is commanded by Major Bobbi Chilton WRAC who also wears a "second hat" as OC WRAC to ensure that the Corps interests of those servicewomen not under her command are looked after.

The WRAC contribution to life in a fully fledged Gunner Regiment has not passed unnoticed. In addition to the more usual duties such as cooking, clerking, driving and stewardessing etc, servicewomen take part in small arms training, Regimental runs, sporting events and a host of other activities. Indeed the WRAC and QARANC element of the Headquarter Battery team made a major contribution in the gaining of 1st place in the Inter Battery Swimming Competition. In 1982 Sergeant Jones, Corporal McIntyre and Lance Corporal Flanagan were part of the Gunner crew in the Tall Ships race to Lisbon.

On a sadder note, it was discovered early last year that Private Julie Turton, a stewardess in the RA Mess had leukemia. She spent many months at the QEMH Woolwich and the Westminster Hospital. Happily she is now back with us and frequent hospital checks show that she is making steady progress. Last May a sponsored swim in aid of the Andrew and Elizabeth Bostic Fund, a leukemia charity, was held and the photograph below shows Major Chilton presenting a cheque for £1000 to Professor Hobbs, Chairman of the Westminster Bone Marrow Transplant Team, with Private Turton in the middle of the front row.

We were all sad to say goodbye to W02 Di Salisbury at the end of last year on her retirement to civilian life. However this is the way of the service, and the loss of old friends is balanced by the pleasure of welcoming new faces.



Professor Hobbs receiving the "large" cheque from Major Chilton.

HQ 3 ARMoured DIVISION

Cpl Ginnette Powell is the first of nine members of the WRAC to be posted to the Iron Division. She joined up in 1977 and has already served in Rheindahlen and in Cyprus where she married her Royal Military Police husband Colin. After two years in Cyprus, he was posted to Werl, east of the Ruhr, and she has now followed him, though she has had to give up a stripe.

Cpl Powell is an athletics champion and will be giving encouragement to those clerks who are struggling to pass their Battle Fitness Test.



Cpl Ginnette Powell at her desk.

RAC CENTRE

WRAC DETACHMENT



The RAC Centre Cross Country Team, runners-up in the SW District Championships, displaying their trophies.

L-R: Back Row: LCpl Lawson, Pte Wharton, Pte Gratrix. Front Row: Pte Jenkins, LCpl Blay, Cpl Sleightholme.



Ptes Coleman, Cox and Reid with a muddy troop from 1 RTR having emerged from the Pridhamsleigh pot-hole during adventurous training at Renney Lentney, Plymouth.



Brigadier Meechie, accompanied by LCpl Allan, talks to Stewardesses, Ptes Belcher, Keen, Cudd and Evans.



The drivers at Lulworth Camp, LCpl Burton, Ptes Bean, Cox and Skerritt tell the Director about their jobs.



Ptes Stacey, Morris and Grandfield, cooks at Central Catering in Bovington, talking to DWRAC.



Gen Sir Frank Kitson, Comd UKLF, accompanied by Lt Col Seymour, talks to Cpl Warner, LCpl Blay, Pte Evans and Pte Osbaldstone.

FAREWELL TO WO2 M T G VON DAHLEN BEM WRAC

This July saw a page of WRAC history close with the retirement of WO2 Ghis Von Dahlen, the last WRAC Seychellois. Mrs Von Dahlen, or as she was then, Mme Camille was recruited in the sunshine Isles of the Seychelles on a district enlistment scheme for service in the British Army in 1961. She came to not so sunny Lingfield for recruit training and since then has served in MOD, Beaconsfield, 28 Signal Regiment, Aldershot, Aden and since 1968 in HQ BAOR.

During her time in HQ BAOR she has moved from Medical Directorate to Transport and Movements Branch and since 1976 has been in charge of No 1 Typing Pool. Little wonder that she is nicknamed "Miss Rheindahlen". She was awarded the BEM in 1976 after serving for nearly six years in Transport Branch and the following year received her LSGC.

Ghis Von Dahlen's farewell party in the WO's and Sgts Mess was a cabaret night. To add to the festivities she was well supported by several friends from the Seychelles who were in Europe on holiday.

WO2 Von Dahlen and her husband will be returning to the Seychelles where they are intending to run a Guest House. We all wish her well for the future.



WO2 Von Dahlen (left) receiving a bouquet and scroll from WO1 (RSM) Wells during her farewell party.

23 Postal & Courier Squadron RE Cyprus

On April 11th 1983 the squadron was visited by the new Commander British Forces Cyprus, Major General Sir Desmond Langley KCVO MBE. Although the unit is predominantly RE, the Commander was introduced to the WRAC element as well as the Sappers on duty.

At the end of his visit he was presented with a commemorative day cover by Cpl Sharon Major WRAC.



Major General Sir Desmond Langley KCVO MBE talking to Cpl Sharon Major at British Forces Post Office Dhekelia.

HERFORD GARRISON NEW ACCOMMODATION BLOCK

The official opening of the newly completed WRAC-QARANC accommodation block in Wentworth Barracks, Herford, took place on May 31st. Lt Col Alan Eastburn, CO 4 Armd Div HQ and Sig Regt, invited the Garrison Commander, Brigadier R S Mountford OBE, and Comd WRAC BAOR, Lt Col A J Smith to cut the pink ribbon jointly.

Until now there has been no accommodation in Herford specifically for WRAC or QARANC. The only one requiring accommodation until November last year was the QARANC Dental Assistant and she lived alone in the luxury of a 13-man flat designed for soldiers employed in the Signal Regiment. From November onwards she was joined by 9 WRAC clerks posted in to work in the Signal Regiment and in the Divisional HQ and 3 comcen operators. In the meantime work has been steadily progressing to convert spacious

accommodation in Wentworth Barracks into a self contained flat which can house up to 16 girls. It is bright, comfortable and very spacious and our thanks go to Lt Col (QM) Ray Morris, his staff and the Herford PSA for all their hard work.



Back Row:

Cpl S E Paines, Pte P M Horn, Pte S B Allan, QLCpl McCarthy, Pte S A Garvey, Pte J Butler, Pte D S Loblack, Cpl C K Stone

Front Row:

LCpl C I Parsler, Brig R S Mountford OBE, Lt Col A J Smith, Lt Col A F Eastburn, LCpl J Regan.

King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers

SISTER AGNES'S

Beaumont House,
Beaumont Street, London W.1.

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers, affectionately known as Sister Agnes's, provides the best medical and surgical facilities at the lowest possible cost to officers of all three services (including women officers) serving or retired, who have held a permanent or temporary commission in the Armed Forces. This facility also extends to officers' wives, widows and dependent children of not less than 4 years of age.

The hospital has both private rooms and small wards, and well-equipped X-Ray and Physiotherapy Departments. Medical check-ups can be arranged at a moderate price.

