

2001

No. 1

LIONESS

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THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 206184

Founded in 1919

PATRON

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER

PRESIDENT

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF KENT GCVO

VICE-PRESIDENT

Brigadier S P Nield, CBE

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Cover Photographs

Front Cover

HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

Back Cover

The 100th Birthday Celebration Parade
on Horse Guards

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EDITORIAL

It seems hardly possible that another 6 months has flown by since the last Lioness went to press. So much has happened. There are even more changes at HQ. Ruth Watt has left us to accompany her husband on his posting to Canada and Angie Davey, the Chief Clerk, has gone with her husband to Scotland. We welcome Derek Dallamore as the new Case Secretary. He has joined us from the Royal Naval Benevolent Fund where he was the Case Secretary for some 13 years. We also welcome Rosie Mills as the new Chief Clerk.

There has been cause for great celebration with the 100th Birthday of our Patron, HM The Queen Mother. You will find pictures and accounts of the wonderful parade at Horseguards in this edition of the journal. It has also been a time of great sadness for the Association, with the untimely death of Brigadier Helen Meechie in August. Our sincere condolences go to her family and friends and also our thanks to those who have kindly given us permission to share with you the words they spoke at her funeral.

From everyone here at HQ, we wish you all a prosperous and happy 2001!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On behalf of Brigadier Helen Meechie's family and friends, very sincere thanks are due to everyone for their kindness and thoughtfulness following her untimely death. Your telephone calls, letters of condolence and cards were a source of much comfort. At such a time, the sympathy and affection of friends means so much. Our thanks also go to those who contributed most generously, in Helen's memory, to the WRAC Benevolent Fund and to the Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) Association.

Lt Col V E Trout

LETTER FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Dear Members,

As I write, floods are returning to many areas of the country and the unremitting rain of 2000 seems to be set to continue. I do hope that you all managed to avoid the worst of the weather and its effects and had a really good Christmas. I hope also that you are, as I am, looking forward to a happier and drier New Year and indeed new millennium.

I have very much enjoyed meeting so many of you this year. I remember with real pleasure my luncheon in Colchester with Eastern Area, the outstanding week-end celebration with a lot of old colleagues also known as the rogues of the WRAC Luncheon Club in Stafford and a really excellent Christmas Luncheon with the Norfolk and Suffolk members in Great Yarmouth. I know we are all getting older and, no doubt, increasingly bothered by the ills which this brings, but my word, how marvellous to see you all in such good health and high spirits. Long may it continue.

It has been marvellous to hear some of your stories of Service life as it was and I believe in many ways it still is. As I know I have already said to many of you, I would like us to

celebrate our achievements and share our experiences through the pages of the Lioness. I have chosen a date 6 June 1944 D-day.

I must admit I can remember little about it. I was 8 years old, still tramping off daily to Junior School. My life was unusually uncertain and disrupted at that time; my mother was in hospital. As we all know, on that day the invasion of Europe by Allied Forces was successfully launched. I was dimly aware that something momentous had happened by the atmosphere surrounding the adults around me but had no idea what it was. Two days later my brother was born and I suppose I thought that momentous enough to account for the excitement!

Where were you? What were you doing? Who were you with? How did you feel? Do send us just a few paragraphs on your experience that so very important day in the history of our country. We will put together a mosaic of what we as an association contributed to the 'beginning of the end' of the war.

Shirley P Nield

Articles of Interest

THE REUNION OF MRS CONNIE DEAKIN née SUTTON AND HER FRIEND MRS EDNA GOBLE née BOXALL

Mrs C E Deakin, Broadle Close, Christchurch,
Dorset BH23 3QP

Edna Boxall and I, Connie Sutton decided to join up in 1941 and first met at the Droitwich Spa Hotel. From there we went to Blandford Camp where we were drilled, taught to keep our uniforms smart and trained to use the instruments that direct the guns to fire, - yes, we were Ack Ack girls and belonged to 504 Battery. I met a Lance Bombardier from a searchlight site at Blandford and soon became engaged to him. Edna was engaged to a soldier who was a POW, so we were content to go around together. Eighteen months later Les and I were married and I returned to the gunsite at Scunthorpe and he went back to the searchlight in deepest Dorset. He was just able to see our daughter before he went overseas. He didn't see her again until she was 18 months old and he was demobbed. Meanwhile, Edna and I had lost touch.

Many years later Edna invited two Ex ATS girls to her farm in Surrey. While looking through all the old photos, one of the girls realised she had seen one of them before. It was a photograph of my wedding, but where had she seen it? As Edna pointed out, I had left the battery before she had arrived. Then she remembered. She had seen the photo at Norton Conyers where a friend of hers had been a lady's maid and my sister-in-law had been the housekeeper. A letter was sent to Lady Graham at Norton Conyers who kindly wrote to my sister-in-law saying that Edna would like to hear from me. When I received this message I was dumfounded and to make sure that it was the same Edna I sent her a couple of photographs taken at Blandford and yes, we were the same Edna and Connie who last saw each other 40 years ago. Les took me to see Edna and we recognised one another at once.

Edna's fiancé had died just before the end of the war, but she later married and has a son and three grandchildren, although sadly she is now a widow. Les and I had fifty happy years together until he died six and half years ago. So Edna and I are company for each other again now. We are still the best of friends, visit one another, go on holidays together and just enjoy each other's company.



Taken at Hengistbury Head, Southbourne, Dorset

FORGOTTEN HEROINES

(The Women's Army are getting ready for another fight)
Steve Carroll

This article was first published in the South Shields edition of "The Herald & Post" who have kindly given permission for us to reprint it. The reporter is Shirley Smith's grandson.



Sunderland Secretary - Mrs. Shirley Smith

Women who gave their lives for their country during the wars have been forgotten, according to a local gran.

Ex-servicewoman Shirley Smith is fighting for the names of women who were killed during conflict to be added to war memorials.

The Herald & Post can reveal that although many women who served in the forces gave their lives to help Britain's war efforts in 1914 and 1939, very few have their names included on war memorials.

And Shirley has decided it is time women were properly rewarded for making the ultimate sacrifice.

Shirley, 66, from West Boldon, is behind a campaign to see the name of every woman killed during conflict to be inscribed onto war memorials.

Shirley said: "I am the secretary of the Sunderland branch of the Women's Royal Army Corps.

At our annual meeting, we discovered it was very rare for women to appear on war memorials.

I have made enquiries and have found that, in this region, women only appear on memorials in Washington, Stanhope and Tynemouth.

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There are no women on the war memorial in Boldon and, as far as I am aware, this is the same throughout South Tyneside. Nobody seems to know why this is and in my view women did as much to help in the war as the men.

We can't go and chisel the names on ourselves, but if we kick up a fuss, something might be done about it.

Women took part just as much as men and it is time they received the same recognition.

It is an issue which seems to have slipped everybody by. Now we will organise a petition and will be contacting MPs to see if we can get something done. I would like to think we will succeed".

The campaign was backed by Billy Tee, secretary of the South Shields branch of the Royal British Legion.

He said: "My branch would welcome the addition of women's names to the war memorials. They did a great deal to help the country's war effort and should be rewarded".

And a spokesperson for the council added: "We can add to memorials if we are approached through the correct channels and it is agreed by members. If this group wishes to add any additional names then they should contact their local councillor or write to the council".

VISIT OF CHELMSFORD BRANCH TO THE VIOLETTE SZABO GC MUSEUM Gina Shadrack



*Chelmsford Branch visit the Violette Szabo Museum
28 June 2000*

Last June some members of the Chelmsford Branch were on a group holiday near Hereford. During this time we became aware that a small museum to honour the memory of Violette Szabo GC had been opened only a few days earlier.

Violette was originally a member of the ATS. She spoke fluent French as she was half French, half English. With this valuable quality she was selected to serve with the exclusive Special Operations Executive, becoming a Secret Agent, working with the French Resistance despite having a young daughter. During her last special mission into France, in an effort to save others, she was captured by the Germans. Despite being tortured both physically and mentally, she maintained her silence and was subsequently shot and her body incinerated. For her outstanding courage and bravery she was awarded the George Cross.

Her story was recounted in the book and film "Carve Her Name With Pride" in which her part was played by Virginia McKenna.

As we arrived on our visit we were greeted by the founder of the museum Miss Rosemary Rigby MBE. She explained that the official opening on 24 June brought many hundreds of people from all over the world. Both Violette's daughter, Tania, and Virginia McKenna took part in the celebration.

The creation of such a place is due solely to the dedication and determination of Miss Rigby, who has made available a permanent and unique collection of artefacts in memory of a woman who showed outstanding courage in giving her life for her country. Miss Rigby, who has spent years in tracing documents, photographs and other information, now lives in the house that used to belong to Violette's aunt in Wormelow, Herefordshire. As a child, Violette spent many summer holidays at "Cartref". It is understood she was "full of life" as a child and, probably, a bit of a tomboy.

We returned to our hotel overwhelmed by what we had learnt. It was impossible not to have been affected by what we had seen and we felt emotional, proud to have been in the ATS and a keen desire to share this experience with others which is why this article has been written.

The museum is now supported entirely by voluntary contributions. It maybe that another branch may like to visit here or to support the continuing work through a project. It is also possible to become a "Friend of the Museum". There is no admission charge so donations are appreciated. It is open on Wednesdays from April until October and other times by appointment. Information can be obtained from Miss R Rigby MBE, "Cartref", Wormelow, Hereford, HR2 8HN. Tel 01981 - 540477.

*Violette Szabo GC
26 June 1921 - January 1945*

*The life that I have is all that I have
And the life that I have is yours
The love that I have of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours
A sleep I shall have, a rest I shall have
Yet death will be but a pause
For the peace of my years in the long green grass
Will be yours and yours and yours*

(Attributable to Leo Marks, Code Master of the SOE)

THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY ARMY CORPS (POSTAL) IN BEF 1917-19, ROYAL ENGINEER'S MUSEUM

Simon Fenwick

"Without Women, victory will tarry"

Lloyd George – Prime Minister 1916

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A new permanent exhibition at the Royal Engineer's Museum, Chatham has just been opened to display the activities of the Royal Engineers (Postal Section) during the First World War. The display also highlights the work carried out by the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), who were attached to RE (PS) units in France.

The General Post Office (GPO) was one of the first government departments to employ women, there are records going back to the mid-eighteenth century of women being appointed as Postmistresses. For instance, in 1747 Elizabeth York was appointed Postmistress of Darlington, on the Great North Road, a position she held for thirteen years. At the same time women also acted as 'postboys' and in Wales rode the post from one stage to another. After the nationalisation of the telegraph companies, in 1870, the GPO began to employ a large number of women to work as telegraphists, and they were also employed as postal sorters and clerks. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that by 1885, women made up 20% of the total staff of the GPO, which was the largest body of civil servants in the country consisting of nearly 100,000 persons.

During the First World War the Royal Engineers (Postal Section), under the command of Brigadier General William Price CB, CMG, CBE, VD and Brigadier General Sir Frederic H Williamson CB, CBE, was responsible for the handling of all the British Army's mail. The Royal Navy had their own mail facilities and arrangements. The mail was centralised on the Home Postal Depot (HPD), which consisted of Army Letter Office (ALO) established in the GPO London premises of Mount Pleasant and the King Edward Building. Over five hundred GPO female staff, under the close supervision of Miss E M Permain and Miss D Deane, sorted the Army's letters in those respective buildings. By 1915 the mail volume had out grown the storage capacity of both Mount Pleasant and King Edward Building so a large wooden building, reputed to be the largest wooden structure in the world, was erected in Regent's Park to accommodate the sorting of parcels, and again women were employed there in sorting and clerical capacities. The women in the Army Parcel Office were under the supervision of Miss E A Langham, a bespectacled woman who wore a locket about her neck, in the fashion of a choker.

In the Army Letter Offices, the women sat in rows in front of wooden sorting frames, sorting letters. Mail was initially sorted into unit type, ie cavalry, infantry, Royal Engineers etc and then into individual units (eg 204 Company RE), because it was discovered that this was the most efficient and effective way to ensure a good mail service was maintained to the various fronts in France, Gallipoli, Serbia, Italy, Egypt, Salonica, Russia, Cameroons, East Africa and Mesopotamia. The transit time for letters from the UK to the Western Front was between 12 hours and three days depending on where the unit was located. The transit times for the other fronts were governed by the distance travelled, much of it went by sea, although there were military mail rail routes that ran from the north to the south of France and into Italy for troops serving in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean areas.

At the Home Postal Depot the women were also employed in the returned letter office (RLO), the registered letter enclosure and damaged parcel department. The staff who

worked in the RLO were some of the first persons in Britain to be aware of the horrendous casualties suffered during the battle of the Somme in July 1916, the reason being that a large amount of undeliverable mail was being returned to the RLO. Indeed the situation was so serious that the government, who were concerned that the knowledge of this slaughter would damage home morale should it become publicly known, instructed that the members of the RLO were under no account to tell anyone about their work.

Towards the end of the war, to free men for active service, women took over the arduous task of loading and unloading the mail trains at the London stations of Victoria, Charing Cross and Cannon Street. They were responsible for handling approximately 9,000 bags a day, at an average bag weight of 55 lbs (25 kg). The mail trains travelled between the London stations and the embarkation ports of Southampton and Folkestone.

By 1917 the war of attrition in Europe was beginning to tell and there were severe shortages of able-bodied men to fight in the front line units. To address this short fall, there was a constant trawl of all units for fit men to transfer to combat units. The Royal Engineers (Postal Section) like other logistic units were not exempted from this trawling process, and therefore they lost men to the front line units and in turn found themselves under pressure. To cover for the loss of these men, it was decided that women should fill their places. The matter was taken up with the Postmaster General, Lord Illingworth, and a notice was posted in the *Post Office Circular* inviting Temporary Female Sorters, Temporary Sorting Clerks, and Sub-Office Assistants between the ages 20 and 40 with at least four months' service with the GPO to sign up for an engagement with the WAAC to serve with the Army Postal Service in France for twelve months or the duration of the war, whichever was the longer.



*GPO Staff in The Broken Parcels Office,
Army Parcel Office, Regent's Park, London, 1917*

Those who volunteered were given some postal training at the Home Depot, Regent's Park, London, which also included elementary instruction in hygiene and discipline – ie 'bull' and 'square bashing'. The first draft of Postal WAACs arrived in France in May 1917 and they were employed in the rear area stationary Army Post Offices and the Base Army Post Offices (BAPO) at Le Havre, Bologne and Calais. They wore WAAC uniform, a dark khaki dress, stockings, shoes and hat, or a WAAC tunic and long skirt, with a shirt and tie worn under the tunic and a brimmed hat as head dress, they were given an annual uniform purchase allowance of £4, as well as an extra £1.10s on enrolment to buy a greatcoat. Looking closely at the photographs of the

Postal WAAC it is clear that they did not wear the RE Bomb on the left breast of their tunic as their successors the ATS and WRAC women did. On their arrival in France, it was found that they required extra postal training, for the majority of them were young women who had only worked with the GPO for a short period of time. This lack of experience is easy to understand if you consider that the most likely recruits were the younger women who were unmarried and therefore had no domestic commitments in England, while the more experienced women were more likely to be older, married and have other commitments. But it should be noted that women who had husbands serving in France were not eligible to volunteer.

Working in a stationary Army Post Office (APO) in France came as a shock to many of the WAAC, who arrived under the impression that their duties would be similar to those, carried out in the GPO, back home. This is well illustrated in an extract from an article in *The Postal Dump* (the HPD Newsletter dated 1918) written by a woman known by the initials 'JH' who states: "Imagine our horror and surprise to find ourselves put to work in an ordinary post office, where all had to speedily learn the intricacies of selling and cashing postal orders, weighing parcels, accepting cables, and all the ins and outs of the routine life of a civil office at home, plus the difficulties of [currency] exchange and the complications of censorship". The women worked long hours, from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. "balances and Boche permitting". Even in these rear areas they were not excluded from the dangers experienced by their front line colleagues-in-arms, for the rear areas often came under attack from long range artillery and German bombers, so when the "Tocsin" the early warning siren, sounded they had to evacuate their APO. Before seeking shelter in the cellars or trenches however, they had to secure their stock, cash and date stamps – the loss of which in postal circles was a cardinal offence. For their work and the dangers they endured, they were paid a wage of 30s a week, plus a bonus of 13s a quarter, this pay was to cover all work whether over weekdays or Sundays. A deduction of 14s per week was made for their board, lodging and washing, but, while they were abroad they were entitled to free medical care, a considerable benefit when there were no free medical services available back in Britain. To allow them to recuperate from the rigors of work, they were entitled to a fortnight's leave per annum, and were granted free passage to and from France to take up their leave entitlement.

In France the women were accommodated in a variety of billets, which could range from houses with their own grounds to "barrel-shaped huts" (nissen huts), within a special compound in an established Army Camp. Care was taken to closely supervise and keep the women segregated from the men. This was much to JH's disappointment, who commented that "the life of the WAAC overseas is inclined to be too disciplined to suit the modern independent Englishwoman, who feels capable of looking after herself and is, in consequence, opposed to too much red tape." However, in spite of the red tape, the Postal WAACs seemed to have made the most of what little opportunities there were to fraternise with the men. Another member of the WAAC, writing in *The Postal Dump*, under the initials 'CNP', who served at an APO in Dieppe tells a tale of how after an 'All Clear' was sounded, which they did not hear "owing to the shrieks of the wounded", they continued with the impromptu party that had evolved during the air-raid. The party, which was held in the cellars of the APO, (their make shift air raid shelter) was attended by both the male and female APO staff. The entertainment consisted of "dances by WAACs,

songs of all sorts from venerable antiquities like 'Nirvana' to 'Where the Black-eyed Susans Grow', to recitations of 'Dangerous Dan McGrew and the Lady That's Known as Lou,'" – all innocent fun no doubt.

Regardless of the title, the WAAC, was not in fact a part of the British Army but was a civilian organisation, for there was deep suspicion about the employment of women in areas that were considered by the men as being very much their own domain. The WAAC Chief Controller, Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, encountered great difficulties in removing that prejudice. The WAAC were not allowed to have officers, in spite of the fact that a management structure was required to administer the women. Female Unit Administrators were appointed in their stead. 'CNP' writes that her Unit Administrator was called Theodosia Thomas (I suspect that her name was changed) and looked "manly", confirming the predilection of a few young women to view those in authority over them as some form of ogress. On 9 April 1918, as a mark of appreciation for the good services rendered by the WAAC both at home and abroad, Queen Mary assumed the position and title of Commander-in-Chief of the Corps, which thereafter bore the name Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC).

The war ended on 11 November 1918 and some of the Postal members of the QMAAC stayed on in France to help provide mail services to the troops who were left to clear the battle fields. The last of the Postal QMAAC were demobilised just before 25 December 1919. In an unpublished history of the *Army Postal Services (BEF) 1914-1919*, contained in the PCS archives of the Royal Engineers Museum, there is a simple tribute to the women of the QMAAC – it is: "They showed considerable aptitude for the work and with increasing experience they rendered most valuable service".

If you would like to see more of the work of the WAAC and Royal Engineers (Postal Section) during the First World War, please come and visit the Royal Engineers Museum at Brompton Barracks, Chatham, Kent. It is open every Saturday through to Thursday 1000-1600 hrs. There is a small admittance fee of £3.50 per adult and a concessionary fee of £2.00. We are currently planning an exhibition of the military mail services of the Second World War, which will include the work of the Postal ATS, and which we hope to open by 2002.

Email: fenwicksc@aol.com

LETTER TO ALL RANKS OF THE AUXILIARY TERRITORIAL SERVICE from CHIEF CONTROLLER L E WHATELEY, CBE

In February 1945 Chief Controller Whateley wrote a letter to all ATS servicewomen. Phyll Harvey received her copy in her Release Document presented on demob at a holding unit in Paddington. She had just disembarked off a troop ship from The Middle East. Did anyone else keep their copy? As she says "it really says it all!"

PLEASE read this as you would a letter knowing that the message it contains is meant for you personally. My one regret is that I cannot say it to you, but after fifteen months as your Director I now realize that, in spite of every effort on my part and touring continuously, the ATS now being so large and serving such a vast area – the whole of Great Britain, the Middle East, East Africa, Italy, Belgium, France, the North and South Caribbean and the United States of

America – it is a physical impossibility to fulfil my wish to visit and speak to you all for some time to come.

Do you realise what a magnificent contribution you have made and are making to the war effort and how much you have helped to build up the name the ATS has now earned? I realize that we have not achieved this good name without some of the "blood, toil, tears and sweat" of which our Prime Minister, Mr Churchill, warned us in 1940, for the task of women in uniform is made just that much more difficult by the constant call of home as well as the call of service, which really means our National Home. For five and a half years this struggle has gone on and the fact that the ATS is now as strong as it is and so vital to the Army and to the winning of the war, shows that you have never failed to know where your duty lay and there is, in my opinion, no praise too high for your efforts and the sacrifices you have made.

Recently our Service has been brought into the limelight a good deal over posting overseas. I think, therefore, there are certain facts which it may help you to have in writing.