Serving officers are entitled to free nursing and maintenance in the shared rooms. Retired officers and their dependants are charged £315 per week for a private room. The charge for other patients is £665. If, however, a patient can pay a sum nearer to the actual cost of his/her maintenance (now over £680 per week) this is much appreciated as it helps others. Consultant's fees are a matter for personal arrangement between patient and Consultant. There is a generously administered Benevolent Fund for those in straitened circumstances.

Subject to age BUPA gives friends of the Hospital a 15% reduction on their BUPACARE subscriptions, and PPP and Western Provident a 25% reduction on their Family Masterplan and Supercover policies respectively, if payment is made by direct debit.

The hospital is currently handling over 2200 in-patients and 700 out-patients a year. It is not part of the NHS and is therefore reliant on voluntary aid via subscriptions, donations and legacies for which there is an increasing need as the demand for beds increases.

If you would like to receive information or become a subscriber please write to the Appeals Secretary, (N.6), 6 Buckingham Place, London SW1E 6HR, or phone 01-828 4454. Applications for admission should be made to the Matron on 01-486 4411.

BOOK REVIEW

THE CHILWELL STORY

By CAPTAIN MIKE HASLEM RAOC

Published by the RAOC Gazette

Price £4.95 + £1.34 p&p

The Chilwell Story begins in the early years of the First World War when under the energetic direction of the 8th Lord Chetwynd a vast munitions factory was built on green fields between Beeston and Long Eaton and near to the River Trent. Among the first workers employed in the somewhat dangerous occupation of shell filling were redundant women lace workers from nearby Nottingham. Women were also employed as overhead-crane drivers. Both these occupations had up until this time been regarded as the domain of men but the dictates of the war soon changed all that.

For most of the period between the two world wars, Chilwell was closed but in 1934 it was re-opened as an RAOC Depot housing the Army's reserve vehicles and motor spares. By 1939 when War was again declared in Europe Chilwell was ready to play its new part in helping to defeat the enemy. Once again women at Chilwell were to fulfill a vital role in the struggle against Germany but this time in uniform, as members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

The first twenty-five of them arrived within hours of war being declared. All members of the 14th Notts Detachment, they were commanded by Miss Elsie Bottomley, now a Nottinghamshire County Councillor, who remembers receiving her unit's call-up orders by telephone from the War Office. A distant voice told her to report with her ATS girls (then all part-time volunteers) to Chilwell where they would all be given a job to do. Without hesitation or written orders — Miss Bottomley never received those — she gathered together her enthusiastic brood and full of excitement about the impending adventure they marched into Chilwell. They were not expected and their arrival caused a certain amount of embarrassment as well as delight to

the soldiers already stationed there! With no accommodation specifically for women available they were billeted in local private houses and after a few days were indeed found jobs to do.

From this small beginning the ATS at Chilwell quickly grew into a formidable force approaching 3500. Initially the girls were employed as cooks, drivers, clerks and store women but their full value was soon realised and eventually they were to be found working in every branch of the Depot in a variety of jobs, thus releasing the men for duty abroad. The stories of ATS life at Chilwell are legion and many are re-told in "The Chilwell Story".

By early 1943 nearly 4000 ATS, 5000 soldiers and 7000 civilians worked at Chilwell with thousands more employed in its various sub-depots around the country. Chilwell Depot was in effect a small town and the ATS had their own village within it. Known as "the Camp on the Hill" and appropriately called Queen Elizabeth Camp after the Queen Mother, who opened it in March 1943, it became a home from home for the girls. The Princess Royal was another royal visitor to the ATS at Chilwell. She paid an annual visit for two or three days at a time.

As the war approached its climax the work load at Chilwell increased ten-fold, for it was here that all the stores and equipment for the "D" day landings were gathered together. The ATS as always, had a vital role to play in this vast undertaking.

By the end of the War over 60,000 people were employed in Chilwell and its satellite depots which included of course the largest ATS Unit in the country. The run down to peace time manning took many years and in the meantime in 1949 the ATS became the Women's Royal Army Corps. But it wasn't until March 1957 that the old 4 Battalion ATS finally disappeared.

Finally in 1964 only two representatives of the womens' services were left at Chilwell, both WRAC officers serving in the Provision Branch. For those who served in this great depot the "Chilwell Story" represents part of their own experiences. For those who did not, the book is well worth reading for it gives an insight into the daily lives of those behind the fighting men in two World Wars.

Editor's Note:

The book is available from Mr Wright, Head of General Admin. DSM Vehicle Division, Chilwell, Beeston, Notts. Send a cheque for £6.29 made out to RAOC Gazette.

THE GARRISON CHURCH OF ST GEORGE, BORDON

SERVING WITH THE ROYAL ENGINEERS

2 Lt Jan Harper WRAC recently spent six weeks attached to 26 Engineer Regiment in Iserlohn prior to starting a six month "young officer" course at the RSME in Chatham. She is the second girl to be permanently employed with the Royal Engineers, and on completion of her course she will be posted as a troop commander to an Engineer Regiment in UK.

2 Lt Harper, a qualified Engineer, is not entirely new to military life, having served in Leeds OTC. During her attachment she visited 28 Amphibious Engineer Regiment, joined in with live firing at 32 Armoured Engineer Regiment, and went on both a battlefield tour and a mine-field tactical exercise without troops (TEWT) with the Regiment. She also carried out Commanders' Functional Tests (CFTs) on vehicles, joined in with the men's fitness training and learnt how to lay a mine.



Spr Dersley shows 2 Lt Harper how to carry out a Commanders' Functional Test on an armoured personnel carrier.

After more than 60 years of services in the old corrugated iron Church in Budds Lane, the Bordon garrison Church has moved into a newly converted building in Station Road. This Church was dedicated by the Chaplain General, Venerable W F Johnston CB QHC MA on 10th May 1983.

Over the last 60 years many members of the Association worshipped in the old distinctive blue iron Church of St George and will, I am sure, be pleased to know that great care has been taken to incorporate into the new Church as many as possible of the fittings and memorials from the old Church. The David Shepherd painting of Christ surrounded by soldiers representing those who served in the Boer War, World War 1, World War 2 and Korea now has pride of place behind the altar.

Eventually the old Church will be demolished and a memorial garden is to be built on the site. In recognition of their long association with Bordon Garrison the Canadian Army has donated a maple tree to be planted in the garden.

ARMY BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY (ABWS)

Membership of the ABWS is open to any serving and ex service member of the Army, to civilians employed by the Army and to members of their families. Members of the TA are particularly welcome. It maintains representatives worldwide and within the counties of Britain and on most training areas where it makes a significant contribution to conservation programmes.

The Society produces a quarterly bulletin and an annual journal which contains articles on a wide variety of ornithological subjects of interest to the serviceman.

It also has a large selection of books, journals, slides and tapes that are available for loan to members. If you are interested, write to:

The Secretary, Army Bird Watching Society,
Defence Lands 3, MOD Tolworth Tower,
Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7DR.

TRAINING WITH NATO

While events during last year in the South Atlantic are still remembered, the hard and relentless training of the British soldier continues. Last March in the mountains of southern Norway, SSgt Joyce Gibson WRAC was undergoing arctic survival and combat training.

SSgt Gibson is a cook and is based at the Royal Artillery Depot in Woolwich. She is one of 1500 troops which make up the British Contingent of NATO's ACE (Allied Command Europe) Mobile Force. The ACE Mobile Force or AMF as it is called is NATO's "Fire Brigade" with a difference. This 5000 strong multinational quick reaction force can be deployed to any NATO flank such as Norway or Turkey in the deterrent role before hostilities can begin. A former hospital chef at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Banstead, she joined the Army in 1961 and has served in Norway and the UK. She trains with her NATO allies from Canada, West Germany, Luxembourg, Italy, Belgium and the United States twice a year. Not only does this training practise the AMF in its deterrent

concept but it also demonstrates well the goodwill and solidarity of the NATO partners during which she learns a great deal about her foreign comrade chefs.

"Despite the fact that I am working indoors I still have time to be aware of the dangers of the arctic weather," she said. "If your vehicle breaks down you may have to stay out the night. My sleeping bag accompanies me everywhere" she added.

UOTC

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY OTC Exercise "Beehive"

At the end of April, the WRAC Troop of Bristol University OTC ventured south to Plymouth for the annual Exercise Beehive, a tradition which, judging by the enthusiastic response that it receives each time from the girls, will remain for many years to come.

With the help of our own RSM - Mr Hubbard, OOH - and instructors from the Junior Leaders Regiment RAC, training on Saturday covered canoeing (and therefore swimming!), potholing and abseiling which gave most the chance to tackle a new sport. The few who had already sampled all three were able to learn from the experts and improve their abilities. Lt Col Anne Bray, Commander WRAC SWDIST/WALES paid the Troop a visit and viewed the various activities in progress, while the enjoyment of the day was mercifully enhanced by warm weather. This continued in a fine evening, and a successful barbecue on the rocks brought the day to a very pleasant end.

Standing on the top of a 100 foot cliff, staring at the beach below or crawling through the entrance of a cave had daunted several prospective abseilers and potholers, but on Sunday there was not one who did not feel some sense of nervous apprehension at the sight of the high rope



SSgt Joyce Gibson hard at work with RAF cook Senior Aircraftman Nunn.

confidence course tucked away in beautiful parkland in Ashburton.

After a brief lesson in self defence which caused no little amusement, the girls moved on to what became the most memorable event of the weekend. Nobody noticed the drizzle as each surveyed the obstacles ranging from about fifteen to thirty feet above the ground. The practical dangers proved to be minimal, but the psychological problem of confidence was a very real barrier which everybody needed to break in order to complete the course. The more intrepid paused only briefly to summon up their courage where others had to muster a tremendous strength of mind to overcome their fear. For every girl this was the most valuable achievement of the exercise.

Exercise Beehive provided a different sort of challenge for the girls of the UOTC from that set up on most training weekends. It was met with keenness, enthusiasm and success by the 25 girls who took part. As a result, the benefit was felt in a rewarding sense of achievement for the individual, and greater unity and comradeship within the Troop.

We really are most grateful to the Junior Leaders Regiment RAC who continue to put their facilities at our disposal every year for this exercise, and whose instructors give up their leave to train us.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1983

The AGM was held at The Victory Services Club, 63/79 Seymour Street, London W2 on Saturday, 12 March 1983.

320 members attended the Meeting and the WRAC Staff Band Concert which followed the AGM.

The Chair was taken by Brigadier E J Nolan CB Vice President of the Association.

Colonel F M Cook, Chairman of the Association, reported that the Association continued to flourish with new branches at York, Wrexham, Swansea, Medway, Barnsley and BAOR.

There were 3320 ex Service members and 3611 Serving members, making a total membership of 6931. The ex Service membership increased by 394 despite 400 members failing to renew their subscriptions. If the Association could stem the flow of members who fail to renew their membership it would make a great difference.

The Association was represented on the Remembrance Day Parade in Whitehall by the Aldershot Branch, and the Association Wreath was laid by Mrs Manners at the Cenotaph. The Aldershot Branch was supported by London, Greater London, Wimbledon and Kent branches with individuals from South Wales and Shropshire making 94 members on parade.

Mrs E Laurence-Smith the Honorary Treasurer reported that the Association was financially sound and had an excess of income over expenditure due mainly to the investments income which was £5334, or half our total income. This was a satisfactory state of affairs and the Association should be able to hold its subscription rate.

Major D R M Parker the Editor of *Lioness*, explained that consideration had been given to re-introducing the third issue each year but because of the postal costs it had been decided to increase the size of the existing two issues. Whether this could be maintained was dependent on contributors sending reports and articles.

Brigadier E J Nolan Chairman of the Benevolent Funds reported that the Grants Committee had considered 553 cases which was an increase of 24 per cent over the previous year and the total expenditure on grants rose to £50,406.

Brigadier Nolan gave examples of the help given which included help with the cost of adapting a car to hand controls for an ex WRAC Sergeant aged 26 suffering from multiple sclerosis, and with an electric wheelchair for an ex ATS Sergeant also suffering from multiple sclerosis. Two ex ATS sisters disabled with arthritis were provided with a TV set under the Benevolent Fund TV Scheme. The Fund was providing 41 sets under this Scheme.

The Army Benevolent Fund were always most generous in helping when necessary.

The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund continued to provide £3 per week to annuitants living on

their own on minimal incomes. There were 39 annuitants of whom a quarter were over 80 years of age.

The Trustees were most grateful to Serving individuals and Association branches who contribute to the Benevolent Fund and to all those who raise funds for the Princess Royal's Memorial Fund. Nobody knows when they might be hit by an unforeseen misfortune and may need a helping hand. The Services had a tradition of helping their comrades in need, and with the members' help the WRAC was able to live up to these high traditions.

Brigadier E J Nolan as Chairman of the Museum Trustees reported that now the walls of the Museum could be used to display photographs etc it had been possible to improve the display. The Trustees were most grateful to members who had written or put on cassette their experiences.

Lt Col G E M Saunders-Davies, Lt Col C H Leese and Miss A G Learmouth were re-elected Council Vice Presidents and Colonel B M Laverack was elected in place of Colonel V I Fisher who was not eligible for re-election.

It was agreed by the Meeting that the AGM in

1984 should be held at The Victory Services Club, London.

Northern Area proposed that the Grand Reunion in 1985 be held in either Liverpool or Harrogate. After a discussion a vote was taken and it was agreed that it should be held at Harrogate. The provisional date was 13/14 April 1985.

Copies of the Minutes of the AGM are held by Branch Secretaries but any member requiring a personal copy can obtain it from the General Secretary.

Contributions for next issue by
13th December 1983 in double
spacing. Photographs in black & white.



WE, THE LIMBLESS, LOOK TO YOU FOR HELP

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REUNION NOTICES

QMAAC TEA PARTY

The Annual QMAAC Tea Party will be held at The Victory Services Club, 63/79 Seymour Street, London W2 on Friday, 23 March 1984 from 2.30 pm to 5 pm. Tickets price £1 from Corps HQ WRAC, Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6QH.