First, many of you volunteered some time ago and have not yet been sent simply because demands in your particular trade or employment have not yet been sufficiently great. Second, when your age and service group becomes due for release to civil life, you will be released whether you are in this country of overseas. Third, if you are married you will not be ordered overseas unless you wish to volunteer. Fourth, if you are single and have genuine compassionate grounds for remaining at home, again you will not be ordered overseas. Fifth, in spite of compulsion, all volunteers, if in the right trade or employment, will be taken first. Sixth, if you do go overseas, in addition to your direct contribution to the war effort, you may be the one to enable a soldier (between the ages of 35 and 45) who has served abroad for five or six years, to return to this country. A soldier who has been separated from his family for so long cannot be repatriated until someone else is available to replace him.

The chief criticism from the public and a very few members of the ATS, at the decision in the House of Commons to post ATS overseas compulsorily, has been the fact that "young fit men are still in this country". If this criticism has been or is made to you, tell them "all is not gold that glitters", and we cannot judge by outward appearances only; we do not know how many of these men may not already be earmarked for service in the Far East or even home on leave from Burma. Finally, you can point out that you are trained in your job, and would they prolong this war by the months it would take to train the men, even if they were available to answer the calls Field-Marshal Alexander and Montgomery and the other great soldier leaders of overseas theatres of war have made for ATS. You may safely take it from me that the military authorities are very vigilant on this point. Continuous efforts have been and will continue to be made to utilize every fit man to the best advantage, and it must be remembered that some fit men *must* be retained at home. For instance, you cannot use a weakling as a Battle School instructor! But, surely, the short answer is to leave matters of this kind to those who know *all* the facts and are therefore the only ones in a position to decide them. The recent official account of Britain's war effort shows that no country – Allied or enemy – has succeeded in mobilizing her entire population to better advantage than we have.

You in the ATS undertook to serve your country wherever you might be needed and up to date you have done so magnificently, and will continue to do so until the end, and I

as your leader take this opportunity to say a very sincere "Well done" and "Thank you".

When the war in Europe is finished we must not forget the thousands of our fellow-countrymen who will be fighting in the Far East and indeed making the supreme sacrifice that you and I may live. We must not forget, either, as we are all inclined to do, the horrors and sufferings we have been spared compared to the peoples in occupied countries, thousands of whom have been separated from those they love for over five years and in many cases not even known whether they were alive. The sacrifice we may be asked to make in serving overseas for a limited time cannot be compared with those people's.

Many of you will marry and bring children into the world, and we are not going to have it laid at our door that for want of a little more unselfishness on our part now our children or our husbands might have to go through the horrors of another war which with modern science will be far worse than even this one. Selfishness has brought us into this war and only unselfishness on the part of us all can bring a lasting peace.

I have implicit faith in you all and know you will not fail in the last lap of the race. You and I know that our belief is contained in the words of Drake's prayer before the Battle of Cadiz:

O LORD GOD, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory.

Director, Auxiliary Territorial Service

THE WAR OFFICE
February, 1945

**ASSOCIATION MEMBERS GO BACK TO BASICS AT
THE ARMY TRAINING REGIMENT (WINCHESTER)**
WO2 Karen Baxter AGC(SPS) – CSM B Coy

It was a lovely hot summer's day at the ATR, just the right weather for another Pass Off Parade, but this time, one which I would not be participating in. Instead, WO2 Dave Taylor AAC (CSM HQ Coy) and I would be hosting 14 lovely ladies from the WRAC Association for the day in the absence of WO1 Andrea Denham (2 I/C HQ Coy) who was away on yet another course. (She seems to have more time off than Clint Eastwood's safety catch!!)

The ladies arrived at Winchester station on Friday 30 June 2000 from various parts of the UK and were collected by delectable Dave. I met them as they arrived at the WOs and Sgts' Mess and introduced them to WO1 (RSM) Lewis AAC. Tea, coffee and toast were in plentiful supply. We sat around chatting about days gone by and had some very interesting conversations. Looking at the smile on Dave's face, he enjoyed it too.

We had seats reserved on the front row for the ATS and WRAC ladies. The Pass Off Parade went very well. The inspecting officer was Lt Col Anthill LI and he was here to witness the passing out of 3, 6 and 12 Platoon before they went off to join their Phase 2 units. Afterwards the inspecting officer and the CO, Lt Col Morgan AGC(SPS) came across and chatted to them. "It brought back some wonderful memories" some said afterwards and thanked the CO for allowing them to watch this eventful parade.

From there we went to the Church and the ladies had just enough time to have a look around inside the Light Division Chapel before Dave and I escorted them to the Rank and File Restaurant (previously known as the Cookhouse) for lunch. They seemed quite impressed with the standard of food served in today's restaurants and enjoyed their meal. All in all a wonderful lunch and they were well looked after by the RCWO, WO1 Dave Goodwin RLC and his staff.

After lunch it was back to the Mess for tea and coffee. Time for another chat and then, unfortunately, I was called back to work to sort out a minor problem.

Delectable Dave hosted the ladies for the rest of the afternoon and, from speaking to him afterwards, they had a very enjoyable time. So much so that Dave and I received some lovely letters from Winnie Wright and Pat Gibson. Thank you. Hopefully, see you all at the next big Association gathering.



The picture shows myself (I'm the one in combats), Dave and the Association members standing in front of the Sir John Moore statue

"ONE GIRLS WAR"

Mrs Eileen McMurdo née Haywood (W123401)
Original transcript is held at the Imperial War Museum,
and was to be used in the book written by Michael
Moynihan 'People at War 1939 - 1945'

"It seemed as if the entire population of Brussels went mad with excitement as everything just ground to a halt. Work, public transport, everything ceased, as we started to celebrate and it was a celebration that was to last for several days. On the afternoon of VE Day I had arranged to meet some friends at a forces' club at the town centre, but as things turned out I never did keep that date. The trams had already stopped running as I made my way down the Rue de la Roi (sic) and I gladly accepted a lift from some Americans who were passing in an open command car.

"As we drove towards the main shopping centre we were caught up in a slowly moving stream of traffic and were hemmed in by a dense crowd of cheering people. By this time we had gathered several more Allied personnel as passengers, sitting on the radiator and turned-down hood, perching precariously on the spare wheel and bonnet. We were fêted like royalty! The Belgians pelted us with flowers, confetti and paper streamers. Bottles of wine and cognac were thrust into our hands and we drank toasts to everything and everyone as we exchanged our caps for gaily coloured cardboard hats and tooted loudly on an assortment of shrill squeakers.

"We grew hoarse with joining in the yells of 'Vive l'Angleterre!' and 'Vive l'American!' We sang 'Pack Up Your Troubles' and 'Mademoiselle from Armentier' over and over again. We sang 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'The Star Spangled Banner' until our throats were sore. The pent up emotions of all the years of darkness flared up in a surge of joyous celebration.

"By midnight, what with the combined effects of the excitement and the assortment and quantity of drinks, the passengers had dropped off one by one, and the young American Airborne Lieutenant who had been navigating our overloaded vehicle through the crowds for several hours turned off into a less congested side street. He parked the command car and the four of us who remained went in search of something to eat. Most of the cafes and bars were crowded to the doors but we eventually found a small restaurant that was comparatively empty and peaceful.

"As we ate our meal, an accordionist began quietly playing nostalgic continental music, and afterwards, as we sat sipping our drinks, I noticed that the mood of my companions had undergone a change. The last traces of the wild gaiety of the past hours had vanished. Each man seemed to be wrapped in his own thoughts and there was an aura of aloneness about them, a sadness which I felt I could almost put out my hand and touch. I knew that they were remembering not only the victories but the bitter battles, the cold, the dirt, the stench and fear, the bloody disfigurements of wounds and the death of close companions.

"I also went back in memory, back to the bar of a London pub which had once been filled with the laughter of scores of young men of whom so few remained. Suddenly I felt sick of the jubiliations of the past few hours and, thanking the boys for the meal and their company, I slipped through the back streets away from the crowds. I passed a small church. The door was open and through it I could see the warm flickering glow of many small candles. I went inside. The air was warm and heavy with incense and the pews were packed with kneeling people, the silence broken only by the murmur of whispered prayers and the faint click of rosaries. The candles glowed from every corner of the church. I too lit one and, after placing it before one of the many statues of the saints, I knelt for a few moments at the altar rails. My prayers were not only in thanks for victory but in remembrance of the untold thousands who did not live to see it."

We will publish another extract from Mrs McMurdo's Memoirs in a future edition of the Lioness.

VERA SOLDIERS ON

by Jenny Andrews

This article first appeared in the Evening Gazette, Wednesday, September 27, 2000 and is reproduced by kind permission of Newsquest (Essex) Ltd.

"The indomitable spirit of an 83-year-old woman has ensured a forces' group continues to flourish.

Vera Cole, of Shrub End, Colchester, was a co-founder of the Colchester branch of the Women's Royal Army Corps Association in 1986.

But her association with the Army goes back to August 1942 when she enlisted and spent the next 4½ years as a driver stationed in Surrey before leaving with the rank of Corporal.

She still drives today and said: "No-one taught to drive in the Army can be anything other than a good driver."



Vera Cole with the last edition of the Lioness

Of her time in the forces she said: "It made me. There were 82 jobs in the Army a women could do including cooks, orderlies, ack-ack, clerks and even down to mending shoes. It gave us all confidence."

Miss Cole returned to live in Colchester in 1986 to care for her elderly mother and answered a newspaper advertisement calling for ex-servicewomen to form a branch of the Association.

The advertisement had been placed by a Chris Osman and the first meeting, to which 11 people turned up, was in the Trinity Street offices belonging to her husband.

Miss Cole and the late Beryl Wolfe were the first officers and, as the branch began to grow, they had their monthly meetings in a hall at the rear of George Street before moving to their current home at the Castle Methodist Church.

The branch boasts 140 members from a wide area which includes the Tendring peninsula – where there is a 30-strong contingent at Clacton – as well as Colchester, Chelmsford and Bury St Edmunds.

It meets on the second Wednesday of each month and members enjoy a good chat, speakers, outings and each are sent a monthly newsletter, written by Miss Cole and printed at Goojerat Barracks at Colchester Garrison.

Miss Cole said: "We had a lady join us last week. She is aged 80-plus and our subscription is £5 a year or £50 for life. She joined as a life member – that is our spirit."

When she left the services, Miss Cole stayed with her sister whose husband was a prisoner of war – at Eight Ash Green before returning to Croydon where she enrolled on a secretarial course at a Pitman College.

"I started work as a shorthand typist and by the time I retired, I was the company statistician," she said.

She had another love in her life – old time dancing followed by modern and Latin American which she taught in the evenings for the Inner London Education Authority.

"When I retired I taught during the day as well, but then my mother at 90 needed help and I came back to Colchester. I feel I was sent back," she said.

Then came the formation of the branch at which Miss Cole was the first treasurer.

She gradually took over the running of the branch on her own for a long time before headquarters said there had to be other officers.

At one stage the branch had 170 members, but it has been running at 140 for a number of years.

Not all of them turn up at the monthly meetings although all get a copy of the newsletter.

Miss Cole, the ex-corporal, is now branch secretary and says the chairman is an ex-major and the treasurer is an ex-private.

"I have never been happier," she said.

A WONDERFUL WONDERFUL DAY AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM Compiled by Leeds Branch

Those of us who had paid for Trees for a plot at the above Arboretum were invited to a dedication ceremony organised by Vee Robinson. As we set off for Lichfield and Tamworth on Tuesday 27 June we had no idea of the memorable experience in store for us.



The Memorial Stone

Tuesday evening we were to meet at the Naval Officers' Club where we were made most welcome. We received our instructions for Wednesday plus the opportunity to purchase very attractive Red T-Shirts with our Bow and Arrow Command Logo in Black across the front. (These caused lots of interest at York).

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Wednesday 28 June dawned fine and sunny, truly a minor miracle after the wet and windy weather of the past weeks. The coach was on time and we arrived at Alrewas where we were told that two days previously the site had been a quagmire and only a mammoth effort had managed to drain it.

The Service of Dedication was originally planned to take place in the Chapel but high winds had lifted the roof and it was declared unsafe. Being well able to cope with worse calamities we happily formed a half circle around the Memorial Stone for a moving Service of Dedication. We sang hymns unaccompanied, had prayers and readings, the Last Post and Reveille. Vee Robinson was joined by Major General M Steele and The Honourable Dame Mary Soames as she unveiled the beautiful granite Memorial Stone. She then planted a tree as a token of the many, which will eventually grace this plot for years to come. This is to be a lasting reminder to future generations of the part played by the ATS during WW II without which none of them would have the freedom they enjoy. Many tears were shed as we remembered our lost friends.

After numerous photographs, we wandered around the site admiring other plots further advanced than ours, all very moving. Particular interest was paid to the one for the Korean Veterans being created by members of their Association up on the hill side in memory of the Glorious Gloucesters who fought to the last man on a hillside in Korea.

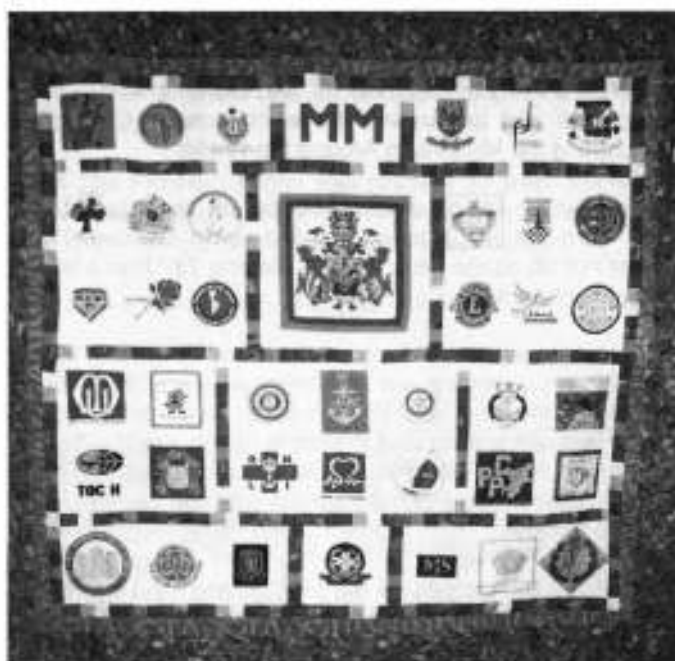
The coach then took us to Alrewas Royal British Legion Club where we were served a substantial lunch which included Spotted Dick for pudding. The Honourable Dame Mary and General Steele queued along with the rest of us and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. After a few drinks we left for Whittington Barracks where they had arranged an exhibition of WW II memorabilia and a video show. We visited the Chapel with the Padre who told us a little of its history and the Regiments associated with the Barracks. There were special plaques for the numerous VCs of these Regiments. We had a photograph taken in front of an old AA Gun after which we were welcomed into the Corporals' Mess for tea served by some of the sergeants. We watched an account of the Dedication Ceremony on the TV, had a few drinks and learned about life in the Army today from the sergeants. To make us really feel at home the Barracks organised a firework display in the form of an air raid complete with siren, we were very touched, a suitable end to a wonderful day.

The National Memorial Arboretum should be open for visitors next year. There will be a visitor centre funded by the Lottery with catering and childrens' play area. Those of you who missed this memorable day, visit the ATS Ack Ack plot as soon as you can, you cannot help but be moved by it. It will be a way of reminding future generations of how much they owe to the ones who kept England free for them.

Thank you Vee for enabling us to be part of a most enjoyable and yet sad day as we relived times which we hope other generations will not have to repeat.

MILLENNIUM QUILTED WALL HANGING

Peg McElwaine



Two and a half years ago Weymouth & Portland Borough Council invited Service and civilian organisations to have their badge or motif included in a Millennium Quilted Wall Hanging. We wanted to be there and we already had an embroidered ATS badge.

Eleven years ago one of our members, Nell Mitchell, died and her daughter found the embroidery in her house and gave it to us. At the time we didn't know what to do with it, so I kept it in tissue paper for when it could be put into something significant. I took it to the quilter who said it was fine, but it had to be sewn onto a standard sized calico square first, so I stitched it on.

The quilt was eventually finished and unveiled by the Mayor. We were pleased to see it on display, with Nell's badge in the bottom right hand corner. A fitting memorial to Nell and the ATS.

"IS THAT SHAKEN OR STIRRED, SIR"

Cpl Shelly Whitehead, Mess Manager,
Lancastrian and Cumbrian Volunteers

Having attended a Mess Stewards' course at Aldershot last year, I was really surprised to be asked to become part of the Army Tri-Services Salon Culinaire Team. The idea behind the Salon Culinaire competition is to pit the best of the three services in a competition that displays skills in mess work, both in front of house and in the kitchen, the display work needed for regimental functions; and the kitchen skills transferred by chefs to out in the field.

The theme of the class I finally chose to enter was the "Millennium Challenge", three cocktails and three napkin folds linked by the theme of the Millennium. I had also been entered by the Steward Training Department for the Giridon class, but for those who know me most of my cooking turns out to be flambé, not just the presentation dishes completed by stewards at the dining table.

So where do you start?

I'm not usually short of ideas, but there was a need to find something totally different! Not hard for those who had already sampled my punch in the Sergeants' Mess and my

Tri-colour Regimental Cocktail at our final 4 QLR Regimental Dinner.

Anyway I dismissed the ideas of bugs – millennium types, crashed computers and of course the most hyped event, the New Year's Party and them all, and came up with..... Aeroplanes and an around the world ticket. Of course! "Welcoming the Millennium Around the World!"

There was a lot of artistic licence as we started our Millennium trip in Cuba and ended up in Sydney, I'm a soldier not an airline pilot, and my Boeing 747 had a mixed up flight schedule.

From there it was a quick round the world ticket with lots of talking to my audience – a little tricky when you're trying to slice lemons and not your fingertips and pour from a cocktail shaker without spilling and therefore losing points. This is even more difficult when you're being interviewed and there are TV cameras and photographers pushing cameras into your workspace.

So here are the recipes for the two "Strong" and one "Light (on the alcohol, not the calories!) cocktails. The three napkin folds interspersing the delectable drinks were the Norwegian Glacier, the Bagpipes, and the Opera House to round off the planetary plane hop.

Judging took into account final presentation, speed of mixing the cocktails, tidiness and hygiene, strength and combination of the mix of the cocktail; and the folds of the napkin.

Presentation time and I was awarded a silver medal, not bad for a first time out. So next year, with a class of no specific title – I can really let my imagination run wild – hopefully I can shake, stir, pour and fold my way to a gold. Unfortunately I'll have to do the Flambé class as it's combined with the stewards' skills event so we'll have the obligatory burnt offerings to go with the cocktails.

Cuba Libre



Pour 1 part white rum, and the juice of half a lime over ice. Drop in the lime shell, and stir in cola to taste.

Capricorn



Shake 1 part peppermint cordial with 4 parts fresh cream. Strain over crushed ice, and garnish with grated chocolate.

Green Dragon



Stir 4 parts gin, 2 parts crème de menthe, 1 part Kumquat, and 1 part lemon juice.



**Glacier
Cocks Comb
Bagpipes**

ON PARADE

Hadley is nephew to Cpl Shelley Whitehead (The Lancastrian & Cumbrian Volunteers), and grandson to Linda Whitehead, both are members of the Accrington Branch of the Women's Royal Army Corps Association.

Even at this young age Hadley knows the meaning of Remembrance and Armistice Day, and wears his poppy and the uniform of The Queens Lancashire Regiment with pride.



Hadley Thomas Kay Whitehead Aged 4

THE "NOT FORGOTTEN" ASSOCIATION

Maggie Purkis, The Women's Royal Army Corps Association, Wales and the West.

Throughout history, the populations of the world have, periodically, demanded that their sons and daughters take up arms to either force their neighbours to conform to their own beliefs and convictions, or to defend their own way of life against the aggressors. At every conflict, there are winners on one side, but losers on both. Inevitably there are those who do not come home. Equally, there are those on both sides who are wounded and permanently scarred by the horror and deprivations through which they have lived.

Every year, on the anniversary of the cease-fire following the end of the First World War, we wear our poppies with pride and call upon the Nation to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives in the service of their country.

But what happens on November 12th each year? Well, I would suggest that the majority of the civilian population removes the crumpled poppy from their coat lapels and forgets for another year. The serving members of the various armed forces get on with their jobs of enforcing and/or preserving what peace exists and works towards ensuring that such conflicts never reoccur. Like all other Service Associations, we in the WRAC Association return to the business of providing support, comradeship and a focus of remembrance for all those who served in the former QMAAC, ATS, WRAC, WRACTA and WRACTAVR and to ensuring that their Service is recorded, recognised and remembered in perpetuity.

Happily, there are also others who do not forget either; amongst them the "Not Forgotten" Association for the Ex-Service Disabled. Their emblem is the head of an elephant holding a sword in its trunk. (I say "its" trunk – we all know that our Lioness is the only female animal used in heraldry, but to tell the truth, the "Not Forgotten" elephant may well be the matriarch of the herd). Either way, as we all know, an elephant never forgets.

Their Mission Statement reads:

The "Not Forgotten" Association is dedicated to providing an entertainments programme across the country throughout the year. Those eligible are ex-servicemen and women of all ages who have a War Pension or who are currently suffering from some form of ill health.

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We aim to bring a little lightness and brightness into the lives of those who have served their country so proudly over the years – we ensure they are not forgotten.