REUNIONS

NO 2 SUB AREA REUNION South West Area

There was a large gathering in Salisbury on Sunday 15th May for the No 2 Sub Area Reunion. Members attended from Bath, Bournemouth, Cheltenham, Portsmouth, Somerset, Southampton, Swindon and Weymouth. We were also delighted to welcome serving members from Wilton, Larkhill and Bovington.

The day started with a most interesting guided tour of the Cathedral, followed by a visit to the Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment Museum and Monprocessor House.

We then played "follow the leader" to the Sergeants' Mess UKLF at Wilton where Major Anne Clarke, Chairman of Salisbury Branch welcomed everyone and introduced Lt Colonel Betty Michell, Chairman of No 2 Sub Area who expressed pleasure in introducing Brigadier Helen Meechie DWRAC. Brigadier Meechie thanked the South West Area for inviting her and gave a most interesting and enjoyable talk on the present day Corps and its activities.

Colonel Nan Robertson was also introduced as the new Chairman of South West Area. Brigadier Norman King, General Secretary WRAC Association also attended.

A delicious tea followed which was served by No 1 Squadron, 10 Signal Regiment during which a lot of reminiscing took place among the members who had served at Wilton thirty years ago.

Apologies were received from Brigadier Dame Mary Railton and Lt Colonel L E Holt who were on holiday.

At 5.30 pm goodbyes were said and "see you next year" as Reunion 1983 came to a close.

NORTHERN AREA REUNION – 1983

The Northern Area Reunion will be held in the Royal Baths Assembly Rooms, Harrogate, on Saturday 22 October from 2.30 to 6 pm.

Tickets £2.50 including tea, obtainable from Miss M Bradley, 60 West End Avenue, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 8BY (Tel: 0423 - 57023) not later than Saturday 15 October. Please send SAE with remittance payable to "WRAC Association – Northern Area".

There will be a "produce" Bring and Buy stall.

It would be appreciated if, when applying for tickets, members could give brief details of main units in which they served. This year we shall have an "identification board" to make it easier for friends who served together to locate each other.

Anyone requiring accommodation in Harrogate please contact Miss Bradley as soon as possible beforehand, giving details of requirements and type of hotel etc.

WESTERN AREA

A Reunion will be held at the Royal British Legion Club, Oakengates, Telford, on Saturday 2 October 1983 from 2.30 pm – 6 pm. Tickets £2.00 including tea, obtainable from Mrs C Griggs, 54 Oakfield Road, Shawbirch, Telford, Shropshire (Tel: Telford 56305), not later than 7 October.

Please send sae with remittance, payable to "WRAC Association, Shropshire Branch".

Produce, Bring and Buy Stall in aid of WRAC Funds.

ATS DINNER CLUB

The Annual Luncheon of the ATS Dinner Club for Members and their Guests will be held on Saturday 1st October at the Bloomsbury Crest Hotel, Coram Street, London. We hope that as many members as possible will attend.

The Membership, which reached the dizzy height of 606 a short while ago, has dropped a bit lately for various reasons and now stands at 599. The Chairman, Mrs Jane Croom-Johnson, and Committee Members wish to stress that membership of the club is open to all ex-ATS irrespective of rank held at the time. We would like to hear from more ex-ATS members, and anyone wishing to join the Club is invited to write to the Hon Secretary, Miss C I Lawrence, 23 Trinity Close, The Pavement, London SW4 0JD, who will be pleased to send the necessary information.

WORLD WAR TWO CWAC VETERANS 25th ANNUAL REUNION 1983

We still haven't located all our CWAC friends of those great days of World War II.

Once again we call Canadian Women's Army Corps Veterans to Annual Reunion through the medium of this release.

This event is sponsored by the Canadian Corps Association, CWAC 47, the last weekend in September 1983, in Toronto, Canada. This is the 25th Annual Reunion for our Canadian Women's Army Corps.

Here is our schedule in brief:

Friday evening from 7 pm September 23rd — Photo viewing, wreath laying Ceremony, Social time, Dancing and fun.

Saturday 12 noon to closing September 24th — Reunion Luncheon, Dinner, Dancing and fun for all.

For complete Reunion Brochure write to CWAC Veterans' Reunion Chairman, Mrs Shirley Wood Heesaker, 201 Niagara Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1C9. Tel: 781-2872, 781-3821, or 488-4027.

AGM 1984

The AGM in 1984 will be held at The Victory Services Club, 63/79 Seymour Street, London W2 on Saturday, 24 March 1984.

Tickets will be required for admittance to The Victory Services Club and will be available from Corps HQ, WRAC, Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6QH.

CHURCH SERVICE — ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

On Sunday 25 March 1984 the Corps has been invited to attend the 11 am Service at The Royal Hospital Chelsea. The WRAC Staff Band will play at the Service.

Seating is limited and it will therefore be necessary to issue tickets for the Service so that members are not disappointed by being unable to get in.

Tickets from Corps HQ WRAC, Queen Elizabeth Park, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6QH.

DIDCOT CHURCH

All Saints Church at Didcot has served as the Garrison Church for 67 years and the Church Notice Board includes the WRAC badge in recognition of the many ATS and WRAC who have participated in the Church activities.

The roof of the church is in need of repair and the Garrison are doing what they can to raise money to contribute towards the cost.

The Association has made a donation but it is felt that there may be individuals who served at Didcot who would wish to make a personal contribution. Donations should be sent to Rev Norman C Wadsworth, The Rectory, Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxon OX11 7EA.

BRANCH NEWS

BOURNEMOUTH Seven members attended the Remembrance Service in November, and our Christmas luncheon was once again very successful with 26 members enjoying the party.

We have a raffle at every meeting to help increase our funds.

Three new members joined us this year, two of whom have very recently left the WRAC.

We attended St George's Parade in April and the DVA 25th anniversary parade in May. We much enjoyed our trip to Salisbury on May 15th and meeting the other branches at the No 2 Sub Area reunion.

BRIGHTON We meet on the third Monday of each month at the YMCA, Old Steine, Brighton. Many of our seventy members live outside Brighton, but they usually manage to attend our Annual Dinner and Bring & Buy Sale.

Sadly we have had to report the deaths of three members, Mrs Leslie and Mrs Ritchie, both of whom had been ill for some time, and Miss Irene Durndell who was our branch secretary for 27 years. Miss Durndell was a wonderful organiser and arranged many outings and visits to sick members. She handed over the secretaryship to Miss Chris Cornwell in March 1979 who unfortunately had to give up through ill-health after four years. We now have Mrs Bradford as Secretary, Mrs Wye as Chairman and Miss Phyll White who has been Treasurer since 1948.

CHELTENHAM The branch continues to thrive, and numbers remain steady in spite of two long serving members having died, and some moving from the district.