The "Not Forgotten" Association provides TV, TV licences, holidays (individual and group), outings across the country, concerts in ex-service residential and nursing homes, an annual garden party and Christmas parties. (If you are unsure of your eligibility with the Association, give them a ring on 020 7730 2400 or 3660).

The "Not Forgotten" Association does not have a membership scheme as such and therefore no subscriptions on which to draw. They consider that all those who have been included in their outings and parties are members. The Association works in close co-operation with the Royal British Legion. Their Patron, (as is our President) is HRH The Duchess of Kent GCVO and the list of their Officers reads like Who's Who in the Services.

Last summer, I was privileged to be invited to join six of our members at the annual "Not Forgotten" Association Garden Party in the grounds of Buckingham Palace. The Party, like all events hosted by the "Not Forgotten" Association was organised by Rosie Stewart. Rosie has obviously organised many parties and outings, the whole delightful event ran like clock-work and became my most memorable three days in recent times.

The seven members of the WRAC Association travelled to London in ones and twos and met at the Victory Services Club for dinner. Later we retired to the bar (like you do), and tried, albeit half-heartedly to refrain from sounding like a group of girls out for a very special treat, not wanting to waste a moment or to forget a single second of the experience.

After breakfast the next morning, we window-shopped the smart establishments in Town. The Half-Price Sale in Selfridges brought the cost of clothes down to merely exorbitant! We lunched on sandwiches and retired to don posh frocks having arranged to meet in the foyer and engage taxis to the Palace. When we re-assembled we were delighted to find that we had been invited to join the other guests of the "Not Forgotten" Association on their coach, and then we met Biddy. Biddy, together with her son, had brought a contingent of guests of the "Not Forgotten" Association across from Northern Ireland, a trip she makes regularly with those invited to attend the various outings and parties organised by our hosts. Biddy is a living angel; she shepherded her flock of ex-servicemen and women with tact, care, consideration and humour throughout the afternoon, without once being patronising or officious. Biddy, like all who run the "Not Forgotten" Association, obviously...just Cares.

I know that the event is going to be recorded by at least one of our members here in the Lioness. Suffice it to say that I came home with an enormous sense of pride at having been eligible to attend, that I had been invited and had spent the afternoon at Buckingham Palace in the company of so many delightfully memorable people.

My New Year's Resolution for 2001 is to help the "Not Forgotten" Association to help those who have Served and now need and deserve a little brightness in their lives. Long may The "Not Forgotten" Association continue to remember.

ROYAL GARDEN PARTY

Edith Francis

The Branch Officers of Wales and the West were invited by the "Not Forgotten" Association to join them at their Garden Party held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace on 27 July.

HRH The Princess Royal was present as were many well known celebrities, including Bill Pertwee of 'Dad's Army' who kindly consented to join us for a photograph.

It was a very enjoyable and memorable day.



L-R Edith Francis, Jo Anscombe, Nancy Tipton, Bill Pertwee Maggie Purkis, Daphne Jervis TD, Anne Deakin and Edna Thomas

SWIMMING IN EGYPT

Miss Charmian Mary Mould joined the ATS at the beginning of the Second World War. Following demobilisation she could not settle into civilian life and returned to the ATS within a few months. She eventually resigned from the WRAC as a Major in the late 1950s.

Following Miss Mould's death earlier this year, her cousin sent a photograph to the Lioness. It shows the swimming team in Egypt sometime in the 50s. Maybe you will recognise yourself or a friend.



Standing L-R, Pte Brand QARANC, LCpl Dunn, Pte Noble, Pte Low
Seated L-R, Capt Mould, Capt Thomas, Sgt Colby

ATS Reminiscences

THE PLEASURES AND PREDICAMENTS OF

PENG A WAR-TIME DRIVER

Miss Kyra E. Tuftnell (LCpl W/74020)



The photograph I have enclosed shows me and three friends leaving Warrington Barracks early one morning bound for the docks on the Clyde. From left to right they are Elsie Wells, Margaret (Bunny) Blanning, me and Jennifer Wells (sister of Elsie). It was taken at the Copper Kettle on the Preston-By-Pass where the staff used to save us chocolate biscuits if they could get them. (I remember several places by what we had to eat).

A "shipping convoy" necessitated 3 nights away. We were given subsistence for every day we were away from base for more than 12 hours. I forget now what the rate was, not very much, but it all helped. When I joined up, a Private received 13 shillings a week. It had been 8 shillings at the beginning of the war, so things were looking up.

We never knew where the lorries were bound for, everything was very "hush-hush". However, we guessed these particular ones were bound for Egypt or "somewhere in the Mediterranean" because of their sandy coloured canopies.

A night in Glasgow meant The Berkeley Hotel, lashings of hot water, baths enough for all, and a long hot soak. We would then put on clean clothes and have dinner in the dining room where we were treated as if we were real paying guests. However, one night we were horrified to be denied entrance, the US Army had taken over! We found shelter at another old-fashioned hotel, but it was not the same thing at all.

At this time the bitterly cold Winter of 1941-42 gave way to a mild Spring and we stopped doing the Glasgow run and started delivering trucks to a camp just outside Exeter. The South Coast build up had begun.

Convoys were of several different types, long Shipping Convoys, smaller convoys delivering one or more trucks to a Unit and fetching lorries and trucks from factories such as Dagenham, West Bromwich, etc. It was on a convoy from Dagenham that I was given my first "lead" job. The Sergeant said I knew the way. I didn't know all of it, but I wasn't going to turn down the opportunity, so we set off. At

one crossroads I wasn't sure which way to take, but seeing 2 lorries approaching from my right, I took that road and after that I was on more familiar ground and got everyone home safely.

One small convoy was to Llandrindod Wells in mid-Wales. We arrived on a Saturday evening expecting to catch a train back, but we were told the last train had gone and there would be no more till Monday morning. The Army occupied most of the hotels in the little town, and part of one was made over to us for the week-end. We were not at all sorry about this, it was a nice unexpected rest day for us and, as the weather was perfect, we spent all day on Sunday walking in the hills.

Another small convoy I particularly remember took us to the wilds of Dartmoor. We drove down on a lovely sunny day and stayed overnight in a little hotel on the front at the pretty little "pink" town of Teignmouth. By morning the weather had changed dramatically, and the rain was falling down as it can do in Devon. The Unit we were looking for was "somewhere on the Moor", but where? Everyone we saw, and there were not many people about, seemed bent on confusing us and meanwhile we were getting wetter and wetter. We had leather jerkins, but the rain ran off the back of our caps and down our necks and we were soon wet through. I forgot to mention we were driving open trucks!

Eventually we found the unit which seemed to consist of a few men squatting around two small camp fires under a tree. It appeared this was all they had to cook on. However, they were very kind to the bedraggled women who had arrived unexpectedly at their camp. They made us tea and tried, unsuccessfully, to dry parts of our uniform, but it was hopeless and, putting on our pyjamas under our still wet clothes, we travelled back to Cirencester.

Bunny and I had some nice trips together. Once to Perranporth, North Cornwall, and once to Llangadog near Caernarfon in South Wales. Once, we detoured a little from the route given to us to call at Bunny's home. Then we drove down through the Cheddar Gorge, which was new country to me. I reciprocated when we had a large FA Tractor (I still have the original "detail" we were given, it says: FA Tractor to RAOC Hillsea, Portsmouth). We called at my sister-in-law's home (my brother was away in the Navy). She was very surprised to see this large vehicle coming up the drive, and even more surprised when 2 ATS girls jumped out, one of whom was me! She was, of course, very glad to give us tea.

And now I come to a problem. What would you have done in our place?

Bunny and I had to deliver two staff cars to a Provost Unit at Paisley, near Glasgow. We crossed the Pennines from Scotch Corner. The clouds were low and threatening and we seemed to be the only vehicles on the road, it was quite eerie. We reached Paisley and found the Unit. It was quite small and consisted of Officers and Sergeants who were messing together. After we had delivered the cars and had chatted for a while we asked if we could 'phone the Police

for our Billets". "Oh no", they said, "You will be having dinner with us and staying the night, we have arranged a bedroom, etc., for your use".

We thanked them very much, but underneath consternation reigned. What had we done? Two rather awkward ladies who were, after all, on a job, in a Provost Officers and Sergeants Mess? When on a job we wore battle dress tunics, and these were apt to get very dirty from peering into the engines of cars and lorries. In those days rotor arms had to be removed from the engines so that they were quite immobilised. When you took your tunic off you had to roll up your sleeves. We couldn't go into an Officers/Sergeants mess with our sleeves rolled up, it would look dreadful. The only alternative was to put on our clean shirts, (fortunately we each had one with us) and go in to dinner in long sleeves.

During the meal Bunny and I were painfully conscious of the fact that we were not properly dressed. Did they know our dress regulations? We didn't ask and they didn't mention it, but our conversation was not exactly sparkling. After dinner we were introduced to the game of Housey Housey, now more commonly known as Bingo, but it was quite new to us both then. At last the evening came to an end and we said goodnight and retired to our room, firmly locking the door behind us. As I fell asleep at once I never knew if anyone tried the door, but somehow I don't think they did. Someone must have driven us to a station in the morning and put us on a train, but of that journey I have no recollection whatsoever.

Did we do right? If not, what would you have done?

THE FURTHER TRIBULATIONS OF A WAR TIME DRIVER

Miss Vera Cole, Secretary of Colchester Branch

Miss Vera Cole, who was a driver in the ATS was stationed with 900 company BASC Ack Ack Command, and lived in a house called Weston Acres in Woodmansterne, Surrey. There were no children in this village so the ATS girls took their place even to the extent of filling their choir stalls on a Sunday morning.



The company was responsible for keeping all the gun sites south of the Thames supplied with ammunition. The personnel also manned the medical centres and drove ambulances. Vera hated these vehicles because they swayed and were top heavy.

In the photograph the group are positioned round the bonnet of one of the dreaded vehicles. Vera is sitting on the bonnet with her hand on the shoulder of the OC, Junior Commander Webb!

THE LIFE OF AN ATS MESSING OFFICER

Marjory B Drayson (née White), "Bruach" Inverness Road, Carr Bridge, Inverness-shire PH23 3AU

Reading the "Lioness", it amazes me how groups of ATS remained together during War Service and kept up friendships for so many years. Being commissioned, we moved around more often, and as a Specialist Messing Officer one was often, apart from a Medical Officer, the only female in the Mess.

In only three postings were there other ATS Officers and I list them later, just in case any of your members crossed paths with me!

My service began in a FANY Company in Inverness, where our menus were augmented with Grouse, Salmon and Lobster brought in by parents – what a rude awakening on being dispatched to the ACC in Aldershot. I had done a Domestic Science Course and Dietetics but there I did three courses, arriving as a Private, gaining 3 stripes, but remaining on Private's pay! Such memories of Field Cookery in sub-zero temperatures!

I did a stint as a Sergeant Instructor at Hadrians Camp ECC near Carlisle and then was sent to close down the ECC at Aldermaston. It did not take long. The rest of the time was spent on Guard Duties - very necessary as the USAAF had arrived on the adjoining "fields" and the GIs invaded our grounds until a very high perimeter fence was erected!

Next Pre-OCTU at New Battle Abbey Dalkeithy and then Edinburgh OCTU.

I was posted back to New Battle Abbey (ATS Training Depot) as Messing Officer. I knew the cookhouse floor well, having cleaned it and the boilers and roasting tins often on Pre OCTU. The "Lats" too of course !

The second posting where I was not the sole ATS officer was No. 1 Military Port Loch Gareloch (Top Secret Posting). Extremely busy Docks, Railheads etc. with 24 hour workshifts and 14 camps around the loch. HQ was Belmore House, and the Mess was in Shandon Hydro – (demolished after the war) - and was shared with the Navy and Fleet Air Arm. ATS officers slept in the 'White House' nearby. On the Dockside a huge construction was taking shape. It had a code name and on it was a cook house, which I inspected. Eventually, the 'monster' was towed away and rumoured to be going to Milford Haven. Only later I realised I had been on part of the Mulberry Harbour.

Finally, the Buffs Depot in Canterbury and Detachments on the coast. How I admired the ATS on 'Ack-Ack' sites, as it was the period of the "Flying Bombs".

I believe the Victorian Barracks on Stumy Road have disappeared, to be replaced by an Industrial site and an ASDA store. I am sorry that contacts from there have died and only a Medical Officer's widow is in touch, but she is no longer able to drive up here.

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NOW – Three daughters, three grandsons, two granddaughters and lately a great grandson! Fortunately I am still reasonably “fleet of foot”, so can't grumble!

IT'S TIME TO STAND UP FOR THE WOMEN

Mrs V Rose (née Hall) Cpl W/6738, 36 Walnut Close,
Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire MK16 8JH

I have an objection to TV advertisements for a tyre company who emblazons ATS across the screen. I wonder why they were allowed to use these initials. I am sure there would have been a complaint if the previous initials of a male regiment were used in this manner.

We have plenty of coverage of wartime documentaries featuring troops of several nations during the last war but very few show the women (apart from nurses) who were working alongside the men on gun sites and search light batteries, driving in convoys, and many rather hazardous working situations.

When we received the telegram which stated that we were “Called to the Colours” in 1939, two to three weeks before war was declared, we were sent to the various Medway forts where there were no facilities beyond a stand pipe!

There were no beds, no washing facilities, a hastily erected “bog”, and as we had to sleep on the concrete floor in the next casement known as “The Officers Mess” which, by the way, still housed some of its rat inhabitants, we could not lay out our newspapers and horse blankets on the concrete floor until the officers had vacated the casement.

Often it would be very late before we could lay out our communal “bed” and the atmosphere was always thick with cigar and cigarette smoke.

As there were no washing or bathing facilities we were a rather scruffy lot. We could not pass the barbed wire enclosure so could not go “outside”.

Someone managed to find a sort of baby bath tin which we screened with an old clothes horse, so we managed to “wash down” with a dixie of warm water when it was possible.

One of the officers produced a radio and the ten of us (girls and women) listened to the declaration of war which was followed by the howling of an air raid siren! We had to run to the tunnel beneath the fort and stand in the pitch dark with our backs against the wall – It was a false alarm!

When the war got under way we were stationed at various gun sites or search light sites around the Medway area and other places and before I was sent to France I was on a “Rocket Battery” which no-one seems to have heard of. (The Z rockets formed a barrage in the sky which, in theory, broke up the bomber formations heading for London).

My overseas service was mainly with SHAEF but as war finished (I was then in Frankfurt) we were “returned” to a British Regiment; I should say Scottish Regiment as it was the 51st Highland Division in N. Germany.

How good it would be to meet up with old comrades, or hear from them.

MRS JESSIE LOW EX W/2049 DUNSMORE (DUNNIE)

24 Grahame Terrace, Gilmerton, By Crieff, Perthshire,
Scotland PH7 3NB

I saw the photograph in the last issue of the ‘Lioness’ of Irene Ludlow receiving a certificate of appreciation. Irene was a valued member of 607 Coy ATS (BTA) in Klagfurt with myself and we still keep in touch at Christmas. The picture of Irene and Dame Helen Gwynne Vaughan's article of 1925 Old Comrades Association Gazette made me think of some of my own memories of ATS Service.

In the Spring of 1938, at a Ranger meeting, we had a talk about poisonous gas and the likelihood of another war. We heard that an ATS company was to be formed and affiliated to the local regiment, the Black Watch. I joined up on 1st December 1938 and as I was no good at cooking and had been a clerk in ‘civvy street’ I became a clerk. Weekly drills were held by the Black Watch RSM. Shoes were a difficulty, an issue of very strong lacing shoes was made available for drill nights but no uniform. In place of a week's camp we had one day in the barracks. A few of us were assigned to the QM's office – very interesting morning with a cup of tea from the RQMS' wife. The day finished at 3 pm.

We were all called up on 1st September 1939 and six of us spent three very busy weeks enlisting reservists. During this time we were issued with one service dress, two not very comfortable shirts with collars attached, one tie, two pairs of khaki knickers (Celanese) and two pairs of khaki stockings. Imagine my laundry problem.

I had joined ‘local service’ so was able to remain at home in Perth. In December 1939 Dame Helen Gwynne Vaughan came and inspected us in the grounds of Balhousie Castle. To me, as a nineteen year old, she was a very old lady with knee length fur lined boots. (Interestingly Dame Helen was a prominent member of the Girl Guide movement when I was a child).

The company increased and I was promoted to Section Leader. I had to do Orderly Sergeant duties at Balhousie Castle, a long walk home in the blackout.

In 1942 I volunteered for general service and was posted on promotion to CSM to 607(M) HAA Bty RA at Oswestry. I travelled all day from Perth meeting different troops at train changes – Crewe, Stafford and finally ‘Tinkers Green’ where I was met by a Bombardier who took me to the Sgts Mess – not an ATS in sight. I was given a glass of beer and a sandwich! What a welcome! I wondered why I had volunteered. However I met up with my cook Sergeant and eventually the operational Sergeants and Corporals. The girls were mostly conscripts with only three weeks training. What followed was a difficult month for us all, until we left by train at midnight for an unknown destination. It was a firing

camp at Whitby where we became a close knit unit, proficient in firing at sleeves attached to planes flying over the sea.

From Whitby we moved at six month intervals to Felixstowe, Newport (Wales), Crewe, Shoreham by the Sea and then to Portland Bill, where we celebrated VE day. I was then posted to Redford Barracks. Here the girls worked in the clothing depot fitting out soldiers for civilian life. We also spent time in Dregthorn Barracks where the troops taking part in London's victory parade were stationed.

In 1947, with married families returning from India, I was posted to a reception station in Folkestone's Royal Hotel. Here families were housed until suitable accommodation was found for them.

In 1948 I volunteered for service overseas and was posted to 607 Coy ATS in Austria where I met up with Irene Ludlow and a very good friend Olive Rutter whom I had met on a course at Liphook. Olive was PA to Brig McDonald in Vienna while I was stationed in Klagenfurt, a beautiful part of Austria even in post war Europe. Summers were spent on the lakes and in the winter we learned how to ski, with greater or lesser degrees of success! Irene, Olive and myself were enrolled into the WRAC while we were in Austria.

The WRAC left the army of occupation in Austria in 1950. I was posted to Chilwell which was now a ghost camp with 300 girls in what had, during the war, held 2000. In 1951 I was promoted to WO1 to take over Highland Division TA unit training with HQ in Aberdeen. I travelled to drills in Wick, Thurso, Inverness, Elgin, Dundee and of course Aberdeen. There were the usual camps at Cultybraggan in Perthshire. I left the service for civilian life in 1952.

KATH TUCKER EX-ATS REMEMBERS ENIGMA

Kath Tucker 212652
75 Lowden, Chippenham, Wilts.

From June 1943 to VE Day I was a Special Wireless Operator (SWOP) with the Royal Corps of Signals stationed at Shenley in Hertfordshire. Training had lasted between 5 and 6 months. Because of the nature of the work everyone was sworn to secrecy, not only for the duration of the war but for many years afterwards.

We learned Morse Code, how to handle a receiving set and the format of the messages we would be intercepting, which were in the Enigma Code. Working in shifts around the clock, we sat with one hand on the tuning knob and held a pencil in the other ready to start writing directly we heard transmissions from the station we were listening for on a given frequency. Messages received would be passed to the Intelligence Corps and thence to Bletchley Park (Station X) where they would be decoded.

Because of the secrecy, my father, who died in 1957, never knew what I had been doing which I still feel very sad about.

It is reported that the breaking of the Enigma code shortened the war by 2 years.

**ROYAL CAMBRIDGE HOME
FOR SOLDIERS' WIDOWS**
(Registered Charity No. 225674)

The Royal Cambridge Home for Soldiers' Widows was founded in 1851, since when it has provided safe, manageable and comfortable homes for the elderly widows of men who served in the British Army. Originally only those widows of NCOs and Private Soldiers were accepted but the regulations governing admission were later changed to include widows whose husbands had served some of their time, be it only one day, in the ranks. Now it is also open to accept women, either single or widowed, who have themselves served in the Army or Army Nursing Corps and married women whose husbands have been admitted into the Royal Hospital Chelsea and who are in need of residential care. This new qualification encompasses women who have served in the following:

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WRAC	Women's Royal Army Corps
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FANY (WTS)	First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (Women's Transport Service) 1917 – 1921
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The Superintendent
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WRAC Reminiscences

MAUREEN BROWN (née MERRIT) WRAC 1953 – 1968

12 Alec Rose House, The Anchorage,
Gosport, Hants PO12 1LZ

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In the Spring of 1953 I travelled from my little village in Sussex the 20 miles to Brighton to enlist in the WRAC. After a medical and interview I was enlisted and given a railway warrant (the first of many new forms) for Guildford with many other new recruits. I found myself in a large barrack room of 20 beds, a wooden box under each bed, a dressing table and locker between each bed. We soon learnt how to barrack our beds every morning, I guess we can all remember how it's done! One of our first visits was to the stores to collect all that strange uniform. Remember khaki greatcoats, tunic, BD, skirts, flat cap with pleats round, pyjamas and unfashionable underwear? I'm sure we all remember "passion killers", the khaki bloomers with elastic around the legs; "bullet proofs", the thick lisle stockings and shirts with detachable collars, not to mention the brown PT shorts with the orangey vests and of course the housewife – all of it crammed into two kit bags. Once we had our uniforms, it was no "civvies" for six months and it all had to be marked with our name and number. We were marched everywhere ("outside in threes" was the cry), cookhouse three times a day, MI room for jabs and medicals, and PT. We were taught how to press creases in our skirts, one went in at each side and four outward, two front and back. We had "In nights" before room inspections and kit checks (can anyone remember how it all had to be laid out?). What fun!