Our activities are varied and interesting. Last year, as always, our Autumn Party was an enormous success. Members provided the food and drinks, or donated money instead. We hold it in the autumn as so many members reside in the surrounding Cotswolds, and winter weather deters a Christmas date.

Once again Royal British Legion Poppy Crosses were sold at the party, and planted by local members at the Cheltenham Field of Poppies. The WRAC Square contained more poppies than any other regiment thanks to the generous support of our members.

A Wine and Cheese party held in April was a great success, financially as well as socially. Official guests included members of the local Royal British Legion, WRNS and WRAF Associations.

From raffles and sales throughout the year, the branch has been able to send donations to the Princess Royal's Memorial Fund and the Star and Garter Home; the latter answering the appeal in the February Lioness.

Our programme for 1983/84 is varied and interesting. It includes visits to Tetbury, with a conducted tour of a well known House, to Quenington and Bredons Norton, all by invitation of our members.

Later this year we have a Bring and Buy Sale, to be followed by a Band performance. This is a local youth band conducted by one of our members.

CHESTER Our membership has increased and we now have 56 members. We meet on the second Monday of every month at the Burma Star Social Club, Chester.

Our White Elephant Stall is a great success and helps to increase our funds, so we can donate more to such charities as the ATS Benevolent Fund, Cancer Research and Heart Foundation.

We were very saddened by the sudden death of one of our members, Mrs Eileen Way. Not long

before she had been with a number of our members on holiday in Jersey where we had a most enjoyable time.

On Remembrance Sunday we joined in the March Past Parade and our chairman, Mrs Cowley, laid a wreath at the Cenotaph.

Our Valentine's Day Social was a great success and started 1983 off well. We try to arrange visits to local social clubs about four times a year, all of which have good accommodation for dancing. At our April meeting we entertained members from the Liverpool branch. On May 28th some of our members joined the Dunkirk Veterans Association on their annual commemorative trip to Dunkirk.

Some of our members live in the Weaverham district and travel a long way every month for our meetings. They have get-togethers in their own homes and the branch is very appreciative of their dedication and hard work for our Fund-Raising efforts.

Our Annual Dance will be held on November 19th and we would be very pleased to welcome members from other branches.

DUMFRIESSHIRE It is some time since I sent a branch report but I am pleased to say we are still going strong. The Secretary, Treasurer and one other member attended the last Scottish Secretaries' AGM in Ayr last October and Major le Gassick gave us a lot of information about the changes taking place in the WRAC. We were pleased to note that the WRAC Band had not been disbanded and also to learn that the Erskine Home now accepts ex service women for admittance.

Our usual social events were all a great success and our summer outing was one of the best, as we had a glorious day for our visit to Culzean Castle.

Our Beetle Drive and Sale for the Benevolent Fund was better than ever in October, and we were able to send £30 to London, and also £20 to Erskine House.

Our Christmas Party was a full house, and our Annual Dinner was held in February, with most of our committee members being able to attend, as the roads were good because of the mild winter.

In January the Secretary was invited to lunch at Craigiehall HQ Edinburgh to meet Brigadier H G Meechie, and had a most enjoyable time.

Sadly we have lost one of our long standing members, Mrs Mary Hackney, nee Armstrong, who served some time in Chilwell during the war and had been a member of our Branch for thirty years. Four of us attended the funeral and a spray of flowers was sent from branch members.

EAST KENT We meet at least once a month, in different towns in the area. All through the year we have outings, parties, dinners, visits and coffee mornings, and also have an annual Church Service when our standard is taken and laid on the altar. The standard is taken on parades at Canterbury Cathedral and to the Thanet Festival of Remembrance.

In the early part of this year we have given £100 to the Benevolent Fund; £30 to the Princess Royal's Memorial Fund and £40 to the Poppy appeal. Our knitters have completed quite a few children's garments for the Benevolent Fund and at Christmas time we give presents to people not in the Association who help us during the year.

Several of our members attended the ATS Dinner Club luncheon last October, and in June some of our members attended the Chelsea Hospital Founders Day celebrations.



Members of the Medway branch at their first anniversary dinner and dance at the Beacon Court Hotel, Gillingham on April 12th.

GLASGOW We continue to hold our meetings in the Royal Artillery Club on the second Tuesday of each month from September to May. Our meetings included a Coffee evening, and Cheese and Wine party at Christmas, and a talk on flower arranging. Our friends from the Association of WRNS joined with us in November, when Major Wendy Le Gassick gave a talk and showed a film of the work of the WRAC. How different from our service with the ATS!

Our membership is now 90 and about 35-40 members attend our meetings.

Sadly, Mrs Louise Rowbotham ATS died in December.

GREATER LONDON The highlight of this year has been the visit of the Director WRAC to our meeting on March 1st. Brigadier Meechie came to tea before the meeting and chatted to members. After the business part of the evening she gave us a very interesting talk on the Corps today based on items in the Lioness, which had just been published.

Our theatre outing in January was to see "Key for Two" at the Vaudeville, which was extremely funny and was greatly enjoyed by all who went.

In June, we were fortunate to have a beautiful sunny day for our outing to Penshurst Place to which twenty-eight members and friends came. Both outings were very efficiently arranged by our social secretary, Mrs Vera Dawson.

Sadly, at the beginning of the year one of our most regular members at meetings, Miss Mildred Nicoll died. In her memory, the Branch sent a donation to St Christopher's Hospice, who cared for her at the end of her illness.

LONDON We continue to hold our Meetings once a month at the Union Jack Club. Our programme has included some interesting talks, notably one by Lt Colonel C J Scott OBE (Retd) on the Gurkha Welfare Trusts, illustrated by colour slides of Nepal. We were also given a talk by Lady Victoria Scott on the Royal British Legion, Women's Section. Miss Mary Curtiss showed us her "Hundred Favourite Colour Slides" and we had a successful Bring and Buy sale.

Several London branch members attended the Association AGM at the Victory Services Club, and would like to thank the WRAC Staff Band for their enjoyable concert on that occasion.

NORFOLK & SUFFOLK We meet on the first Saturday of the month except for January and August at the TA Centre in Aylsham Road, Norwich. Our branch which was founded in 1980 is expanding, but we would like more members to join us. Our founder member, Miss Eileen Skitt, has resigned as Chairman owing to pressure of work, and has been succeeded by Mrs Joan Shreeve. Our thanks go to Miss Skitt, and also to Mrs Eileen Ricketts of the Wolverhampton Branch for their initial help in getting the branch started.

We have had a few jumble sales and Bring & Buy sessions to boost our finances and have been able to send donations to BLESMA and the South Atlantic Fund.

Our speakers this year have covered a variety of subjects with talks on collecting dolls, fire prevention, a trip to the United Arab Emirates and our Chairman's trip to France (with slides).

We hope to round off the year with our usual Christmas lunch.

PLYMOUTH In the twelve months since the 1982 Reunion, the branch has suffered the sad loss of three of our members — Jean Dunn, Pat McCullough and Pat Truscott. All three had great interest in the Association, were regular



Brigadier Meechie with some of the branch members.

attenders and extremely hard workers. We shall continue to miss them all.

We have had our usual round of jumble sales, social evenings and carol singing. The last was more enjoyable than ever in 1982 as we were allowed to sing in the warmth of the railway station foyer! The money raised was donated to St Luke's Hospice in Plymouth.

A dozen or so of our members had an enjoyable day out at the AGM this year, and were delighted to meet again so many new "old friends". In June we took our relatives and friends on a river trip from Plymouth to Calstock, a two-hours each way journey. We booked the whole boat and it was a most successful outing.

On October 14th, 15th and 16th we are organising a "Come to Plymouth for your Christmas Shopping" weekend. Guest house or small hotel accommodation will be booked for you, and the programme will include shopping on Saturday morning, a conducted coach tour of Plymouth area on Saturday afternoon, a social event of some kind on Saturday evening, and on Sunday morning a Church Service and Parade. This will be the No 1 Sub-Area contribution for 1983.

SHROPSHIRE Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month, usually in the Oakengates Community Centre, Telford at 7.30 pm.

During the past year we have had a Mystery Coach Tour to Ellesmere lake followed by supper at the Dicken Arms, Loppington, a Rummage Sale which raised over £36 for branch funds (all surplus items were given to Oxfam), a Cheese and Wine Party and Buffet Suppers.

The Christmas dinner was held at the Falcon Hotel, Wellington and a Social Evening and Fish and Chip Supper was held in March at COD Donnington Social Club.

Discussions, Demonstrations, a Raffle and sale of produce are regular features of the monthly meetings.

Four members paraded at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, whilst others paraded at COD Donnington on Remembrance Sunday.

The branch has donated £10 to the ATS Benevolent Fund, £10 to the South Atlantic Fund and £5 to the WRAC Staff Band during the year.

ULSTER Our Committee meetings were held in the Chairman's home and were always well attended and involved a combination of business and harmony.

Our annual luncheon was held in the Lopeland's Hotel Donaghadee, Co Down on March 5th and proved to be most successful. The food was delicious and the attendance excellent.

On May 12th we held our yearly Wine and Cheese party in Government House, Hillsborough. All who attended were full of praise for the surroundings and also the wide selection of cheese dips and patés, and the excellent wines. We were delighted that Major Linda Ganter WRAC found time to be present on both occasions. We are pleased to report that we were able to add £255 to our funds.

We have been invited to several functions run by the WRAC which many members of our branch were able to attend.

Our AGM will be held in the Royal British Legion Hall, Bangor, Co Down on Saturday, November 19th at 2.30 pm.

We are sorry to say goodbye to our Chairman, Mrs Elizabeth Buckley, who is moving to Sidmouth, South Devon and send our best wishes with her.

YORK With the help of the Harrogate branch secretary a number of members living in and around York were brought together at the Northern Reunion at Harrogate last October, and it was decided to try to re-establish the York Branch. Permission from Council to do this was received in January, and we are pleased to report that we are now 40 strong, of varying ages, one of whom is the Chairman of Council Colonel F M Cook (Retd). Serving members also attend our meetings which are held in the club room of the RAF Association through the good offices of some of our members whose husbands are ex RAF.

We have arranged a programme for monthly meetings which has included a visit to the local Observer Corps Ops Room, and an invitation to the Social Evening held by Hull branch last month.

Correspondence

Miss G Pearson of the Bournemouth Branch who has been a member of the Association for 54 years writes:-

"Thanks for the memories from the poem by Ian Nesbit in the last Lioness. The formation of the WAAC was suddenly and unexpectedly announced on February 27th 1917. The Ordnance and Signals especially needed women to replace soldiers who were stationed at the bases, and were urgently needed elsewhere.

The influx then took place when the Post Office was asked for female volunteers to join the WAACs and work in France for the duration of the war, staffing Military Signals bases, thus releasing more soldiers. These volunteers were required to be proficient in morse-code, typing, teleprinting, and operating the switchboards. The minimum age was 21. I volunteered and was accepted in October 1917.

Early in 1918, King George V and Queen Mary visited France, the King to review the troops and present Victoria Crosses to the gallant recipients. Queen Mary visited the WAACs, and showed great interest in all the work we were doing.

On April 9th 1918 the Secretary of State for War announced that Her Majesty had been graciously pleased to assume the position and title of Commandant-in-Chief, and that in future we would be called Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps. Following this announcement the English newspapers became interested and wished to take photographs. Orders were published stating that every QMAAC not on duty would parade and take part in a route march. After joining others from various hostels and camps in the vicinity we marched to a small park, where the photographs were taken and published in The Times. We felt very proud."

Mrs B Homer (ex Cpl Lester) of 159E Enville Street, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3TD would like to hear from anyone who served with her at Wilton, Salisbury or Aldershot between July 1941 and April 1946. She was a medical orderly, and is now a member of the Wolverhampton branch.

Mrs G Courtenay-Dunn of "Lucerne", 99 Warbro Road, Babbacombe, Torquay writes that she enjoyed reading the poem about the WAAC in the last Lioness. She was a WAAC and joined early in 1917. She went to France on July 4th that year and was stationed at Wimereux until November 1919 working for the Pay Corps. No one found out that she had joined under-age.

"It was an experience that I am glad I had, and we got as much fun out of it as we could, but it was a bit grim too. I actually worked with WAAC No 1! I was Worker G Hew, No 1073. The poem brought it all back".

Mrs Kathleen Salter of 79 Greenlea Avenue, Yeadon, Yorkshire LS19 7SL wrote that she attended a New Zealand WRAC Reunion at Timaru earlier this year at the invitation of Mrs Barbara Pickering, President of the Christchurch section. Mrs Salter spent three months in New Zealand and brought back good wishes from the British girls at the Reunion to all their friends at home.

Mrs E M Welford (ex Pte Lee) of 18 Trent Gardens, Southgate, London N14 4PY would like to get in touch with anyone who served with 514 (M) HAA Battery in 1942 at Whitby in Yorkshire. She describes the primitive conditions (no baths and intense cold) but adds "but then again we had such wonderful companionship that I wouldn't have missed it for anything". If you remember climbing those 199 steps at Whitby, write to Mrs Welford and you will get a reply.

Mrs Phyllis Linsdell (nee Braund) of 17 Wigginton Road, York writes: I was most interested to read of the retirement of Miss Edna Rimington and the story of the ATS Band, of which I was very proud to be one of the original flute players. I also joined the 6th Surrey Company ATS and played the part of fairy god-mother in one of her pantomimes.

I remember too, being part of a squad that marched at a Tattoo held in Wimbledon in 1939 at which a company of Guards militia men paraded in the very new "columns of three".

Mrs Ena Phillips (nee Graham) of 25 Palmersville, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE12 9HN would like to hear from anyone who went over with the BEF in 1940, especially those who were stationed at Dieppe.