After five weeks we all went to different camps to learn our trades. I went to 12 Bn WRAC in Richmond Park, travelling each day to Inglis Bks, Mill Hill NW7 to become a Postal Worker. I worked for three years in Knightsbridge, London, in Postal Depot/RE, bussed in every day from Kingston on Thames. I left there in 1956 as a Cpl and wrote about that time in the Lioness No. 2 1997.

After three years as a Postal Worker I changed trades to clerical and went to 6 Trg Bn RASC in Yeovil to learn about Army Forms, letter writing and how to touch type. When my six weeks was over, I was posted with Agnes Boyton to 70 Coy RASC, Beavers Lane Camp. We lived in Cavalry Barracks HQ Eastern Command, Hounslow, just across the road. I met Betty Wilson there who was also a clerk but she changed to Admin later on and became a Company Sergeant Major (CSM). I worked in the Company Office dealing with Army Records for the RASC, ACC, REME and WRAC. We had the old coke stoves for heating, what fun on a cold morning getting them to light. I learnt how to teach drill from Pam Halford, our CSM, and drilled the WRAC clerks, cooks and orderlies every week. Maj O Lance was our OC when I joined and Maj Pritchard was OC when I left. Kathy O'Donoghue was our Unit Pay Clerk and she and I went on a European holiday together in 1960, just before my posting to Gibraltar. My job in 18 Coy WRAC was Personal Assistant to Deputy Assistant Provost Marshal (DAPM) very different from working for the RASC. In those days, troopships stopped in Gibraltar. After time ashore and a few drinks, the soldiers made life very colourful which meant the RMPs were very busy and, therefore, so was I!. We wore the lovely KD dresses, how many remember cutting out the inside piece at the back and changing the buttons every day? Sandals with khaki ankle socks walking to work down Main Street – those were the days! Weekends spent on the beach with lovely sunshine and ferry rides to Tangiers for

the Kasbar or just over the border to Spain for cheap shopping. How nice it would be sometimes to turn the clock back! I sailed to Gibraltar on the "Nevassa", it took four days but I flew home and it took four hours.

Having all the necessary qualifications, Army Certificate of Education 1, Clerks Trade B1 and Cadre course, I was promoted to Sergeant and back to 12 Bn WRAC to work in HQ London District in 1962. We now travelled to work in coaches - no more climbing in and out of three tonners. New uniform was issued, lovat green and a bottle green greatcoat, buttons were 'stay bright' (no more polish or button sticks!). Working in Whitehall meant working in civilian clothes, we only wore uniform when on Regimental Duty which was only twice a month. All ceremonial and state visits were organised by our HQ plus the Trooping of the Colour – a very different job once again. It was while working here, that my friend Ann and I drove from London to Rome and back with just a tent and compo rations courtesy of the Brigade of Guards.

From London I went to 29 Coy WRAC in BAOR, in 1965. I worked for ADWRAC in HQ BAOR. While there, I met Margaret Hutton a Postal Worker whom I hadn't seen since my Knightsbridge days. We went on many trips together in Holland and spent two weeks in Morocco on holiday. I also visited East Berlin during this time and can still remember the contrast between East and West.

My next posting was to Cyprus in 1967 where I worked for the Colonel AQ at Headquarters. I had only been there two weeks when the HQ was moved from one end of the Island to the other. My kit took weeks to catch up with me and we had to travel light when flying. The island had not yet been divided when I arrived, but soon trouble started and I learnt all about Ops Rooms very quickly. When the trouble died down I discovered that Cyprus was a lovely island to drive around. After I left the trouble started again and the Island was permanently divided. I met my late husband, who was a RMP Sergeant, on this posting.

Promoted to Staff Sergeant, I was posted back to the UK as Chief Clerk WRAC, 6 Trg Bn RASC in Yeovil. I left my Army career from this unit to become a wife and mother. My husband finished his 22 years and became a CSM in the Army Cadet Force (ACF) and our daughter is an ACF CSM today.

MORE LIFE IN THE WRAC IN THE 1950

Mrs Norma Young (née Jones) W/369813
21 Stopford Street, Edgeley, Stockport SK3 9HG

In reply to the letter on page 9 of "Lioness" 1/2000 by J James, I too started my service in Guildford in 1951. After basic training I went to Catterick on a teleprinter operators course. I was then posted to Ack Ack Command at Stanmore. Our quarters were in a large house called Kestral where we had a good group of girls, - Elsie Winfield, Jean Norris, Joyce Copeland, Jackie Lee, Margaret Wood, Doreen Atkinson, Maureen Welford to name but a few.

In December 1952 I went overseas to Ladysmith Barracks Fayid where I worked at GHQ when General Naguib and Colonel Nasser were having a difference of opinion. Because of the situation, we had an armed soldier at the side of the teleprinter while we were working.

Six months later my friend Elsie Winfield came out to Fayid and we had some leave in Cyprus. Bell tents on the sands at Famagusta!

Later I met Audrey Shaw (née Walton) who went out to Fayid in 1951. We are still friends 47 years on. We went to the Grand Reunion at Cardiff in April with Stockport Branch, where we had a great time. We are the only two Ex-WRAC members in the branch.

“CAP STRAPS UP”

W/386108 Cpl Mary Baker
13 Pirrie Close, Southampton SO15 7QA

I joined the WRAC in March 1954 for five weeks basic training at Guildford, which I thoroughly enjoyed – although I must admit that the onset of our training was quite a rude awakening for one who had never so much as washed a pair of pants for herself!

When it came to choosing the trade we would like to follow, I had no hesitation in applying to be a driver. An aptitude test had to be taken – assembling Meccano. I was accepted as a driver, and in no time at all it was our passing out parade. How proud we all were!

After leave I was posted to Figsbury Barracks, Winterbourne Dauntsey, Salisbury for a ten-week driver training course. All the instructors were WRAC NCOs. We were known as driver “students”. We learnt to drive on 3-tonners, Austins and Bedfords, K2 ambulances and 15-cwt. Bedfords, all of which had crash-type gearboxes which meant we had to learn to “double de-clutch”. We also had to train in basic mechanics and vehicle maintenance, including fault finding, and map reading. We had to pass both theory and practical tests on all of these to become qualified drivers. Forty-six years on I can still clearly remember my driving test. I took it in the K2 ambulance all around Salisbury and surrounding area and I remember crashing my gears a couple of times. It was a nerve racking experience. After the test we had to line up outside the Platoon Office to learn our results. I remember that about three girls weren't there and we didn't know whether they had passed or we had.

At this stage I had better explain that we wore the soft khaki ATS peaked cap with the cap strap just above the peak. (The WRAC berets had not yet been issued). Back to our driving test: our platoon sergeant came out and asked for our provisional licences. Our hearts sank. However she re-appeared after a short time, handed back our licences and said the magic words “Cap Straps Up” – a privilege accorded to drivers and a tradition inherited from FANYs. This entailed moving up the cap strap so that it sat on top of the head. What a moment that was! There then followed three weeks of solo driving on Landrovers, after which we were given our postings. I was to go, after leave, to RAOC Didcot.

So off I went to Didcot. I was the only WRAC driver there, all the other girls working in the Ordnance Depot. It was while I was at Didcot that the WRAC green beret was introduced. I was the very last to get my beret – because I didn't want to lose my khaki cap. Eventually I was cornered in the QM Stores and had to part company with my beloved cap.

After about fourteen months, I was called to attend a PTI (Potential Driving Instructor) Board, was consequently called for the PTI course, was pleased to pass it and was issued with my first stripe. So it was back to Didcot to collect the rest of my kit before taking up residence at the

Drivers & Clerks Training Centre (D & CTC), which had moved from Salisbury to Yeovil.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Yeovil where I stayed until leaving the Corps in 1958. I know a lot of WRAC girls wanted postings abroad, but it had never bothered me and once you were a driving instructor, unless you were really “naughty”, there you stayed. It was a good life, with a lot of satisfaction gained when you saw the “students” pass their tests.

Eventually I was given a second stripe and became a detail clerk. This entailed producing a daily list of vehicles and Driving Instructors available and which student would be with which Instructor. Seldom would an Instructor have the same student two days running.

I was proud to be a Driving Instructor and when I left the Service in 1958 I was one of the last WRAC driving instructors. The unit was in the process of closing, and all instruction was to be carried out by civilian male personnel. I think we did a good job.

It would be nice to hear from other drivers and instructors who were at D & CTC Yeovil.

Yes, it was a good life with many long-standing friendships made.

W/388481 FAIRBROTHER JESSIE

‘Two Hoots’, 19 Culver Road, Leicester LE3 9BH

I joined the WRAC on the 25 October 1954, like everyone else I went to Guildford for my basic training. I'd always wanted to drive, and the Army was the only one of the three services that would actually teach you. From Guildford I went to Yeovil Drivers And Clerks Training Centre (D&CTC) January – March 1955. Having passed as a driver I went to Hounslow. I had a very good time in the Army and did lots of sports, playing Cricket for the Corps. I went to Munchen Gladbach in BAOR in November 1955 to be a staff car driver. I drove a Brigadier, it may sound grand, but all the girls on this camp were staff car drivers, I just seem to have had a very good job – lots of travelling all over Germany and into Belgium and Holland. I also came back to the UK to play cricket, going on tour with the Corps team, each of my three years. I came back to UK February 1957 to Yeovil to be a Driving Instructor. I really did enjoy my three years service – but decided to give civvy street a chance - I have to say the Army did give me a certain confidence. I rejoined my local Ladies Cricket Team and played for the Midlands. My driving experience got me a job driving a Mobile Library for Leicestershire, one of the first, and by the time I moved on after 11 years, a number of other ladies were doing the job. I then decided I needed to see a bit more of the country and went coach driving, England, Scotland, Wales – weeks away with Senior Citizens and school exchanges to France – some great times. I always thought I might meet some old friends on these travels, but somehow it never happened. I've now been retired for 3½ years, still enjoy driving, and five years ago brought a small camper van. Did lots of travels – then decided to be more comfortable and exchanged it for a bigger and better camper van.

I joined the Dinner Club at the beginning, but as yet haven't made the dinner – however I plan to, in 2001 – I have tried to get together a group of Driving Instructors (DI's) from my time at Yeovil, but somehow it hasn't got off the ground. I really think as we get older, people can only travel so far and cost also comes into it. With the van I did lots of travelling but sad

to say have just sold it, as I need power steering, – "Old Arthritis" keeps pushing the aches and pains around. I have managed to stay in touch with one or two people who joined at the same time as me. Coreen Morris who now lives in Ellesmere Port, we meet every so often, she has a camper van too. Mavis Sturman still lives in Leicestershire, we are in touch by phone and the odd meet. An old friend Di Lyn All has been in touch on and off since we served together – unfortunately she died in September 1999. She lived in Kingswinford, West Midlands, her friend Dorothy Freeman still lives there and we are still in touch. While spending a few days in Wales in Aberystwyth, I came back through Montgomery and called on Jean Preston and Kath Brown – stayed to dinner and had lots of laughs about our times together. Coming back from holiday in Cornwall stayed overnight at Bristol Balloon Festival – and met up with Margaret Wintle who lives in Weston-Super-Mare, she also has a motor van. On our way south in 1998 we met Mavis Martin in Burnham on Sea, and although we didn't meet up in the WRAC she kindly gave us tea, and we still exchange the odd letter and phone call. While in the south about two years ago I went to South and West Reunion in Plymouth, invited by Jean Cundy Borge, who had rung me on the teletext service pals service. I met Marge Owens and Ruth Jennings who were drivers – we keep in touch. I write to Celia Bass (Mickey Rooney) 2000 No. 2 Lioness. I also write to Gladys Pope, Barbara Herforch, we also exchange holidays cards – she has a caravan. In April went to the Tall Ships in Southampton – and met up with Sheila Alexander and Mary Barker both at Yeovil as Dis, – Pam Richards lives in Leicester. I also met up with Wendy James, and another old friend who I'm in touch with is Margaret Beswick. She has tried for a drivers' reunion, we have visited each other and ring or write regularly.

What I want to say is that whenever you meet up with any ex-service people it is so easy to talk, and the more I'm in touch with, the more I find this to be true. Sometimes it's months even years – but you just drop back into that friendship.

If anyone remembers me, and would like to drop me a line, I do, as you have seen, enjoy both writing and receiving news of everyone.

W/418121 LCPL WHITTAKER IRENE

5 Welldale Crescent, Stockton-On-Tees TS19 7HY

It seems that Janet James' letter in Lioness 1 of 2000 Page 9 has stirred up a hornets' nest of response from ex-WRAC. We are crawling out of the woodwork!

Like Sue Hirst (née Waind), (Lioness 2 of 2000 Page 16), I enlisted in 1963, but, being January, Hobbs Barracks was certainly not at its best when I arrived after my long journey from Stockton-On-Tees. It was late evening, bitterly cold and in the middle of a power cut!! After being used to my own lovely bedroom at home, I slept alongside about 19 other girls, and was responsible for my own bed-space (space? – that was a joke!). To the eagle-eyed Corporal "Bunny" Coleshill, a speck of dust made her eyes light up. I soon learned! It did take me a while to get used to drinking out of a tin mug, but the food wasn't too bad.

Our Drill Sergeant was a military policewoman (Bless Her!) so she was a stickler for smartness. She soon got us licked into shape, teaching us that yes, there is a big difference between left and right. After Lingfield, it was farewell to our first bunch of friends, and off to Catterick for trade training. Like Sue Hirst, it was Hooze Lines for 3 months. The great black monster of a stove in our room took some lighting

every day – STs and floor polish usually did the trick. Then our room corporal would casually come in and pinch some of our burning coke for her fire – Ida Kirkpatrick was her name, I'll never forget her!!

One morning, we were trudging in the snow to school when this chap in a very smart uniform and peak cap cycled past us. Being young (and very green) we all gave him a very smart salute only to realise he was an electricity board worker on his way to work. He nearly fell off his bike, and we fell into a heap in the snow, screaming with laughter. My training at Catterick did me some good, as I retired in May from the NHS as a switchboard operator!

Again, like Sue I was posted to Salisbury after trade training, for one night only, the following day I was off to Aldershot. Yes, Mandora Hutments was to be my home for the foreseeable future, working on the telephone exchange. I was not happy there, and applied for overseas. My OC was Captain Ross who obliged me with 28 Signals Regiment in Germany. I loved it there, and made a lot of friends. Anyone remember Jeanette Thirwell, "Flogger" Gates or Renée Ogden? I am still in contact with Renée after all these years – that's the Army Spirit I guess.

Most weekends, when not on duty at 'Telephone House' we found ourselves at the famous (or infamous) Shack Pub. It was quite a long walk to get there but nobody minded (or even remembered) the walk back! We girls in 3 Squadron stuck very much to the lads in 28 Sig Regt and many romances and marriages began in BFPO 40.

I well remember one night, about 1am the alarms sounding, to signal an exercise. None of us had ever worn battle dress before, so trying to get into Boots and Gaiters was a hoot. Picture the scene – half asleep young women in baby doll pyjamas (they were all the fashion then) trying to make our way to Company Office, unable to lift one boot in front of the other. The CSM was waiting for us – her name was Jobling, but she was affectionately known to us as 'Grandma'. Wonder if she knew that? She was all kitted out, but for some reason, she was excused boots – lucky for some!

Shortly after, our OC, Major Frame, left us to be replaced by Major Ross, posted from Aldershot.

I was demobbed from Germany, and I have to say that my 3 years in the WRAC were great, and each year at the WRAC Dinner weekend we re-live all those happy times.

If you recognise yourself at the aforementioned "Shack" in 1964-5, please give me a call. 01642 892238



Life In The Army Today

HOW HAS THE BRITISH ARMY CHANGED IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND WHY IS REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY STILL IMPORTANT TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES?

(A personal view of Colonel D F Davies OBE Late AGC(PS))

This article is based on two 'Parkinson style interviews' given by the author in 2 churches in West Dorset on Remembrance Sunday 2000.

What is your own military experience?

I joined the Army in 1973 and was commissioned into the Women's Royal Army Corps. It was 10 years since the last conscript had left the Army and so I joined an all-volunteer, professional Army, in which women were very firmly non-combatants. I have been a part of an era of tremendous change as, with the end of the 'Cold War', successive governments have been keen to take the 'Peace Dividend', which has left Britain with the smallest Army since Napoleonic times. If it was possible to gather members of the British Army from the four corners of the world where they are currently serving, we would all fit into the old Wembley Stadium. The Cold War may have ended, but during my service there have been wars in the Falklands and the Gulf, we have been committed to United Nations Operations in Cyprus, the Middle East, Africa, East Timor and the Balkans. The last deployment has now turned into a long commitment in both Bosnia and Kosovo as part of multinational peacekeeping NATO forces. In 2000 the latest commitment is some 24,000 troops to the new European defence force which, it would appear, is to be capable of putting 60,000 personnel into any trouble spot within 60 days with the ability to sustain them for at least a year.

The troubles in Northern Ireland have continued throughout my service and indeed I have spent over 5 years in the Province serving in every rank bar my current one. During my first tour in the early 70's, I commanded a platoon of 50 female searchers, a mix of military policewomen and volunteers from other trades, whose role was to search women and children, looking for weapons, ammunition or explosives. They were interesting days as members of the WRAC were unarmed, and whilst the male soldiers wore combat kit, we undertook all our duties wearing skirts and forage caps. This certainly produced some challenges such as crossing Blackthorn hedges and climbing gates in South Armagh, not to mention jumping in and out of helicopters whilst wearing a skirt, this was a special skill. Other tours in Northern Ireland involved me in the management of the Army's budget, a challenging task as the plans had to be very flexible to meet the continually changing operational situation. That same job also had the responsibility for the organisation of visits to the Province and the control of the number of troops in the Province. On another tour as the Staff Officer Personnel, our branch was responsible amongst other things for the administration of all casualties. This included regular races against time to ensure that Next of Kin of casualties were informed by the Army rather than learning about an incident from the media. The speed of communication has become a real challenge. With the media present at any incident of note anywhere in the world, it is likely to feature on the next news bulletin, viewed in millions of homes throughout the UK.

I've been fortunate that during the last 28 years I've had masses of opportunities. It has been the era of equal opportunities and there are now some 6,500 women in the Army, excluding the Medical Services which contain a further 1500. There are some 750 officers, with 2 Brigadiers – Director Staff and Personnel Support and Director Education and Training Services. Women now complete the same training as men (you may have seen the recent, fly on the wall, television documentaries, 'Guns and Roses' filmed at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and 'Soldiers to Be' filmed in the Army Training Regiments) including handling weapons and gender fair/gender free physical testing which has resulted in increasing emphasis on physical fitness. We are all required to pass a basic Combat Fitness Test, a loaded 8 miles speed march, annually and to undertake Basic Physical Assessment Tests twice a year. We now wear exactly the same kit as men, with boots, combat suit and beret being the standard dress. Despite handbags no longer being an issue item, there is still some scope for feminism, as earrings are still acceptable for servicewomen, much to the annoyance of some of the younger male soldiers who are also keen to follow fashion! Women now serve in all Corps with the exception of the Infantry and Armoured Corps, although even this is currently under review. Recent years have seen female officers in command of Royal Logistic Corps Regiments and University Officer Training Corps; female officers employed increasingly widely in General Staff appointments including currently, Military Assistant to the Secretary of State for Defence. There has also been a female RSM in a tri-Service School in which a large number of the students were officers from the Middle East.

In addition to tours in NI, I have served with the United Nations Force in Cyprus for 2 years maintaining the buffer zone between the Greeks and Turks. That tour also coincided with the British involvement in Beirut with first the evacuation of UN personnel and eventually the withdrawal of the British contingent. I have had 4 tours commanding training units, including a 2 year exchange tour in Australia. I was in Hong Kong early in the period leading up to hand over of the colony and of course I've had my share of tours in Germany and in England. Currently, I am the Chief of Staff of the Staff and Personnel Support Branch of the Adjutant General's Corps, which has some 4,500 members, of whom 30% are female, including the Director Brigadier Val Batchelor, appointed in June 2000. Amongst my current duties, I am responsible for providing the Army's Customer Focus which provides the interface with the multinational company which provides the computer support for the personnel administration. This is a challenging task, which has required me to master civilian management speak and to get to grips with commercial practice – something which I never dreamt I would have to become involved with when I joined the Army.

Why is Remembrance Sunday still important 55 years after the end of the Second World War?

In many ways it is rather sad that people are always inclined to associate Remembrance Sunday only with the horrendous loss of life that occurred in the First and Second World Wars. There has only been one year since 1945 in which no member of the British Forces has lost their life in the service of their country. During the second half of the last century, British Forces were involved in Malaya, East Africa, the Middle East, Korea and all the areas I mentioned earlier. Our latest involvement is in Sierra Leone where a young NCO was killed in action in August.

The Services are a very tight knit community whose members have all volunteered to serve their country and who, although most don't consider it until they have enlisted, must be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. We are a young and fit community, but rarely a year goes by in any unit without a member of that unit being lost, either as a result of an accident, injury or illness. No death is easy and we are frequently left asking the question why him or indeed her?