Mrs C E Shirtcliff (nee Clarkson) of 26 Wakefield Road, Staincross, Barnsley S75 6JX would like to hear from anyone who was stationed in Halifax in 1942 at the Duke of Wellington Barracks. She also remembers 207 Battery in Leeds and 225 Battery in Huddersfield. In 1945 she went to Belgium and on to Germany, finally serving at Kolding in Denmark. Does anyone remember the whirlwind which struck their tented camp in Germany?

Miss Betty W Nutt (ex Cpl) of 4 Worfield Gardens, Penn Fields, Wolverhampton, is still in touch with Eileen Scullard, nee Kane, (pay clerk) Pat Crymble, nee Warren, (clerk) and Meg Hill, nee Laing, (despatch rider and driver now living in Australia) who served together in 445 Mixed Heavy AA Battery RA, and would like to hear from any others who served with them.

She joined the Association while serving in the ATS Recruiting Office at Leeds from July 1945 to January 1946, and wonders if any of her colleagues there are still members of the Association – particularly "Bunny" Gray.

Mrs Margaret Heasman (ex-J Comd ATS) was prompted by the retirement of Joan Garwood to write about Elaine Bois, one of the first four Chaplain's Assistants to be appointed during the last war. "They were to be sent to larger units of the ATS such as Training Centres and OCTUs and we were told one would be attached to us at the London District Transit Camp where I was Messing Officer at the time.

I must say we rather wondered what we were in for as she would be a member of our small Mess, though she had her own flat in the neighbourhood.

On the first evening I asked her how we should pronounce her name. Should it be like the English "boys" or would the French word for "wood" be more correct? She answered that we could pronounce it as we liked, but that coming from

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Jersey the latter would be more correct. However, she was quite prepared to answer to anything. Her words were put to the test sooner than anyone expected.

Within a matter of days an inspection was looming up and one of the sergeants suggested she should make cards for all the office doors. To our surprise on the door of the Chaplain's Assistant was written "Miss Boris". Of course this solved all our problems on the pronunciation of her name and Boris she remained to the end of the chapter. I think it says a lot for her that she should have been given and accepted, a nickname so speedily. I often wonder if the nickname continued after she left us.

I was posted soon after, but kept in touch by letter. I think she went to the Windsor OCTU after her stint with us, but she became ill shortly after and was in and out of hospital till her death in 1948. We had been hoping she might be god-mother to our son, but she died shortly after his birth.

I am still reminded of her if sometimes after a tiring day I tumble into bed and find myself repeating a line from a poem she gave me.

Thank you God for my good bed,
For roof unbombed above my head,
And for thy gift, my daily bread."

Mrs Sheila Large (ex Sgt Walford ATS) of 22 Lyndhurst Court, 112 Lyndhurst Road, Hove, Sussex, BN3 6FZ would like to hear from old friends who served in B Coy, HQ Eastern Command, Harpenden 1941-45, and who knew Sgt Alice Klyen, now living in Australia with whom she is still in touch and visited last year.

Ex Chief Commander Helen Nimmo writes:
I was much interested in the article "Now it can be told" in the last issue of "Lioness".

The wearing of tartan skirts by ATS was always a tricky subject. As far as I can remember, it all started with Lady Maud Baillie and Mrs Fraser-Tytler persuading their Territorial Association at Inverness to provide tartan skirts for the ATS attached to the Infantry Training Centres at Cameron Barracks and Fort George, before the outbreak of war. We, with less generous Territorial Army Associations were very envious.

After the war started it became obvious that any ATS member attached to a Highland Regiment was appearing in a tartan skirt. Then, with postings all over the country, tartan skirts popped up everywhere. I got my original one (sanctioned by the Colonel of the Regiment) when at No 5 ATS Training Centre, Cameron Barracks. We all bought them from a little tailor just over the bridge at Inverness. The War Office did not like it at all, but eventually had to admit defeat and ordered that tartan skirts were only to be worn "off duty".

Apropos Lady Maud's precious tartan skirt in your article, there is a scandalous story, which I believe to be true, that Lady Maud, when DDATS, London District, was instructed by the ATS at the War Office, to attend a "Wings for Victory" parade. A note was added that she was to wear a khaki skirt. This drew forth the reply "The Lady Maud Baillie will wear her tartan skirt or her knickers, and she does not mind which".

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Ex-Chief Commander Helen Nimmo started her career with the Stirling Territorial Association before the war and was Senior Commander Stirling & Argyll Group. Later she became Commandant of No 11 ATS Training Centre, Newbattle Abbey until they moved in 1945 to Honiton.

MARRIAGE

D'Orton Gibson - Haddon. At St Philip's and St Jacob's Church, Bristol on June 18th 1983, Lt D D'Orton Gibson 3 RTR to Lt G E Haddon WRAC.

SILVER WEDDING

Mitchell - Williamson. On 1st February 1958 at St George's Garrison Church Singapore, Captain Audrey Williamson WRAC to Major Brian Mitchell RASC.

Present address: Colonel Brian Mitchell MBE
Bursar Penchos College, Colwyn Bay
Clwyd LL28 4TU.

OBITUARY

Ayshford-Sandford. Miss Honora Ayshford-Sandford of Broadway, Worcs on 23 February 1983. ATS. Former President of the Cheltenham Branch.

Batten. Mrs Joanne C Batten (nee Lowe) of Sudbury, Suffolk on 28 February 1983. ATS.

Bruce. Miss Edna M Bruce BEM of Liverpool on 15 January 1983. ATS.

Burden. Mrs Elsie K Burden (nee Bashford) of Norwich on 27 March 1983. WAAC attached to Royal Flying Corps. Served at Lille, Ypres and Rouen.

Copleston. Mrs Ada E Copleston MBE (nee Francis) on 29 March 1983. Deputy Administrator QMAAC. Served at Vendroux, Calais and Abbeville.

Dunn. Mrs Jean M M Dunn (nee Elliott) of Plymouth. WRAC.

Durndell. Miss Irene E Durndell of Brighton on 2 May 1983. ATS. Secretary of Brighton Branch for 27 years.

Ellis. Mrs Olive Ellis of Bramley, Leeds in March 1983. QMAAC.

Evans. Mrs G E L Evans (nee Squires) of Chatham, Kent on 29 November 1982. ATS.

Foulkes. Miss N C Foulkes of Tarporley, Cheshire on 12 September 1982. ATS.

Frith. Miss Margery Frith of West Ewell, Surrey on 25 January 1983. ATS.

Gentle. Miss Eveline M Gentle of Darleydale, Derbyshire on 20 May 1983. ATS.

Gledhill. Mrs Elizabeth Gledhill (nee Skimmines).

Harris. Miss Hilda Harris of Bristol, late of Trowbridge on 24 June 1983. Sgt ATS 1939-45.

Hackney. Mrs Mary B Hackney (nee Armstrong) of Dumfries on 16 March 1983. ATS.

Hartley. Mrs J Hartley (nee Wilson) of Forfar, Angus in February 1983. ATS.

Honnor. Mrs Hilda D Honnor of Bracknell, Berkshire on 7 November 1982. ATS.