Having talked about recent losses, history is very important to members of the Forces today, and we are very conscious of the huge sacrifices that have been made by those who have gone before us. Young recruits are taken to France to visit the scenes of some of the worst fighting during the World Wars. Although they have read the books, seen films and learnt about it at School, it is not until they are standing looking at the remaining trenches on the Somme, or visiting the War Cemeteries, that history is brought alive. The Annual Festival of Remembrance and the march past at the Cenotaph are also vivid reminders of the huge number of people who have been involved in the defence of our homeland. Whilst the average age of those on parade rises each year, if one looks carefully there are many on parade who have served during the last 55 years. Amongst the ranks are the blind veterans from St Dunstan's, many of whom are casualties from more recent conflicts.

They say that every medal tells a story and the campaign medals worn by the young men and women of today's Army reflect the very high level of commitment to conflicts other than the traditional role of defence of the homeland. We have become international peacekeepers and experts in the delivery of humanitarian aid. It is no longer a case of two opposing military forces, we now operate in an environment

of smart weapons and long range engagements on the one hand and direct exposure to the horrors of ethnic cleansing on the other. Today's Forces are deployed world wide as part of multinational NATO or UN forces or are providing training teams in support of Armed Forces of developing nations, whilst here in Britain we provide the disciplined force who can be called upon to assist in any crisis, be it flood relief or the maintenance of essential services. The British Forces are kept very busy and face a very wide range of challenges.

What should be our prayer for those in the Forces today?

I think that there are 3 things we should seek in this new century

- That we never forget the sacrifices made by those who have served the country in uniform and the huge number of civilians who have also given their lives.
- That there is greater public awareness of our professional Armed Forces, which are the best in the world, and rely on young men and women volunteering to join our ranks.
- That those serving in the Forces will continue to display the necessary qualities of faith, commitment, high standards of discipline and fitness and, should the need arise, courage.

Finally let us not forget that remembrance is not just about a national but a world wide tragedy, repetitions of which we must seek to avoid in this new century, through a combination of communication and understanding. War must be the last resort as conflict is a bloody business. As members of the Forces today, we all hope that we will not be called upon to pay the ultimate price.

MEMORABILIA

ATS Enamel Badges	£2.75
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All prices are inclusive of postage and packing.
All cheques payable to WRAC Association
and sent to:

WRAC Association HQ
AGC Centre
Worthy Down
Winchester
Hants SO21 2RG

AGC Corps Day 2001

AGC Corps Day will take place this year on Saturday 09 June 2001 at Worthy Down.

The format this year will be Lunch, followed by a cricket match and possibly other sporting events. Music will be provided by the Band of the AGC and the day rounded off with afternoon tea.

The cost of the event is not known at time of going to print, but can be obtained, along with further details, by contacting Association HQ on 01962 887478.

To book a ticket, please complete and return the following proforma:

I would like _____ ticket(s) for the AGC Corps Day on 09 June 2001.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Gunners Corner

ATS MEMBERS AA BRANCH

Ex WIP 130 Pts E B Holder (née Lewis)
514 (M) HAA Bty, 151 Regt RA (1942 - 1945)

"The Dome, the London Eye and the Millennium Bridge" - all pale into insignificance compared to the Reunion of the ATS Members of Ack Ack Command Branch held at Imphal Barracks on 29 and 30 July in this "Millennium Year". Remarks made by our members last year ie, "tremendous" "wonderful" "super" and "best ever yet", led us to believe that it would take a miracle to better it. Well, miracle or not - we did it!! Not that we, the Committee, can claim all the credit. No way!! We did make suggestions of course and we worked jolly hard but without the kindness, enthusiasm and wonderfully efficient planning of our friends at York Garrison, none of it would have happened.

When Major (Retd) David Robertson welcomed us all on Saturday afternoon, he paid tribute to our dear friend and patron, General Sir Martin Farndale KCB, whose death on 10 May shocked and saddened every one of our branch members. A period of silence was kept as a mark of respect. Sir Martin was respected and loved by all "his girls" and will be sorely missed. His name was amongst those of our members who had passed away since our 1999 Reunion, and which were read out by our Padre, the Rev Geoffrey Holman during our Memorial Service in York Minster on Sunday 30 July to which we were warmly welcomed by the Dean, The Very Reverend Ray Funnell.

Our Guest of Honour this year was the Speaker of the House of Commons, The Rt Hon Betty Boothroyd MP who enjoyed every moment of her visit to York, along with Brigadier Andrew Farquhar MBE (Commander York Garrison), Major General Mike Steele MBE DL (Chairman RAA) and the Lord Mayor of York, Councillor Mrs Shân Braund. The Speaker took the salute from the Minster steps as veteran members of our branch, led by the Royal Artillery Band, who had provided the beautiful music in the Minster, marched past.

After being bussed back to Imphal Barracks and enjoying a well deserved drink, we were ready for lunch during which the RA Band, sweltering in the boiling sun, played a wonderful musical selection to accompany our meal, followed by a marching display. How glad we were that they were doing the marching, not us!! Our grateful thanks to all. Major General Mike Steele MBE, DL, addressing the assembly, brought greetings from our Captain General HM The Queen. After his speech it was the turn of our "honoured Guest". However, from the chatting going on, I do not think many had noticed the Speaker approach the microphone, which gave her the opportunity, in stentorian tones to instruct us - "Ordah!!!! Ordah!!" - which was greeted with much merriment. During her very entertaining speech, she told us that "the efforts of so many people to raise funds for the Memorial to the Women of WW2" of which she is Patron, had reached our target of £100,000 and we could now apply for a lottery grant!! The applause eventually died down and our guest was then able to carry out her final duty of the day - that of taking the salute following the "Sunset Ceremony".

What a day!! What a Weekend!! We all pray that we will still be around and able to attend "Reunion 2001". God willing, "We'll Meet Again".

THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM 2000

Eileen Sullivan, 37 Goodwin Road, Slough, Berks SL2 2ET
(Ex 618(M) HAA)

On 28 June, it was with great pleasure and pride that my husband and I attended the Dedication Service for the ATS Ack Ack Plot, at Alrewas. The service was quite moving and quite well attended.

The Arboretum is a truly amazing place, so many groves of trees of varying kinds, designs and colours, a very ambitious project, and a wonderful tribute to all who served. Our plot is already planted with many trees, and the Dedicatory Plaque says it all. The large Visitors Centre was nearing completion, and is quite close to our plot. So, many thanks to Vee Robinson for all her hard work, and making the day so successful.



Eileen Sullivan beside the plaque

WE DID MEET AGAIN

Mrs Beryl Holder (née Lewis)
10 Dale Road, Dronfield, Derbyshire, S18 1YG

May I through your good offices, send a message of hope to all ex ATS who are still trying to contact war time colleagues?

For some years I've been trying to "find" a friend who served in 514(M) HAA Bty, 151 Regt RA with me, without much luck. Then late last year, as Chairman of "ATS Members AA Command Branch, RAA", I was looking through the database of our branch for information regarding a friend of an ex ATS lady. She had contacted me hoping I could furnish the necessary information. Quite by chance I came on the aforementioned friend. I picked up the phone and the "girl" at the other end was as astonished as I was to be having a conversation after almost 56 years. We arranged to meet at our Branch Reunion held annually at Imphal Barracks, York and as you can see from the attached photo, (I am on the left) we made it.



Re-united after 56 years

ATS MEMBERS OF ACK ACK COMMAND BRANCH REUNION, YORK

Eileen Sullivan, 618(M) HAA Bty, 37 Goodwin Road,
Slough, Berks SL2 2ET



Who is keeping order?

The Re-union at York this year, was indeed a memorable event. In spite of being very wet and thundery en-route, the weather was extremely kind for the reunion.

The Saturday evening was great fun, meeting old friends. There were several Bands to entertain us, also dancing. It really was quite hilarious, all trying to remember the steps of old, favourite dances.

The Memorial Service at the Minster on Sunday had been greatly anticipated and was duly appreciated by all.

The 'March Past' was very professional, all in good step, and we were honoured to have the salute taken by Brigadier A P Farquhar MBE and the Right Honourable Betty Boothroyd.

A buffet lunch was enjoyed on return to Imphal Barracks, followed by a Marching Display given by The Royal Artillery Band.

The speeches followed, and I'm sure that we would all like to thank the Right Honourable Betty Boothroyd for giving us

her time so warmly and generously, and for the wonderful support she has given to promote the Memorial to the Women of World War 2.

Thanks also to Major (Retired) D M Robertson for making it possible for us to enjoy such a wonderful occasion, it gets better every year!

Here's to the next one.

GUNNERS REUNITED

Mrs E Blanchflower née Marshall, 156 Drayton Road,
Norwich NR3 2EA

About 18 months ago I made a determined effort to track down 2 of my friends from 473 Bty RA. After writing to the editors of Newcastle papers and the Eastbourne papers I succeeded. The result was we had a simply wonderful reunion in York at the AA Girls Reunion at Imphal Barracks. It was the first time we had met for 56 years.



As we were . . .

*L to R: Eileen Stonecox, Bette Weallens,
Elsie Marshall and Jean Hepworth*



As we are now . . .

*L to R: Mrs. Eileen Kitcher (née Stonecox),
Mrs. Elsie Blanchflower (née Marshall) and
Mrs. Bette Lebrocouy (née Weallens) - from America*

As we were – and as we are now! One of us was unable to get to York. We are certainly going to meet up again in the future.

Where are you now?

WHERE ARE ALL THE SOUTH EAST ASIA

COMMAND GIRLS?

Mrs Barbara Cawthorne BEM (W/75655 Sgt Bowers)
Lilac Cottage, 80 Chapel Road, Tadworth, KT20 5SE

I would love to hear from any of those girls who sailed with me from England to Singapore in December 1945.

The war with Germany was over. After four and a half years on ack-ack gun sites with 473 HAA Battery, I volunteered for a posting overseas. I re-mustered into the Royal Signals and, after a short training course, I was put in charge of 37 girls.

We were issued with tropical kit, including a bush hat. From this, we deduced that we were heading for the Far East. Our destination, of course, was hush-hush. I still have the Movement Order (Secret) directing us to "Destination T" on Troopship No. L20.

At Southampton docks, we boarded the *S.S. Alicantara*, along with 3,000 Dutch troops, bound for Java. And I was supposed to keep the girls on the straight and narrow? What a headache! Sadly, I failed. One or two were posted home on compassionate grounds.

We sailed through the Suez Canal and on to Ceylon. There we docked at Trincomalee. But when we arrived there we found a signal ordering us on to Singapore.

When we finally reached Singapore, the harbour was so packed with shipping that we were unable to dock. Does anyone remember how we had to climb down rope ladders and were taken ashore by landing craft? Then there was the long drive in lorries to Changi. There were Japanese soldiers everywhere being made to work. Our sleeping quarters were on the ground floor with no doors or windows – and we had Sikhs sleeping on charpoys outside to guard us.

We worked hard in the signal office, on the teleprinters and switchboards. But coming from war-weary England, the colour, warmth and energy of Singapore was exciting.

After some months we moved down from Changi to Tanglin Barracks. Remember the rickshaws, the sampans, Raffles Hotel and prickly heat?

In August 1946 I went into hospital with malaria. Eventually I was posted home, sailing on the same ship as the man I was to marry.

I should love to contact any of you who were in No. 2 Coy, HQ Allied Land Forces South East Asia. Did you, too, find the love of your life on the magical island of Singapore? Do write and let me know.

WERE YOU AN ATS/FANY?

Mrs Marjorie Monkman (W/85857 Abrahams)
24 Hill Rise, Ruislip, Middx HA4 7JL

I joined up nearly sixty years ago. I trained at Guildford and then went on to FANY No 1 MTTC at Camberley where I passed my driving test on a K2 ambulance. I was then attached to 7 Group and worked at Beaumanor Hall, Kedlesdon Hall and Foremark Hall driving troop carriers,

ambulances and staff cars. I am 79 years old, still driving my own car and have a clean licence.

I would like to hear from anyone who knew me, I was known as "Blondie" as I was sixty years ago!



"Marjorie with her friend Mrs Joyce Harper née Beardsley"



"Marjorie driving a K2 ambulance belonging to the Military Vehicle Trust at the Yeovil Festival of Transport in August 1999"

WERE YOU IN THE MIDDLE EAST 1947 – 1949?

Mrs Margaret Grey (W/327835 McIntyre)
3 Nash Close, Pretty Gate, Colchester CO3 4QH

Mrs Margaret Grey was W/327835 Pte McIntyre when she was in the ATS/WRAC between May 1945 and June 1949. She did her basic training in Warrington, became a pay clerk and then a general clerk.

Her overseas postings were mostly in the Middle East, KASR El Nil Barracks, GHQ MELF Cairo, Fayid and the Canal Zone. She completed her service as a Sergeant employed as a Personal Secretary to a Brigadier.



Margaret McIntyre (far left) at a Wedding in Cairo 1946

She would love to hear from anyone who remembers her.

REPLY TO LETTER FROM JANET JAMES PUBLISHED IN LIONESSE 2/2000 PAGE 17

Mrs P O'Connell (W/385432 LCpl Yeo)
3 Cumbrae Place, Aramolo, Wanganui, North Island,
New Zealand

Mrs Pauline O'Connell née Yeo from New Zealand writes to say that she served with Cpl Joyce Queripel in the New Zealand WRAC. Joyce has been married about forty years now and has two grown up sons. The family moved to Australia some years ago and Joyce can be contacted at:

8/718 Jennie Cox Close,
Erina 2250,
New South Wales,
Australia.

CAN YOU HELP TRACE MY FAMILY TREE?

Mrs P Hesketh (W/421903 Sgt Jackson)
22 The Crescent, Middleton St George, Darlington,
Co Durham DL2 1HL

I was in the WRAC from 1964 to 1971, my number W/421903 Sgt Jackson.

I am tracing my family tree and I believe my aunt used to be in the ATS in the 1940s. Her name was Elizabeth Toole and she was a cook. The only information I have is that she served in Bristol before she got married and then became Steadman.

She came from Collyhurst, Manchester.

Any information or photos from members would be much appreciated.

BARBARA THOMPSON WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Murray W W Brazier, 16 Longshots Close, Broomfield,
Chelmsford, Essex CM1 7DX

I am writing on behalf of a good friend in Australia named Raymond Rowsell. Although he has carried out extensive research into his family he has a large gap in the Thompson branch.

Charles Eric Thompson was born in NSW, Australia, on 12 December 1894. Charles, or Eric as he was usually known, came to England with the Australian Army during the 1914-18 war and stayed here. On 14 June 1919, WO1 Thompson, AIF married Doris Elaine Sturridge at St Mary's Church, Balham, London. Doris was the daughter of Arthur Percy Sturridge, a Balham Dentist. Eric and Doris had two daughters – Joan and Barbara – born in the early 1920s. During WW2 Barbara served in the ATS in an anti-aircraft battery on the south coast. Eric wrote to his relatives back in Australia telling them that Barbara's battery "brought down several enemy planes". The battery can be identified by the fact that it was commanded by D V P Wright, the England cricketer! Barbara was demobbed in 1946.

It is known that Barbara's elder sister Joan married in September or October 1939 (no details of her husband) and had two sons born in 1941 and 1946. Barbara married in the summer of 1946, again no details of her husband or of any children.

Eric Thompson, who had also done research into the Rowsell family from Somerset and Oxfordshire, kept in contact with his relatives back in Australia from an address in London, in particular during the late 1940s. Unfortunately, the fruits of his research were not passed on to his relatives "Down Under". All we do know about his later years is that he died on 11 August 1969, possibly in Australia.

If anyone can recall anything at all about Barbara Thompson, where she is living (if still alive), who she married and if she had any children, I would be pleased to have the details. I can then pass them on to my friend in Victoria who is, naturally enough, keen to make contact with any relatives he may have here in the "Old Country".

DOROTHY WHO?

Mrs E McCann (W/376864 LCpl Kett)
2c Springbank, Grimsby, N E Lincs DN34 4BG

When I was stationed in Ladysmith Camp Fayid in 1953 – 1954, I was one of three WRAC Medical Orderlies. Two were called Eileen (I was one of them) and the other was called Dorothy. I would like to make contact with Dorothy again. Unfortunately I cannot remember her surname. I wonder if anyone who reads "The Lioness" could help me? My maiden name was Kett (LCpl) W/376864

WERE YOU IN 478 HAA BATTERY?

Mrs Jean Lever née Harcombe
2 Tarnwater Cottages, Ashton-With-Stodday,
Lancaster LA2 0AH

The enclosed photograph is of a few of my friends – taken at Pakefield, Lowestoft June 1943 – from 478 HAA Battery.



PDF Compressor Free Version

From top left Margaret Cunningham, Marie Priestley, Joyce, Marjorie, myself Jean Lever née Harcombe, Sgt Saunders and Blondie Simpson

I'm still in touch with Margaret, Blondie and Peggy Alexander and would love to hear from anyone who remembers us.

A PLEA FROM CANADA

Mrs G Wallace née Hussey
983 East Chezzetcook, Halifax Co, NS BOJ 1N0

Mrs Gwen Wallace née Hussey is feeling isolated. Being in Nova Scotia her nearest branch is probably in Scotland! She would like to be able to contact other ex WRAC members. She trained at Guildford in 1950, proceeded to Gresford to be trained as a clerk (Course 217), was then posted to Chester, followed by Shrewsbury and after that Ladysmith Barracks, Fayd, Egypt until she came back to UK to get married.

Friends she remembers are: Hilda (Terry) Newson, Winnie Hughes, Anne Reece, Joan Maycher, Joy Pope, Eileen Kirk and Helen Feather. She would be delighted to hear from any of them or anyone else who might remember her.

WERE YOU A HAPPY GUNNER IN 1943?

Mrs Winifred Stimson née Haviland
3 Evans Gardens, Lodge Hill Road, Selly Oak,
Birmingham B29 6NQ

Mrs Winifred Stimson nee Haviland has sent in a photograph, showing a group of her colleagues, who were

members of the Radar Team of 578 Battery, 169 HAA Regiment RA in June 1943.



The only person's name she remembers is Sgt Scotthron (middle row second from left) with whom she went on several courses. Although she was absent from the photograph (not AWOL she says) she would like to hear from any of the team who remember her.

PLATOON PHOTOGRAPH 1942

Mrs I J Bentley (W/123221 Pte Isobel Joan Reddy)
21 Sefton Moss Villas, Litherland, Liverpool L21 7QX

W/123221 Pte Isobel Joan Reddy did her basic training at Guildford in January 1942. She was in B Company No. 3 Platoon as was her mother who enlisted at the same time.

An official platoon photograph was taken at the end of the course, but Mrs Bentley has lost hers. She would be very grateful if anybody who trained in that platoon and still has a copy of the photograph would let her borrow it to make a reproduction. Mrs Bentley became a plotter and her mother a driver.

PLATOON PHOTOGRAPH 1958

398968 Pte Janet Beer (now Cameron)
Present Address: 9 Chicago Avenue, Gillingham,
Kent ME7 2DR

I joined the Army in January 1958. I would like to find a platoon photograph that was taken on completion of training.

I was sent to 8 Independent Company, Bicester and joined the vehicle depot known as B Sites. There are eight of us in contact but would like to find more.

ANY OLD FRIENDS OUT THERE?

Mrs M Hawksworth (née Myles)
56 Southmoor Road, Hemsworth, Nr Pontefract,
Yorks WF9 4LZ

I joined the WRAC in 1959. I was known as Scottie Myles and I did my training at Guildford, then went on to CAD Kinton. My CO there was Col Ann Clissitt. It was lovely to see a picture of her again. I left in 1960 when I married my husband Cyril who was doing National Service. We celebrate our Ruby Wedding this year. I have been in touch with a few girls I was in the WRAC with but would like to be in touch with more. My friend Bronwen Ball married my brother-in-law so we would both be happy if anyone gets in touch.

HOPING TO BUILD ON PREVIOUS SUCCESS

Mrs L Collins (née Ingram)
42 Hodder Avenue, Peacehaven, East Sussex BN10 7PH



Lois Dempsie and Lucy Collins

I wonder if anyone would be interested in our photograph. Lois Dempsie (née Wedgewood) and I met up through "The Lioness". We have kept in touch by phone and letters over the past year. Lois (on the left) and her husband Robert have just been down from Scotland, and spent a week here with us in Sussex. We had a wonderful week, and time just rolled back. We were wondering if there were any more old ladies out there from 602 Bty Northern Ireland or 139 Regt in Kampenhout, Belgium, Berlin and Potsdam.

Where are you – Cynthia Floyes, Connie Hammond, Gwenda Shaw, Jimmy Cox, Margery Kiddy, Mary Russell, Anne Ford or Joan Riley? We would love to hear from you.

LETTER FROM CHINA

Pamela D Barton MBE, A1126 New World Apartments,
T.S.T Kowloon, Hong Kong, S.A.R China.

I was a member for many years but since the changeover we have been out of touch. I recently visited a fellow ATS friend of 1946 – we got in touch through the "Lioness". I called on her when I was in the UK in July.

I have tried hard to find a very good friend from "Austria" days by name of Cpl Meg Osborne (I believe her married name is LING). Several years ago my friend LCpl Mary

Turner/Johnson tried to locate her through "Lioness" but there was no response. Perhaps she has become a member since then!

I am a permanent resident of the S.A.R. China and have lived here for 41 years, having sailed out on a troop ship in 1949 with my former RSM husband.

WERE YOU IN ALDERSHOT IN '42

Mrs Marjorie Evans, 7 Yvonne Roberston House,
Hastings Road, Bexhill-on-Sea TN40 2HQ

Marjorie Evans (née Day) would like to get in touch with the group of girls she worked with in Aldershot in 1942 and who went to her wedding.

Two of the girls were Pte May Sumption and Pte Ann Lord.

ARE YOU IN THIS PICTURE?

Mrs N Johns (née Lord)
29 Surbiton Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 4AX



Mrs Johns would like to trace any of these ladies in the photo.

One name she can remember is Mary Snow from Birmingham and another is Jenny from Portsmouth.

She is on the right of the picture at the back. They all served in 499(M) HAA Battery. Her name then was Nancy Lord.

DID YOU SERVE IN WINCHESTER DURING THE WAR?

Mrs Jean Kingdon, 123 Cranbury Road, Eastleigh,
Hants SO50 5HH

Recently a group of four "girls" met at the Union Jack Club in London for lunch. Barbara (Babs) Kersley, Margaret Newcombe, Lyn Woolf (née Hatton) and me, Blacky (Jean Kingdon, formerly Caudr (née Black)).

We served in the Company Office of "J" Coy in Winchester around 1941 – 1944. Babs was the Pay Corporal, Lyn the Orderly Room Sergeant, Margaret was Company Commander before Joyce L Way took over, and I was the CSM.

Babs and I have been friends all through the years. I met up with Margaret through the King Alfred College reunions. I lost touch with Lyn in the 1950s, she contacted me by letter about three years ago, again from information she obtained

when enquiring about the KAC reunions. Margaret and Babs had not seen Lyn for about 57 years. You can imagine the reminiscing..... I wonder what happened to "my little Mountain", Joyce Mountain, (her mother was a beautiful embroideress); Amy Leal, Iris Garside (I came across her husband quite recently who was in the BR for many, many years ago, but I never met up with Iris) and many more?

For those interested, anyone who served in Winchester and either worked or lived in KAC can become a member of The Winton Club. This Club for ex students of KAC, a Teacher Training College, will accept ATS who were stationed at the College during the War. We meet once a year, in July. There is an AGM and lunch, preceded by coffee and a Church Service in the College. Any one wishing to stay overnight can obtain accommodation in the College. A few of us meet up, usually at The Royal Hotel, for lunch on the Friday before. This get-together was started quite a few years ago by Clarissa Ellis. Since her death, the ATS side of the organisation has been taken over by Betty Verworth née Ellsworth (52 Thornhill, Chacombe, Banbury Oxon OX17 2JQ. Telephone Number 01295 710479) who would love to hear from any of you who were "on records" or, who looked after them. I would too.

MURIEL WALKER (BURNETT)

Moyra Walker Burnett Reading
5 Park Ride Drive, Mandurah, Western Australia 6210

I am desperately wanting to contact my eldest sister Muriel Walker (Burnett) who joined the ATS in Aberdeen, Scotland mid 1944 at the age of 18 years. Her mother's name was Annie MacDonald Walker. I feel sure Muriel would have used the name of Walker rather than my father's name of Burnett. No doubt she would have a married name by now. Muriel would now be 73 - 74. If anyone remembers, or knows of my sister Muriel, could they contact me. The rest of her family, including sisters Margaret and May left Aberdeen for Australia in April 1948.

CALLING FROM CANADA

Ms Patricia Neal
5041 214A Street, Langley, BC V3A 8K9



Ms Patricia Neal née Harris served in the ATS from 1944 to 1947 when she got married. During her service she was stationed at Oxford, Guildford and Camberley.

She is now a widow and lives with her daughter and family in Canada.

Apart from Anna Wilson and Jeanne Houndslow who she is already in contact with, she wonders if there is anyone else who remembers her?

BICESTER 1943 - 1946

Mrs June E Capon (née Monier-Williams W/246880)
10 Everard Road, Ringwood East 3135, Melbourne,
Victoria, Australia.



W/246880 Pte J E Monier-Williams now Mrs June Capon joined the ATS in 1943, served three years at Bicester and was demobbed in 1946.

She always hopes that she will see someone she knew in the Lioness but has never done so. She would like to know if Alma, Agnes, Stella, Harriet, Joan and Josie would recognise themselves from the photograph?

CAN YOU FIND MARY WELLS

Derick Wilson, 2 Hayburn Avenue, Hull,
West Yorkshire HU5 4NA

I am trying to trace an ex-member of the ATS.

In 1941 a Barbara Porter of 62 Cranbrooke Avenue in Hull became pregnant and made excuses to move away from Hull to give birth to a boy in Keighley, West Yorks. Until this year not a single member of her family knew of either the pregnancy or the birth and the child was adopted as a baby. That baby was my father.

Barbera returned to her family in Hull and in either 1942 or 43 joined the ATS and became a Gunner. She joined up with her best friend Mary Wells. I have no other details of Mary.

As my dad grew up his adoptive parents never told him that he had been adopted but he found out at a young age from people living in the area and other family members. He always wanted to trace his natural family but did not want to upset his adoptive parents so he decided he would leave it until after their deaths. His adoptive mother lived to the ripe old age of 90 and died in March this year so he applied for his original birth certificate soon afterwards. This is quite a lengthy process and tragically dad died very suddenly in July aged just 58 yrs. His birth certificate arrived 2 days later.

I then took over the enquiries and through the voters' registers and telephone book I quickly found his cousin who still lives in Hull.

We have since been put in touch with several members of dad's natural family including his half brother and sister but unfortunately his mother had died in 1992.

Of course all of this has been a huge shock to them, as they knew nothing of my dad's existence until my phone call. However they have all come to terms with it and have been very helpful and accepting.

As you can imagine, we would all like to find out as much as possible about his father and the only person possibly alive who might be able to help is Barbara's best friend Mary Wells.

I do not imagine that I will actually be able to trace my granddad but Mary may well know the circumstances etc.

I do hope this story makes sense to you and hope you can help.

WERE YOU AT DONNINGTON?

Mr J Patterson, 70 The Quadrant, Balkwell Estate, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE29 7HU

An ex-WRAC lady named Joan Buckley is being sought after by an old friend Mr J Patterson.

Joan was stationed at N Camp, North Donnington, Shrewsbury in 1950 and came from Northampton.

VIOLETTA PATRIARCA

Mrs V Lipscombe, Flat 3, Dene Court, 11 Inglis Road, Folkestone, Kent

Mrs Violetta Lipscombe née Patriarca (known as Pat) would like to make contact with any of her old ATS friends.

She enlisted in June 1942 and was discharged in May 1946, her army number was W/175178. She served in HQ North Midland District Nottingham, 21 Army Group Brussels and BAOR Germany. She feels that there must be some ladies who remember spending VE night in Brussels and Christmas 1945 in Bad Oynhausen!

DOES THE NAME MARGORIE HICKS RING ANY BELLS?

Ron & Celia Hollands, 14 Speldhurst Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 0DP

I would be very interested to hear from anyone who served with my mother Margorie Hicks at Lichfield or anywhere else in that area, between January 1942 and September 1943. Margorie was from Bovey Tracey, Devon, and was nearly 19 on enlistment. She was enrolled into the ATS as a Private in January 1942, was posted to B Company No. 3 Training Centre and then attached to Sub Officers School in Lichfield. In September 1942 she was posted to A Company and passed tests as Clerk Class 3, 2 and 1. She was discharged in September 1943.

I would be so very pleased to hear from anyone who can remember her.

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2001

The Annual General Meeting of the WRAC Association will take place at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Road, London on 21 April 2001 commencing at 1430 hrs.

Provisional Agenda

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2000 AGM
4. Matters arising from the Minutes
5. Council Report
6. Financial Report
7. Editor's Report
8. Committee Reports
 - a. ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund
 - b. Executive Committee
1. Election of Vice Presidents of Council
2. Resolutions
3. Any Other Business
4. Date of Next Meeting

Any additional items for the agenda should be submitted to the General Secretary by 14 March 2001.

Items for discussion at the Secretaries Meeting should also be submitted by this date.

For security reasons a full list of people attending is required by the Victory Services Club.

If you wish to attend, please inform the General Secretary at Association HQ by 01 April 2001.

OVERSEAS PAYMENTS

Please note that in future, all payments for subscriptions, postage and memorabilia will only be accepted In Sterling.

Please ask your bank for a Money Order or Sterling Cheque.

We regret to have to impose this restriction, but due to the vagaries of exchange rates, the majority of overseas payments fall significantly short of the amount due.

Reunions

WALES AND THE WEST AREA ANNUAL REUNION

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Shropshire Branch hosted a successful Area Reunion at Cordingley Hall, Donnington on the 23rd September. The Chairman of Wrekin and Donnington Council with his wife were invited guests. The buffet lunch was excellent and the entertainment was enjoyed by everyone, including our guests, who enthusiastically joined in the singing and dancing.

Thank you Shropshire for a very enjoyable reunion.

The next Area Reunion will be hosted by Leicester and Ashby branches and is to be held at the Masonic Hall London Road Leicester on 01 September 2001. Tickets will cost £8.00. Information and application forms will be sent to Area Branch Secretaries in the new year. Direct application for tickets can be made by writing to:

Miss D Doswell (Hon Treas), 16 Brabazon Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5HB. Tel: 0116 2714202.

Cheques should be made payable to WRAC Association.

REUNION I & J COMPANIES ATS ATS RECORDS, KING ALFRED'S COLLEGE, WINCHESTER

On 30 June a group of us met at the Royal Hotel, Winchester. After toasts to the late Clarissa Ellis, who had worked so hard to keep us together, and to "absent friends", we enjoyed an excellent lunch. We were in a private room with first class and friendly service – we talked non-stop and were amazed to find, on finally breaking up that it was 4 pm!

Many of us were accommodated at the College overnight – we had spent the previous evening talking of the old days and old friends, passing around snaps etc.

On Saturday we met for coffee and attended the service in the beautifully refurbished chapel (in our ATS days it was locked and packed to the ceilings with furniture).

We are always made to feel completely welcome by the staff and ex-students of the college and they are really pleased to share their reunion weekend with us.

Eighteen of us attended the lunch. During the speeches afterwards a roll call was made of all those attending, according to the years spent at the college. The ex-students (some now in their 80s or more) were enthusiastically clapped but the ATS were cheered – a most uplifting occasion and greatly enjoyed by all!

The lunch at the Royal Hotel next year is booked for Friday 6 July 2001 and the college reunion is on the seventh. All ATS who served at KAC are welcome and I should be pleased to hear from anyone interested.

Betty Venworth (née ELSWORTH) Tel: 01295 710479

ACK ACK REUNION York 2000

On the weekend of 29 – 30 July 2000, the annual reunion of the Ack Ack took place at Fulford Barracks in York. Our "special" guest this year was Miss Betty Boothroyd. "Special" she certainly was. All day Sunday, from after the memorial service at the Minster until sunset when the Standard was lowered, Betty was one of us; chatting, laughing, stopping for hundreds of photographs; nothing too much trouble. Even if her first words over the mike were "Order! Order!", this lady was tops with everyone.

Approximately 400 of us had a wonderful weekend. Brigadier A O Farquar MBE and all helpers looked after us in a right royal manner.



L-R: Joyce Howlett (née Watkins), Deena McGee (née Ross), Betty Masterman (née Sheperd), Peggy Horrocks (née Shurburn)

A wonderful, memorable week-end and very well organised.

93RD SEARCHLIGHT REGIMENT RA REUNION

Members of the 93rd Searchlight Regiment RA held their annual reunion at the Union Jack Club Waterloo on Saturday 02 September 2000.



The photograph was taken by Sgt Ian Liptrot, London District Photographer, HQ Londist, who, happening to be at the UJC that day, kindly agreed to take one of the group.

WRAC PT RE-UNION 2001

The next WRAC PT Re-union Dinner will be held at the Army School of Physical Training Aldershot on Saturday 21 July 2001. Full details will be circulated to all registered members in the New Year. Should there be any address changes, or if there are any former AIPs, SOPTs or PTIs who have not yet registered but would be interested in attending please contact:

Capt (Retd) Kate Bettison
19 Olde Farm Drive
Darby Green
Camberley
Surrey GU17 0DU

Tel No: 01252 873174
Email: katebettison@supanet.com

THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS DINNER 2000 Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford, 13 – 15 October 2000

Thursday After an eventful and stressful year, I decided to join Kathleen Hughes, Cordelia Harding, Joan Lake and Joan Ryder and start the weekend early. The idea was to relax and get away from the phone and computer. As usual, theory is one thing, practise is another but we all enjoyed a bar snack and a few laughs before retiring early.

Friday My early morning call dragged me, reluctantly, from my bed. A hot shower and a good breakfast set me up for the day. It was to be a long day. I had forgotten it was Friday the 13th and true to form, things were to go awry. The floods in Sussex, the usual Friday commuter traffic and motorway accidents caused havoc with train and coach timetables as well as estimated travelling times. Telephone calls spelt cancellations due to personal accidents or emergency hospital admissions. By lunchtime I was convinced that the early weekenders would have the Hotel to themselves. A prophet of doom, the eternal pessimist – I had no faith. Suddenly the doors opened and in walked Betty and Karen Freak, followed closely by Janet Watkins, Chris Dalziel and newcomer Annie McGinley. Annie had a ball! She was reunited with an old friend, Evelyn Norton. They had been good friends in Egypt. You mustn't tell a soul but they used to be teddy girls. They did! The rest of the day was a blur of smiling faces and bear hugs. The QM Stores was established, manned by Cordelia, Joan, Maureen and Sue Dolphin. They "reluctantly" sampled the wine, so that they could inform buyers of its finer qualities. The very discerning purchaser bought one of each then came back for more. From my vantage point in reception, I can only tell you that there was a lot of laughing going on and not an AF 1157 in sight. I don't think they were buying locknit knickers! There were two birthday celebrations that day, Ann Mahony and Bimbo Coleman, suffice to say they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Saturday Another early start moving mannequins, Standards etc into the Royal Suite. Daphne, sporting auburn hair, was dressed in No. 1 Dress uniform and her sister Dièdre, despite being headless/armless and legless, (she was the only one who was) wore a No. 2 Dress. The hard work and many tasks were made easier by the number of willing hands that were available. The

QM Stores continued with sales of raffle tickets, wine, name the doll etc. Beryl and Averill did a roaring trade in T-shirts and Sweatshirts. Brigadier Nield arrived at about 4.00 pm and was left to settle in and rest after her journey. Room Service, in disguise, called to offer a sample of the Hotel's cuisine. If pressed, Brigadier Nield may tell you the gory details. By 6.00 pm the 'retail therapy' group had returned and were recovering on their beds or in the shower. The committee members viewed the Royal Suite with satisfaction. Tables were laid and numbered. Individual WRAC flags and table arrangements were in place. On each side plate lay a well kept secret!

7.30 pm and the Bar was packed to capacity. Sue Dolphin was still selling raffle tickets, Joan Lake – Name the Doll and Laura Kirk – the Bonus Ball. At 8.45 pm the doors of the Royal Suite were opened to the sound of 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill'. Our President, Val Kembal, welcomed everyone and said Grace. The WRAC Dinner 2000 had begun. What a lovely evening. The food was excellent. Brigadier Nield's speech was not only amusing but enlightening too. The raffle, as usual, was dealt with efficiently by Val and a faithful band of runners. The runners covered so much ground that they qualified for next year's marathon. The Star Prize was deservedly won by Cicely Connolly; Mr Jingles by June Jones and Name the Doll by Moric Plume. The Bonus Ball, 30, had three winners - Mary Pearce, Irene Hall and Carole Gorman each of whom won £30. Our charity this year was Cancer Research. The Dinner Club Committee challenged the diners to match a donation of £100. Members quickly raised £140. Brigadier Nield very generously donated a further £50. Many thanks to everyone for their generosity.

The DJ played all the old favourites as we rock n' rolled the night away. At 12.30 am everyone gathered for 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill'. The sound of marching feet was infectious. As the line wound its way through the tables, into the bar and back again, it grew longer and longer. With great reluctance the evening drew to a close. With the festive season only 64 days away I took the opportunity of not only saying goodnight but I wished everyone a "Merry Christmas". The sound of 125 Voices singing 'Silent Night', with such sincerity, would have filled the Royal Albert Hall. It was beautiful.

Sunday The Reverend Tina Turner conducted the Service. Her theme was prayer and, with her young daughter, Catherine, they explored the everyday meaning of the Lord's Prayer. It was not only unusual but it was entertaining and very true to life. Frances Green very proudly carried the HQ Association Standard. Branch Standards were carried by Maureen Deeley – Birmingham; Ann Mahony – Cleveland, Sue Dolphin – Luton; Gladys Pope – Salisbury. The Service was almost over and it was 'Time to Say Goodbye'. As the music flowed around the room I saw Kathleen Hughes sway and I watched as it spread along the rows. Hands were joined once more in friendship, in comradeship. The spirit of the FANY, the QMAAC and the ATS is alive and well. See you in October.

Ann

PS The well kept secret! It was a beautiful, green and gold carnation. One hundred and forty carnations were lovingly knitted, in 3 weeks, by Joyce Checketts, Maureen Deeley, Dorinda, Betty Freak, June Minard, Win Roberts and myself.

BURMA STAR REUNION

Along with a friend from Cleveland Branch (Pat Hill) and our husbands, we attended the 14th Annual Burma Star Reunion in Blackpool. Almost 1,500 members and families attended, and that's a record for the event. Entertainment was provided in the Winter Garden Ballroom by The Beverley Sisters and The Batchelors.



Burma Star Reunion

Forty standards were paraded – Viscount Slim, whose father was with the 'forgotten army' as it was known, was present along with 3 Gurkha soldiers and the lovely Chelsea Pensioners.

On Sunday we had a wonderfully attended church service and afterwards, a wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph. Then back to the Winter Gardens to say our farewells to old comrades – this may be the last get together. Lots of battles were fought and won over a pint of beer!

Thank you so much to Blackpool Burma Star Branch.

Olive Kinghorn

CANADIAN ATS REUNION 2000 Wyn Raven



"Col Georgina Khich" leads the troops on parade

It was quite a party, with 92 people meeting in London Ontario Canada. They came from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coasts and all parts in between. We had two ladies from England and also many from the USA and all over Canada. Registration began on Friday afternoon when the ladies received their itinerary for the weekend. They were also each given an engraved Pewter Clock to commemorate the occasion. On Friday evening we were served a delicious dinner which was followed by an all round entertainer, Bob Finlay; he was fantastic. On Saturday morning we had a meeting followed by lunch. The afternoon was left open for sight-seeing, shopping or just lazing around the Pool. Saturday evening started with Cocktails from 5.30 to 6.30 followed by a lovely Dinner, after which we had Dancing and Karaoke. Around 9.30, our acting Sergeant Major Jessie Seddon calls the girls on Parade, then Colonel Georgina Khich, (AKA George Yelland) inspects the Troops. They marched through the Hotel to the Colonel Bogey March; the ladies all enjoy this segment of our weekend. We had a sale of crafts, all of which had been donated. We had all kinds of knitted items including dolls, scarfs, sweaters and such; we had Angels and Butterflies and Jewellery. Margaret Garbutt and Jessie Seddon looked after this, also we had a raffle on a doll dressed in ATS Battle Dress.

The ladies are generous with their donations, and also in their purchasing. Connie Van Tichelin sold ATS Sweatshirts embroidered with the ATS crest. This year we got 6 new members, 4 of whom were able to attend the reunion. We had 2 visitors from England, Mina Valler and Winnie Jennings. We voted to meet again next September in London, Ontario from 7 – 9 September 2001. If anyone is interested in further information please contact Wyn Raven, 595 Knights Hill Road, London, Ontario, N6J 3A3 Canada. Telephone Number 1 519 686 5840

W/72949 Bunty (Beattie) Jones sent in the enclosed newspaper cutting, reproduced below by kind permission of the Editor, The Illawarra Mercury.

'FEARLESS FOSDICK' MARCHES AGAIN Veterans reunited for Anzac Day By Danielle Woolage

'Until recently ex-servicewomen Bunty Jones and Barbara Fosdick had not laid eyes on each other for 56 years – a long time between drinks.

So naturally the first thing the pair did when they saw each other was make up for lost time.

The World War II veterans lost contact after Mrs Fosdick migrated to Canada from the UK and Mrs Jones settled in Warrawong.

The two first met when they were wide-eyed 17-year-olds who volunteered to serve in Britain's Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

They were assigned to the same barracks and quickly established a friendship which has survived a number of wars, extreme distances and five decades of lost years.



Ex-servicewomen Bunty Jones and Barbara Fosdick finally caught up with each other after 56 years.

It was only a few years ago that the pair renewed their friendship through letters and phone calls but the unspoken bond, cemented by the tragedy of war, was never really broken.

"Nothing has changed," Mrs Jones said.

"It is like we have never been apart."

The two giggled like schoolgirls when they reminisced about their military days and denied that they were brave to become soldiers at such a tender age.