Hulme. Mrs M I Hulme (nee Harvey) of Liverpool on 4 January 1983. ATS.

Leslie. Mrs Lilian Leslie of Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex on 14 February 1983. ATS.

Marrison. Corporal Elaine Marrison on 14 February 1983 as the result of a road traffic accident while serving in Northern Ireland. WRAC.

Marshall. Miss K Marshall of Eastbourne, Sussex on 6 April 1982. QMAAC. Served at Le Havre and Harfleur.

Maconochie. Miss Alice C Maconochie of Wester Ross on 30 June 1983. Chief Commander ATS.

McCullough. Mrs P L McCullough (nee Juleff) of Plymouth. ATS.

Mitchell. Miss Agnes Mitchell MBE of Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire on 14 December 1982. ATS.

Newman. Mrs Christine Newman (nee Sowerby) of Carlisle. WRAC.

Nicoll. Miss Mildred L Nicoll MBE of Croydon, Surrey on 12 January 1983. Senior Commander ATS.

Pleister. Miss E M J Pleister of Cambridge on 23 August 1982. WAAC and QMAAC.

Renner. Miss H Renner of Matlock, Derbyshire on 21 August 1982.

Ritchie. Mrs Edith M Ritchie (nee Scarratt) of Southwick, Sussex. QMAAC.

Robinson. Mrs Vivian K Robinson MBE (nee Hoey) of Guildford, Surrey on 15 January 1983. Senior Commander ATS. Wife of Colonel "Robbie" Robinson who was MO at the WRAC Centre from 1967 - 1981.

Rowbotham. Mrs L Rowbotham of Glasgow in December 1982. ATS.

Truscott. Miss P M Truscott of Plymouth on 7 May 1983. ATS and WRAC.

Verrall. Miss L E Verrall BEM of Brighton. ATS and WRAC.

Wise. Miss Doris Wise of Hull on 29 December 1982. ATS.

Wood. Miss Avril Wood, daughter of Sir Henry Wood, on 10 May 1983. Junior Commander ATS 1939 - 1945.

TRIBUTES

Miss Mildred Nicoll MBE

It is with much sadness that we record the death on January 12th 1983 of Mildred Nicoll MBE. Mildred joined the ATS in 1939 and served until 1946 with War Office Ordnance Directorate, retiring as Senior Commander. She was a long time member of the Greater London Branch of the WRAC Association and of the ATS Dinner Club, serving as Chairman for the last three years of her life.

She worked for, and was a great supporter of the Guide movement and gave her time, even when she herself was suffering from a terminal illness, to encouraging and helping disabled members of her Church.

She will be widely remembered for her staunchness, her wry humour and, above all, her kindness, and she will be greatly missed.

J C-J

WO1 Lucy Verrall BEM

All who served with Lucy Verrall during and after the last war will be sad to read of her death on June 2nd in Brighton.

Lucy joined the ATS in 1940 and served for 28 years, mainly in catering. She was Chief Instructor of the Cookery Instruction Centre at the WRAC Centre, Guildford during the 1950s and 1960s, and her last posting was to the Officers Mess at the WRAC Centre. At the end of her 28 years' service she returned home to Brighton and continued her catering career as a civilian at Preston Barracks, Brighton.

Lucy was a loyal member of the Association and will be missed by many friends in her own and other branches.

JA
EW
LM
MC

The members of the 10th Cumberland ATS Company formed at Whitehaven in January 1939 have heard with deep regret of the passing of their CSM, ex W/3682 WO2 A Mitchell.

From pre-war days until Miss Mitchell was posted to the Middle East, her Whitehaven girls had a very real friend in their CSM to give them help and advice when most needed. They have lost a very special friend.

Miss Mitchell's concern for the welfare of young women continued after the war in her work in the prison service. Her last appointment was as Governor of an open Borstal near Maidstone, and she received the MBE for her services.

MB

LONDON GAZETTE

PROMOTIONS

Regular Army

Colonels: N R Robertson MBE, S P Richards

Lieutenant Colonel: C A Marriott

Captains: L E Finch, E A Sperry, S L Bruce,
J R Dixon, C Nicholls

Short Service Commissions

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K M Collinson, D McLeod, S M Gale,
C Woodcock, E K Jackson, L A Mackinnon,
C P Kinsman, K A Ibbotson

Lieutenants: P M F Fincham, C D King,
A S Hatherell, S M Kirkham, J K Spence,
C Ronan, R Archer, R J Gollidge,
J Oakley, C A V Aitchison, F J Blood,
B J Collin, J L Cox, J M Dunn, J A Heap,
A Jones, S E Morris, D E Rice, P F Wright,
F J Gibson, K J Luney, A Humphreys,
C C McLaughlin, D E Smith, S Peters,
C S Johnson, A H Firth, J F Harper

2 Lieutenants: J A Simons, W L Bobbitt,
L J Parton, J A Sloan, P L Smith,
J M Venables

RETIREMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Regular Army

Majors: S L Williams BEM, J M Perry,
K J Dyer, C M Gould
Captains: S P L McCullough, Y M T Dutton

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SGT DENNIS ALDER Royal Signals, would like to hear from anyone who knew Sgt Anson ATS who served at G Branch, HQ East Riding & Lancs District, Hickleton Hall, Doncaster, 1943-44. Please contact Mr D Alder, 120 Crabtree Lane, Lancing, Sussex BN15 9PW.

JAMIESON, Mary. Born Menstrie, Scotland 1891. Died 1949. Granddaughter seeks information on period 1914-1918. Forewoman attached Artists Rifles, served N France. Women's Movement London/Warwick. Reply A M Bennett, 70A Honor Oak Park, London SE23 1DY.

PERSONAL COLUMN

PERSONAL COLUMN CHARGES — 4 lines £2.00, additional lines 60p each. Non members 50% extra. Write to the Editor at Corps HQ.

AUTHOR would be pleased to hear from ex-ATS Intercept Operators or anyone associated with Bletchley Park, including out stations during the last war for book to be called "Ladies in the Park". Please write to: Eric N Rhodes, 18B Arlington House, All Saints Avenue, Margate Kent CT9 1XS.

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LETTERS FROM THE FRONT Annette Tapert, 8 Glebe Place, London SW3, is compiling an anthology of letters written home from battlefields from 1914 to present day. The project has been accepted by a publisher. All letters will be treated with respect and returned.

Author writing biography of Miss Aileen (or Aleen) Isabel Cust (1868-1937), the first British woman to become a veterinary surgeon, seeks information covering the period 1900-1919. Miss Cust worked unofficially for the Remount Service from 1914-1918, going to France in 1915 under the auspices of the YMCA, and from 1917-18 in the bacteriological laboratory of the Army Veterinary Corps. From February 1918 until the end of the war, she served as a Unit Administrator in the QMAAC.

Please contact Miss C M Ford MBE MRCVS, 49 Rivermead, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7RD who will travel anywhere in the British Isles to meet anyone who knew Miss Cust during this period.

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