"We didn't do this because we were brave...foolhardy, maybe," Mrs Jones joked.

"At 17 you are fearless and we were just ordinary people who had no idea what we were in for, but we would do it all again."

Mrs Fosdick agreed and said her days in the military gave her a sense of achievement.

"I decided to join when I saw Cardiff go up in flames," she said.

"We fired rifles, built roads and went on guard duty just like the men. We lived like men, marched like men and died like men.

"And our bond with our fellow servicewomen is just as strong."

That is why the woman they call Fearless Fosdick has travelled to Wollongong to visit her long-lost friend.

"My daughter convinced me it would be cheaper to buy a plane ticket to visit Bunty than continue our marathon conversations on the telephone," she said.

"So I planned my trip around Anzac Day. I have heard it is such a wonderful ceremony and I am looking forward to marching."

But she is not looking forward to the dawn service – it reminds her too much of the chilly mornings of her military days.'

News from the Benevolent Fund

It is clear that many of our applicants are not receiving their full entitlements under the minimum income guarantee. The current figures are:

	Single	Married Couples
Under 60 years	£52.20	£ 81.95
60 – 74	£78.45	£121.95
74 – 79	£80.85	£125.35
80 Plus	£86.05	£131.05

For those who are not sure that they are getting their full entitlement, there is an Income Support help line (Free Phone) **0800 028 1111**. The Social Services also provide a form filling service over the phone.

The Winter Fuel payment has as you know been increased to £200 per household and is available for both **men** and women over 60 years of age. It is not means tested and if you or your spouse have not received this benefit then you should call the **Winter Fuel Payment Line on 0845 151515**. If your husband is younger than you and became 60 within the last three years, he is entitled to claim retrospective payment for the years after he reached the

age of 60. However, remember that although the payment may be made 50:50 to husband and wife, the maximum sum mentioned above, is per household.

Working Family Tax Credit was introduced last year and may be suitable for some of our applicants. It is not an automatic benefit but must be claimed. It is available to people on limited incomes but who are working a minimum of 16 hours per week. The applicant must have more than one dependant child and have savings of £8,000 or less. There is a childcare element within this allowance which represents a real benefit to working mothers. For more details, please call the benefits help line (stated below).

There are a number of other improvements to benefits and allowances mentioned by the Chancellor last November. The new rates will be published soon and I will include the more relevant details in the next issue.

For general Benefit enquiries the free phone number is **0800 882200** and for those on the 'net' you can access them on <http://WWW.DSS.Gouv.UK.BA/BA>.

Weddings

GOLDEN WEDDING – BRITCHFORD – DURDIN



Mr and Mrs Britchford on their wedding day

On 3 September 1949 at All Hallows Church Wellingborough, Northants Kenneth Britchford Ex-Royal Navy to Margaret Durdin Ex-ATS 1942 – 1945.

Present Address: 81 Valley Road,
Wellingborough,
Northants
NN8 2PN

GOLDEN WEDDING 22 JULY 2000 – DICKSON – MURRAY



Cpl Charles Dickson RE and Margaret Hiddleston Murray ex-ATS W/76914 married in the British Church, Frankfurt, Germany on 22 July 1950

Present Address: 19 Osborn Gardens,
London
NW7 1DY



Celebrating their Golden Anniversary

Queen Mother

PAGEANT PARTY OR PARADE?

Madge Evans, Luton Branch

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My phone rang one morning towards the end of June, the caller enquiring whether I had a green skirt to match my green jacket.

Mystified, I confirmed that I had, whereupon the caller asked if I would like to go on the pageant for HM the Queen Mother's 100th Birthday celebrations! My immediate reaction was "this is a wind-up", but no, our esteemed Chief Clerk was perfectly serious, and within days, I received my reporting instructions. My home is only 30 miles from London, but not fancying travelling up to Town with the commuters, wearing my uniform, I booked into the Victory Club, as did several others of our group. We got together on Tuesday evening for a good old 'chin-wag' and a getting to know one another session. On Wednesday 19 July we were all up bright and early, ready for our big day. My tum felt like a butterfly farm as we grabbed a cab to take us to Birdcage Walk and our assembly point.

Once there, Major Maskens-McIntyre, our detachment commander, slipped swiftly into regimental mode, sizing us off etc., in readiness. Two young Coldstream Guardsmen had been detailed to look after us. I can just imagine their reactions on reading Part 1 Orders and finding they had been assigned to look after 10 old ladies, approximate average age 65! All credit to them, they carried out their duties with courtesy, respect and great good humour.

Parked opposite our assembly point was what we assumed to be a horse-transporter - until 5 camels were unloaded. Their handlers had set about putting on their saddles and finery when a small, sliding window in the transporter was pushed open by a small, brown head which bellowed "Mum" - in camel. We were verging on hysterical as Mother camel did her best to get back to her calf. During the pageant, she was the camel that sat down right in front of the Royal box - appealing to Her Majesty perhaps?

The first rehearsal was brought to an untimely halt by the actions of some obscure faction of the IRA, darned cheek, but it did not deter us.

During the break for lunch, the stalwarts of the WRVS fed all 7,000 participants - our picnic in the park. They distributed drinks donated by ASDA, airline lunches courtesy of Monarch Airlines and commemorative plastic mugs bearing the birthday logo which, as the temperature reached 83 degrees at one point, we didn't need. To our right in the pageant were a group of RN/RM Association who kept veering into our squad whilst we were marching. One of our number challenged them. They answered that they didn't want to walk in the 'calling cards', deposited on the road by the animals, as they had shone their shoes!

The second rehearsal passed off without incident, but we found the mixture of sand and sawdust spread over Horse Guards Parade was dreadful to march on, and as a result our marching left a lot to be desired.

Right behind us were a contingent of former Southern Rhodesian Police with whom we struck up a rapport, so much so that, when told to move further back, they refused point blank, saying "We want to march behind the girls in green".

The actual pageant went extremely well - although I do expect a right rollicking from a high-ranking member of our Association when next we meet if she happened to notice that I "Eyes lefted" too early. Letting 4 Indep Coy down!

By the time we got back to the Victory Club, my feet felt about 30 years older than the rest of me, but it was worth it. Later on in the Victory Club bar (where else?), a lady approached us, enquiring if we were the ladies who had represented the WRAC Association. We said we were, whereupon she told us she had been a member of the Womens Royal Australian Army Corps and that we had made her very proud. She told us she was in London because her son was one of the Australian Army detachment mounting guard at Buckingham Palace. I feel very honoured and proud to have been thought worthy to represent our Association on such a memorable occasion - one I shall remember for the rest of my days.

THE PAGEANT OF 100 YEARS

July 19th 2000

HORSE GUARDS PARADE

Daphne Brookes

This was Horse Guards Parade as one has never seen it before. Over past years I have attended Trooping the Colour; Beating the Retreat and have gathered there with other veterans before marching into Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday, but this day was so different.

The People

Yes, there were plenty of personnel on parade from all three services, but added to the military spectacular was the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra together with massed choirs from throughout the UK. This formed the backcloth as everyone awaited the arrival of Her Majesty, the Queen Mother, in celebration of her 100th birthday. Her imminent arrival was heralded by Buglers from the Royal Air Force, high up on the Admiralty Citadel (not the State Trumpeters as stated on ITV, nor the Royal Marines as in the official programme).

The March-Past

The Parade was brought to attention and the 7,000 people in the stands rose to their feet - the atmosphere was electric - my seat was high, behind the royal podium and just to one side of the royal box. Once Her Majesty, together with H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, had inspected the Armed Forces from the UK and the Commonwealth, she and the Prince returned to the flower decked podium. There then followed a march-past which concluded with the Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery, The Mounted Band and Escort of the Household Cavalry and the Pipes and Drums marched forward.

The Doves

Suddenly all was hushed, as young Dominic Kraemer sang Mendelssohn's "Oh for the Wings of a Dove" and 100 white doves were released and circled overhead and over Whitehall for some time before flying off to their Essex home.

The Pageant of 100 years, a real carnival of people from organisations associated with the Queen Mother during her lifetime - it seemed endless and so colourful, happy and

quite informal, and one wondered quite where everyone would fit on the Parade Ground!

I was quite surprised at how many organisations I could count as having been involved in during my own lifetime! Brownies, Girls Brigade, **PDF Compressor Free Version** Puffin's Ambulance Brigade, wartime service in the ATS, British Legion, Women's Royal Voluntary Service, Mothers Union, Royal Horticultural Society, National Trust and Women's Royal Army Corps Association.

The Birthday

I have always been proud of the fact that I share the same birthday as Her Majesty (but not the year) and that my late father was awarded his OBE in the Coronation Honours of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937, but had never dreamt I would be attending such a wonderful occasion as this.

The highlights were many and I'm still sorting it all out in my mind –

the singing of "Oh for the Wings of a Dove"; the Fly-past by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight; the many happy children taking part – so many; the camel who wanted to sit down; the Dignity of the Chelsea Pensioners; the scent of lilies and roses on the podium; but above all ...

Her Majesty

... resplendent in pink, determined not to sit all the way through – getting to her feet time and time again to wave, smile and be as gracious as ever.

Yes, it was hot, we did have extra walking because of security alerts and returned to Bournemouth very tired, but I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

THE QUEEN MOTHERS PAGEANT

Mrs Nora Kendall, Bradford Branch.

I was deeply honoured to be invited to take part in the pageant to celebrate the hundredth birthday of the Queen Mother, and to represent the Northern Area as one of 10 WRAC Association members from all parts of the country. We were in the care of Mrs A Masken – McIntire (Major Mac) who took us under her wing and was absolutely marvellous, never losing her 'cool' once during that long hot blistering day.

Most of us had met at The Victory Club the previous evening and quickly made friends, just as we had in those long ago wartime days.

The morning of 19 July, we converged on Birdcage Walk to be placed into position in readiness for the first rehearsal scheduled for 10.00 am.

The order was given and we marched off. It was very hot and we had been warned to take plenty of drinks (water tanks with cups had been placed at the top of Birdcage Walk for which we were truly thankful). We were halted and remained in place for almost an hour whilst a bomb scare was investigated.

After rehearsal, lunch awaited in St James Park, also toilets (very welcome). We joined queues for packed lunches, soft drinks and a raincoat each. A raincoat on this hot day?? The lunch – chicken salad and fruit pie was delicious and we ate it picnic style on the grass under a shady tree.

After this very welcome interval it was back to business and the dress rehearsal. There was a long wait while everyone got into position but by the time they had, the numbers taking part had swelled.

Near us were a party of camels – yes really camels! They were being unloaded from their transport. It was hilarious when it came time for their riders to mount. Camels have minds of their own and would turn and spin in circles with the riders half on and off the ground. This brought cheers and applause from those of us watching.

Meanwhile the sun got hotter and hotter.

Dress rehearsal drew near and the order to march given.

Here I must say a word or two about our Standard Bearer, Mrs Maureen Deeley. Three times we marched past and she carried her Standard with great dignity and never flagged in all that heat. Being a Standard Bearer myself I knew what she must have felt and had great admiration for her. Very well done Maureen!

Now at last we are marching proudly past the Queen Mother, who as always, looks lovely and the parade ground is full, with thousands of spectators clapping and cheering. This was a wonderful experience and we forgot our tired feet and just revelled in the moment.

After an address by the Queen Mother we had community singing which I'm sure must have been heard for miles. Cheering and clapping seemed to go on forever then the National Anthem was played, the Queen Mother's party left and it was all over. It was time to make our walk back to the starting point to say farewell to our little party with hopes to meet again, maybe the next Grand Reunion.

Taking part in a pageant like this, one only sees the immediate surroundings and not the whole so I, like others, looked forward to seeing it on video. But the powers that be had edited us out. A bitter disappointment to us all but I have my video anyway and my memories of the new friends I made. I shall never forget you ladies and the laughs we had that day.

HM THE QUEEN MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY PAGEANT

Major (Retd) A Maskens-McIntyre

It was a great honour to be asked by Brig Shirley Nield to lead the WRAC Association contingent on HM The Queen Mother's Birthday Pageant in London on 19 July 2000. Very good accounts of the day have been submitted by others so I will not bore you with my version, however, I had an interesting run up to the event which is worth sharing:

Not being in possession of a green blazer, I set about finding one; "Yellow Pages" and lots of telephone calls confirmed that green was not "in fashion" this year. I got a catalogue from Dewhirsts (a firm some of you may know who made underwear and clothing for Marks and Spencer) and, when the Women's No. 2 Dress uniform changed from Lovat green to Khaki in 1992, supplied made-to-measure uniforms for the recruits going through Guildford. They had the style, but not the green, so I gave them a ring and learned that they had some of last year's M & S stock. They gave me the code numbers to order a blazer and matching skirt. This done, I 'waited' and 'waited', time was getting on so I gave them a ring and was told, to my horror, that all M & S stocks had been withdrawn from their warehouse and sent to Belgium. What



The WRAC Association at the 100th Birthday Pageant



*Maureen Deeley prepares
to Parade the Association Standard*



Susan Moorcroft with Sir Norman Wisdom



Army Women's Contingent Queen Mother Pageant

was I to do in the short time before the event? Maybe I would have to get a suit made. Out came "Yellow Pages" again and lots more telephone calls. At one time I thought I was in luck and made a 100 mile round trip to Newton Abbot in Devon only to find that the jacket was not suitable and did not fit. Back home, very frustrated and with no more time to spare, I dialed a number and was told it was the M & S distribution warehouse. I told my sad story and the voice at the other end said: - "If your suit has been sent to Belgium madam, it can be sent back". My first thought was, "Has this man the power?". He went on "my name is Peter Salisbury, I am not in my own office at the moment but I will get back to you on Monday" (it was about 1630 on a Friday). The name did not ring a bell with me at the time, but it was no less than the Chief Executive of M & S himself, and yes, he had the power! On the Monday morning I was called by his secretary for some details. This was followed by a call from the Mail Order Director of Dewhirsts who told me they had located a blazer for me and that they were making a skirt ("You will go to the ball Cinderella!"). Later that week the suit arrived with a letter saying: - "The enclosed garments are sent to you with our compliments, we hope the day is a great success". I was sorry that Peter Salisbury lost his job and I am very grateful for his 'clout' on my behalf.

We were warned to bring our sense of humour on the 19 July and they were not kidding! That said, it was a mammoth task to put on such a show and one has to remember that civilians cannot be controlled in the same way as military personnel. I did not appreciate the full extent of the event until I got home and played the video; it was disappointing that the TV camera panned away from the parade when we were about to come into view and we did not get our moment of glory on TV. However, as you can see from the photographs, we were there and I for one will treasure the memories of that wonderful day. The whole atmosphere was electric and we got a lovely smile from both the Queen Mother and Prince Charles (who was reading out aloud the name of every group for the benefit of the Queen Mother). My personal thanks go to the other ladies who took part; for their good humour, turnout, stamina and the uncomplaining acceptance of a long, hard, hot day. I hope they all feel as rewarded and proud as I did.

A DAY NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

By Maureen Deeley, Birmingham Branch

I would just like to say how honoured I was to be asked to take part in the Queen Mothers 100th Birthday Parade. I was told there would be twelve WRAC ladies on parade, so I was ready for this. Then I was told to phone Major Maskins-McIntyre for instructions which I did. She told me that I would be carrying the Standard. I just could not believe it, I got goose bumps all over my arms and I had to sit down! It truly was a great honour.

I must say we had quite a few laughs and mishaps along the way. We all felt tired and weary as the day went on, standing in the hot sun. But then came lunch, we had a picnic in the park which was nice. Back on with our shoes. I realised I was getting a blister so off I ran across the park, "shoeless", to the Red Cross tent. Before I could get a plaster they wanted a full history of my background. With the plaster firmly in place and my tights back on I returned to the ladies. It was then I realised I had run across the park with an elastic band holding my skirt together. Not to worry it was on with the shoes and jacket and back on parade like the good troopers that we are.

Now it was Sue Marcroft's turn for mishap. The sole of her shoe was falling off. She went to the guardroom for assistance

where they sprayed super glue on it. It still wouldn't stick and I think it was Madge Evans who wrapped sellotape round the shoe like a bandage. However, it did not look very smart for the parade, so she departed for the shops. About ¾ of an hour later she re-appeared with a new pair of shoes – just in time for the parade. By now I had another blister and no plaster. But that did not deter me. Rehearsals were over and it was time for the parade. We got within earshot of the Band, heads went up and chests went out, nothing else mattered, - left, right, left, to the band, what a great feeling for us all. I carried the WRAC Standard with pride and felt 10ft tall. I think that feeling goes for all the girls who took part. What a day!

"ANGELS OF BURMA" BY DIANE SLOGGETT

PRICE: £10.50

When Diane Sloggett was only 19 years old and a St John's Ambulance Brigade V.A.D., she made a decision which would take her from the tranquillity of the convalescent home in which she was then working to a front-line hospital in Burma. It was 1944 and Lady Luis Mountbatten recruited 200 of these V.A.D's to help the over-worked Q.A's attached to the 14th Army. In intense heat and very poor living conditions, these courageous young women were to be pushed to their limit – they would come face to face with the atrocious injuries of war.

Angels of Burma is the story of how these young women were transported on a packed troopship, in the deepest secrecy, to Bombay. From there, they were posted in pairs to the hospitals where they were so greatly needed. Diane Sloggett was to find herself in the hospital at Panitola.

In moving detail she relates her experiences. There was much to be learned on the wards, where Penicillin had just become the new wonder drug. Night duty was suddenly alive with the additional hazards and strange noises of this exotic land – jackals prowled! Not to be forgotten, however, are the bonds of friendships formed, the camaraderie, the fortitude, the fun – off-duty and at Christmas – the romances which blossomed. Diane Sloggett is one very fine example of the many who learned to survive and smile in the face of adversity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diane Sloggett was born in 1925 of an army father and a French mother. At an early age she showed an interest in nursing, passing First Aid and Home Nursing tests at the age of 12. She was educated in Swanage and is an Honours Graduate in History. In 1943, she worked in a convalescent home near Salisbury. It is from there that she was recruited, by Lady Luis Mountbatten, to join the St John's Ambulance Brigade V.A.D's who aided the Q.A's nursing the 14th Army in Burma.

After a whirlwind romance and marriage to army officer, Alastair Mackenzie, she travelled extensively and they have one son and four grandchildren. Diane is now a widow and lives in Modbury in Devon with her five cats.

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Branch News

ACCRINGTON BRANCH

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*Isabella Hamilton, The Town Crier and Jean Delaney
at the Charity Market June 2000*

During the last few months the branch has been busy. In June we had a charity stall run by Hynburn Council in conjunction with Volunteers Week, which is organised every year to enable local charities to raise money. Our Chairperson Isabella, Jean our Treasurer and Linda one of our honorary members worked hard and raised £53.71, but they enjoyed doing it.

In the middle of July some of the members went out for a meal at the Walton Arms. They had a lovely lunch and a good afternoon was had by all. I am hoping this is going to be an ongoing event. It is nice when members meet other than at meetings.

We are doing very well for charity stalls. We had another one in August and raised £71.69. September has been a birthday month for four of our members. Marjorie was 80 and had an open house, Isabella was 76. Jean, our Treasurer was 65, and Linda was 60. She also opened her house for a party. Love and best wishes to them all from the branch.

Four of our members attended the reunion at Stafford and really enjoyed themselves.

ALDERSHOT



*Aldershot Branch Supper Cruise.
Foreground: Chairman Pauline Grundy
and Brigadier Nolan.
Behind (L to R: Elaine Smith,
Alison and John Schofield*

The Branch's summer began with a supper excursion on a long-boat on the Basingstoke canal; we enjoyed one of the few fine evenings of the season and a delicious meal into the bargain. The whole evening was made most memorable by celebrating Brigadier Nolan's "very special" birthday (it would be very indiscreet to put a number to it!) Gill Turner and Elaine Smith presented her with a beautiful bouquet on behalf of the branch.

We were very proud, in July, to see our president, Lt Col Susan Westlake, leading the contingent of army women at the Queen Mother's 100th birthday celebration; also on parade was piper, WO1 Danny Fleming whose wife Dawn, one of our members, had the honour to be presented to Her Majesty. There must be many former WRAC recruits who remember Dawn when she was SSgt McLean in one of the training companies at Guildford. A particularly special moment was when the WRAC Association representatives, led by Maj Maskens-Macintyre paraded with our Standard. Spontaneously, from all over the parade-ground, former members of the Corps from many branches, got to their feet in honour of our representatives.

Lt Col Soames welcomed us in August to her beautiful garden for an evening supper at which £100 was raised for the Benevolent Fund. In September, the Royal Signals Association invited us to join them in a visit to the Tower of London to view the Ceremony of the Keys – the Tower looked quite beautiful in the sunset and we were treated to a private tour led by a former Royal Signals WO who is now a Yeoman Warder. It was this evening that formed the basis for a talk to our own branch later in the same month – much enlivened by the reminiscences of one of our members who had been stationed there during the "Blitz".

A feature of our Christmas Party on 05 December, is to be a demonstration of the making of Christmas Crackers – we look forward to an explosive evening!

At our AGM, it was decided that, being such a geographically dispersed branch, we shall try to hold events elsewhere in the region as well as in Aldershot in the hope of catering for those who can no longer manage long distances, especially on dark nights.

ASHBY-de-la ZOUCH BRANCH

Our last report – this time last year (last century!) finished by looking forward to Christmas Lunch. Here we are again looking forward to...guess what!

It has been a good year – well balanced rather than dramatic. Thanks to our excellent Treasurer, Mavis Litchfield-Parry (who also supports the Chairman as "Vice"), our finances are in good order, which has enabled us to do two things. Firstly, we made donations to WRAC/ATS Benevolent Fund, the Princess Royal Fund and SSAFA. In addition, we gave small donations to three speakers. Secondly, we have subsidised the Christmas Lunch and transport to the Re-Union at Cardiff and the Wales and West Re-Union at Donnington, Shropshire. Our Treasurer made a considerable contribution to the cost of transport to Cardiff having had a Lottery win – a typically generous gesture.

Average attendance is 13 out of a membership of 27, which is quite good considering that, like many Branches, we have members who, for a variety of reasons, cannot attend. However, they look forward to our twice yearly newsletter as well as Lioness.

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We have had three excellent talks – on the “Derby Soup Run”, a charity for down and outs, Prison Life, and the reminiscences of a former Lady Mayor.

Membership of the Branch (in accordance with the ruling in the Constitution) was offered to WRNS and WAAFs but, so far, no takers.

We sent a good contingent to Cardiff, where they assisted as required and had a really good week-end. A group also attended the Wales and West Re-Union in Donnington, Shropshire. We enjoyed this immensely and observed very carefully, since we are assisting the Leicester Branch who are hosting the Annual Re-Union on 1 September 2001.

Support was given to the Memorial to the Women of the Second World War through correspondence with our local MP.

We try to give time for members to chat together and one of these occasions was lunch at a very large Garden Centre in our vicinity. Fourteen members and 2 husbands enjoyed excellent food and fantastic flowers. The number of us who can march in the local Remembrance Day Parade is now small, but some of us who are less able on our feet attend Church and the wreath laying ceremony at the War Memorial.

Our next meeting is the AGM when we shall look back on the year with, I hope, a degree of satisfaction. May 2001 bring all our fellow members a year they enjoy.

BATH BRANCH

In spite of our advancing years we are still able to hold meetings twice a month and have a very good attendance, albeit mostly ex-ATS. Unfortunately we do not seem to attract the WRAC members, but we welcome Mrs Violet Wheeler from Chippenham as our latest member. She served from 1942 with the Royal Artillery. Sadly Audrey Hole (née Bailey) has died.

We celebrated the Queen Mother's 100th Birthday with a lunch at which our Area Chairman, Col Val Trout, was able to join us. We were also pleased to welcome SSgt Tracey Jones from the Bristol Recruiting Office, who will shortly be taking up a position at Hullavington. We feel it is good we can span the generation gap and have contact with the present day servicewomen.

We are holding Coffee Mornings to raise funds not just for our Branch but also to support our own Benevolent funds, and send donations to the Star and Garter Home, Combat Stress and the Gurkha Welfare Fund. Like most charities we find fund raising is becoming more difficult.

We are indebted to the Africa Star Association who include us on their outings. Some of us have visited Athelhampton Manor with them, and we are looking forward to a visit in the near future to the Dome.

Members still knit for the children of serving members, and we have joined with Bristol members for a lunch at Fry's

Chocolate Complex at Keynsham. We keep in close touch with their Branch.

We have our Annual Christmas Lunch in December, and look forward confidently to 2001.

BOLTON BRANCH

In my last report I said that we might not be able to continue at our present venue. Happily this has now been resolved. The fees are quite affordable, but we have had to change our meeting day from Thursdays to Fridays and this has been agreed with our members.

We joined with other ex-servicemen and women in Victoria Square to commemorate VJ Day. We paid a final salute to veterans of the Burma Star, there being only six members left. This was followed by a remembrance service at the Parish Church, where their Standard was handed to the church. In June, three of our members joined the Veterans on a visit to the War Graves in France. On the 22nd September we enjoyed a day at Cheshire Oaks and Chester. The weather was quite good and the day was happily spent either shopping, sitting by the river or taking a boat trip. We now look forward to our birthday lunch in October.

BOURNEMOUTH BRANCH

Our May meeting was well attended and we held a Quiz and a Bring and Buy Sale.

June was a very busy month; our monthly meeting was held as a garden party at the home of Branch Secretary, Daphne Brookes. The following weekend eighteen of us attended the Veterans' Service of Remembrance and March Past at Weymouth. A really glorious day, and how proud we were to be a part of the 2,000 marching along that mile long sea front to the cheers of local folk and the holidaymakers.

On June 25th a group of us attended the Civic Service in St. Peter's Church, Bournemouth, for the laying-up of the Dunkirk Veterans' Standard – a most poignant and moving service.

For this year's main outing in July, we changed venues and visited the Cavalcade of Costume exhibition at Blandford, which was most interesting. This was followed by a cream tea. At our August meeting one of our members, Margaret Drew, gave us an insight into the varied problems and joys of living in Army Married Quarters at various locations in the world.

Sadly, during August, one of our members, Miss Jane Little, died and also the husbands of two members. Our condolences were sent to the families involved.

Due to the fuel crisis our September meeting was very low on numbers, but a lively discussion session was held.

Early in October we had a most interesting visit to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton. After lunch we were privileged to be escorted round the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church, St Bartholomew's, by the Chaplain, the Reverend Father Mark Jackson, and the Verger. The cemetery for Fleet Air Arm personnel was a most peaceful and tranquil spot. Our thanks were expressed to the ladies of the parish who kindly provided tea and scones.



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*Bournemouth Branch with the Chaplain and Verger
outside St. Bartholomew's Church,*

At our October meeting we shall have a Quiz, our usual Raffle to boost funds, and a discussion on the format of next year's programme.

November will be our Annual General Meeting, and then we look forward to our Christmas lunch at the Quality Hotel, Bournemouth.

Several new members have joined the Branch during the summer, but sadly to date, none have come along to the meetings – we hope to meet them in 2001.

Members of our group have attended various reunions again during the past few months, at York, Blandford, Bletchley Park, Chicksand Priory – we're always happy to recall our service days and meet our comrades.

We wish everyone a happy and healthy 2001. If you plan a visit to Bournemouth do contact us, we would be delighted to welcome you.

BRADFORD BRANCH

Greetings to all members at home and abroad.

Not a great deal to report this time. The main event of the summer was the Queen Mother's Pageant in July which I attended.

Our Summer Bring and Buy Sale was well attended and enjoyed by all.

The Northern Area Re-union was a great success with a very good lunch and lots of entertainment. Thank you to Gwyneth Friday who could have made a career as a comedienne. She was very funny.

It is with sadness I report the death of Mrs Betty Goldthorpe of Ossett Wakefield. A very good member who had been ill for a long time and will be sadly missed. Like other branches we have had our share of illnesses and hospital visits etc this year. Unfortunately we are getting older so this must be expected.

BRISTOL BRANCH

It doesn't seem so very long ago that I did our first Branch report. We feel that we have had a very successful first year. Our membership has increased; this is due to advertising on a Regional TV Community slot, which was shown at various times during the day for a week. We also have a slot on the Associations page on Channel 4. Our members have also taken posters to display in their local communities.

Ann Jones and myself paid a visit to Gloucester to meet some of our colleagues there. We had an enjoyable time and a return trip is promised. We think this will now be in the New Year due to other commitments. I, along with the Secretary and Treasurer from Bath, also joined the ladies in Cheltenham. We have promised to return, we had a most enjoyable time.

We were pleased that many of our members were able to attend Cardiff, some only came for the day on the Saturday but they enjoyed themselves.

This year, our members attended a service at Bristol Cathedral in the presence of the Duchess of Gloucester to honour the Queen Mother's Birthday. We have been invited to participate in the local Remembrance Service on 4 November and also to attend the parade in Bristol on 12 November.

We recently celebrated our first birthday. We had a Birthday cake and members brought food, we had a most enjoyable time.

We had a Fund Raising Auction of Bric a Brac, this was very successful with lots of bargains to be had. At the present time we are organising our lunch for February next year. We will have it at the Marriott again, we received such good service and the food was delicious.

Next year's plans include a trip to the Star and Garter Home and Poppy Village. We are also organising a few days at Weymouth in June for the Veterans' Week and we will be inviting speakers to our meetings.

We published the first edition of our Newsletter in June. It has been named 'Bugle Call' which we think is most appropriate. We hope to have our second edition ready for December. We feel the newsletter is an important part of the branch, as it keeps those members who are unable to attend meetings in touch.

There are two other changes we have introduced to the Branch. One is a Committee Member responsible for contacting members who are sick, and the other is a Committee Member to send Birthday Cards to members on their birthday.

One of our Serving Members, SSgt Tracey Jones, is being transferred. We hope she will stay with the Branch, but, as it was her birthday as well as her last meeting with us, we presented her with a Bristol Blue Paper Weight and Blue Jug from her many friends in the Branch. Tracey was working, so we actually took it to the Recruiting Office for the presentation.

Some of our members attended the WRAC Luncheon at Stafford. Well done to Anne and her very hardworking team, it was, as usual, first class.

I feel that for our first year we have been quite successful, certainly busy, and we look forward to the coming year with confidence.

Best wishes to you all, and I look forward to meeting you in April.

CANTERBURY BRANCH

Since our last report, Canterbury Branch have had some very enjoyable afternoon meetings in the form of an excellent talk by Liz Cook about the Donkey Sanctuary, a quiz about Kept and Bathing Belles at Mavis' Beach Hut. Fourteen members attended and Mavis, Doreen and Maria braved the cold wind and swam in the sea (they did not last long and had to come out for a refreshing cup of hot tea and a biscuit before they felt warm again). We had a very memorable musical interlude when we hosted some members of the Medway Branch, the WAAFs and WRNS to a party afternoon. There was an excellent buffet provided by members and a roaring rendition of 'Land of Hope and Glory' to round us off at the end. As some of our members are advancing in years, we decided that an informative talk about hearing aids would be useful and this proved very interesting. An excellent Christmas lunch was served at The Dominican Priory. Did we really eat all that food?

Maria hosted members to a very enjoyable afternoon tea with sandwiches, homemade scones and jam. She then proceeded to sell homegrown tomatoes, Bric a Brac, and cakes. We also had a raffle and Play Your Cards Right and she raised £81.20 for charity.

Members had an outing to Brogdale Apple Farm and the rain managed to hold off until they got back to Canterbury, a lovely day was had by all.

The Branch Standard has been carried at various events and this is appreciated very much by other Associations whom we support.

Earlier in the year one of our members had an idea that we, as a branch, should commemorate women who have served our country. Because of Rosina's efforts, a memorial bench has been placed in Trinity Gardens, Margate in honour of these women. We had a dedication service that was quite moving which the local Mayors and other Associations supported.

Our programme for the year 2001 is as follows:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 3 January | - Military Talk by Maria |
| 7 February | - Quizzes by Jenny, Doreen and Kay |
| 7 March | - Aromatherapy Talk |
| 5 April | - Fish and Chip Lunch.
Small Flower Arrangement Talk/Floral
Decoration Competition |
| 2 May | - Bring and Buy – Fundraiser |
| 6 June | - Mrs Finney Talk
Life as a Camp Follower Re: Royal
Marine Band |
| 4 July | - Yvonne Nulty Talk
Contents of a Suitcase |
| 1 August | - Bathing Belles at Mavis' Beach Hut |
| 5 September | - Party with WRNS and WAAF
Talk Pat Wilkinson – Behind the Scenes |
| 3 October | - AGM (Subscriptions Due) |
| 7 November | - Horder Centre for Arthritis Talk |
| 5 December | - Christmas Lunch |

Canterbury Branch would like to wish all members a healthy and prosperous New Year.

CARDIFF BRANCH

We have settled down after the excitement of the Grand Reunion and we are delighted with the favourable response from so many members, both from letters in the "Lioness" and personal phone calls. Once again, we would like to express our thanks to the Branches who did so much to make the occasion such a success. We expect the March Past will linger long in the memory, but at least it was different!

Sadly, our Chairman, Mrs Eve Poole ex-ATS, died in April – she will be greatly missed. Eve was instrumental in reviving the Cardiff Branch and making it the well attended Branch it is today.

On 23 September we attended the Shropshire Reunion at Cordingley Hall, Donnington and would like to thank their members for making it such an enjoyable occasion.

To return to the Grand Reunion; once again we thank you for appreciating our efforts. We hope that many of you will want to return to visit our lovely city - we will be sure to keep a warm welcome for you.

CHELMSFORD BRANCH

Since the last report our Branch has continued to meet at the British Legion Hall in Chelmsford on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The attendance of members is stable with about 40 of us enjoying each other's company.

We are sorry to report the death (in August) of our oldest member – Margaret Woods age 93. Margaret had served in the Territorial Army and the ATS between 1939 – 1945. We have many memories of her, but perhaps the one most remembered is a visit to her home one summer afternoon for our Anniversary Tea. Not only had she erected at least one rather ancient bell tent in case of rain but she went out of her way to make us welcome. As it had rained and the tent leaked, early arrivals had quite a difficult job getting the water out before anything else could happen. The rest of the afternoon also had its moments but, despite the difficulties, we all came away happy and feeling we could never again have an anniversary tea quite like that one! This year we held it at the British Legion Hall where we enjoyed some very good music provided by Mr Hines on his keyboard. He also read some amusing poems.

In June we went to Felixstowe for a day by the sea and all met together for a meal before returning home. Shortly after that, some of us went to Warner's Holiday Centre at Holme Lacey, near Hereford. There were visits to Hereford, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. We thank both Joyce and Joan for arranging the holiday and these outings. Just before we returned home, we were also able to make a visit to the newly opened museum commemorating the life of Violette Szabo GC, member of the SOE and former ATS member. We highly commend this museum and a report can be found separately.

After a holiday break, as we do not meet in August, we reassembled on 19 September for an informal afternoon where we exchanged photographs – some of our holidays and some of former ATS days. On 16 September, 13 of us joined other branches in East Anglia at a Group Re-union Lunch in Colchester. The event, arranged by Lady Val Kemball, our Area Chairman, was very successful and much enjoyed by those who were able to go.

We are looking forward to 4 March next year when a plaque commemorating ATS who served at Warley Barracks and elsewhere in Essex is being dedicated.

It is possible to receive our Newsletter if you are not able to get to meetings. Please contact the Hon. Secretary to entitle you to 12 copies.

Many thanks to all at HQ who support us during the year and our grateful thanks go also to all our members who help to keep our Branch "ticking over".

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE – WARLEY CHELMSFORD BRANCH

The details of the Dedication of the Plaque in the Chapel at the former Warley Barracks off Eagle Way near Brentwood in Essex are almost complete. Chelmsford Branch would like to thank everyone who has responded with information about those who served in Essex at the time of World War II. Your donations and help in compiling the Roll of Names is much appreciated.

The Service of Dedication is on **Sunday 4 March** at 11am. This will be followed by a Reception in the adjacent TA Centre where car parking has been arranged and we extend a warm invitation to anyone attending the service to join us for refreshments.

We are delighted that the Honorary Chaplain to the Association, the Rev. Susan Wing, is able to be with us to conduct the service and perform the Dedication. Standards will be paraded and medals should be worn.

For those who may need accommodation, the nearest hotel is FORTE POST-HOUSE, BRENTWOOD. They are offering a special rate for us, so if you make a booking, please mention the reason you are staying there to obtain it.

The prices given by the hotel are as follows:

One Night	Dinner Bed and Breakfast	£ 45pp
Two Nights	Dinner Bed and Breakfast	£ 85pp
Three Nights	Dinner Bed and Breakfast	£125pp

The Telephone Number is 01277 720009

The nearest Railway Station is Brentwood, about 2 miles away, and is on the Main Line from Liverpool Street.

Warley Chapel is approximately 1.75 miles from the hotel which has a good taxi service. Copies of a map for motorists can be sent if you require one – please send a SAE. Copies of the Roll of Names can also be sent, again, a SAE please size 8 x 5 (nearest). The latter will also be available following the service.

We look forward to welcoming all those who can make the journey to join us on this unique and special occasion. However, if you do intend to come, it would be very helpful if you could let us know beforehand.

Please contact the Hon. Secretary – Chelmsford Branch, Mrs Gina Shadrack, at 100 Arbour Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 7RL. Telephone 01245 251088 - if possible, well before the date.

CLEVELAND BRANCH

Hello again Ladies (and those Husbands who, from time to time, take a peek! I know mine does!).

Remember what we were all taught when we joined the ATS/WRAC? Volunteer for nothing. Well, I forgot, and have now taken over as Treasurer from Mrs Pat Hill. She decided to hang up her cheque book, so on behalf of the Branch I would like to say "thank you" to Pat for leaving the books in such good order – so you see the ex-WRAC are doing their bit, including our Standard Bearer of whom we are very proud.

Some of our ladies have been busy this year. They have been to Dunkirk, the Burma Star Reunion and Ack Ack Reunion, so I have included their accounts and photographs separate from this branch account.

We had our Birthday Party in July, and invited Sunderland Branch to join us. We had a great afternoon, with our visitors winning the majority of the raffle prizes!! On the agenda for the next meeting - should we ask them again?? I think so, as they were good company. After being well fed and watered, we were entertained by a singer from Geordieland (*Male*), - he had us all singing along.

Mid-August saw 32 of us on our annual day out at Newby Hall, near Ripon. The sun was shining almost all day, and the gardens to the Hall were really lovely. Most of us had lunch in the picnic area, swapping stories (and sandwiches – but not "Spam!"), bathed in sunshine. It was a happy band on the way home – perhaps a bit tired though.

One or two of our members have been unable to attend our monthly meetings of late, owing to poor health. May I send you our kindest regards, get well soon, and hope to see you fit and well asap.

Irene Maclean (née Whittaker)

A note from our Secretary's Diary – 4 June 2000

The 60th Anniversary of Dunkirk is an historical fact, but facts cannot convey the emotions and camaraderie I experienced watching those Dunkirk Veterans parading that day. This was our last official pilgrimage to remember those who never made it back home, and also to show our thanks. I have been many times, and I've watched the 'Lads' grow old, but this year there seemed to be a great determination to make this parade "the one". Most of those on parade were over 80 years old – swinging along, all in step, so proud to be a Dunkirk veteran. For once, words fail me, and do not do them justice. May God bless 'em all.

Gwyn Friday

WRAC DINNER CLUB

Are you interested in knowing more about
the Dinner Club?
Would you like to attend the WRAC Dinner 2001?
then please contact

E Ann Butler-Deakin
'Cobblestones' 2 Chesham Road
Stafford ST16 3JP Tel: 01785 249992

WRAC NATIONAL REGISTER

Are you interested in finding old friends?
Did you serve/enlist between 1949 and 1992?
Why not join the WRAC National Register?

E Ann Butler-Deakin
'Cobblestones'
2 Chesham Road
Stafford ST16 3JP
Tel: 01785 249992

ATS NATIONAL REGISTER

Are you interested in finding old friends?
Did you serve in the ATS?
Why not join the ATS National Register?

Mrs Ellen Powis
16 Vincent Naughton Court
Rodney Street, Birkenhead
Wirral LA41 2ZA
Tel: 0151 647 7046

COLCHESTER BRANCH

This report starts from June 2000 meeting when the main subject to be discussed was the Area Reunion which our Area chairman, Lady Val Kemball, had arranged to take place at the Colchester Garrison Officers' Club on 16 September 2000. On the actual day we welcomed members from Chelmsford, Braintree, Norfolk & Suffolk and Cambridge Branches, approximately 88 ladies in all. We had, as our special guest, Brigadier Nield who gave us a talk on the future of the WRAC Association. This was a very happy day and all thanks must be extended to Val for all the work she put into arranging this event.

On 21 June 2000 fifty of our members were invited by the Mayor & Mayoress to visit the Town Hall for a tour of this grand building followed by an excellent buffet meal. It was indeed a very happy gathering and everyone had an excellent time.

At our July meeting we had, as our speakers, a Mr Ward and Mr W Garland from SSAFA FORCES HELP. Mr Garland explained to us the workings of this organisation and the number of cases they had dealt with over a year. He left us two phone numbers just in case any member should find herself in need of help.

On 3 July 2000 we had an outing to Lowestoft but on reaching our destination we found the sea shrouded in a thick mist which did not clear all day. It was a case of having to walk around the shops, not bad, but not so good for those who find they can no longer do a 'Route March'. Still, we enjoyed the day.

We had no meeting in August but in September we were pleased to welcome Mr Bob Russell, MP for Colchester. Bob had met quite a number of us when we had the ATS Cap Badge unveiled on Balkern Hill. When he got up to speak he said how amazed he was to see such a large crowd of ladies still meeting up together after all the years that have passed since we were in uniform. He gave us an interesting and amusing talk on his working life in Colchester and said that he would like to come to talk to us again sometime in the future.

Our plans for a Christmas Dinner and a Christmas Party are well in hand and we hope that the weather will behave itself on these occasions.

Sadly, we have lost one life member since our last report and several of our members have lost their partners in life which is very sad for them.

In our last report I said that Kyra Tufnell had received a Certificate of Appreciation from Lady Val Kemball. At the same time Mrs Beryl Newell also received one, but unfortunately this was omitted from the last "Lioness". Beryl has worked hard for the Branch in many ways and is now the Treasurer.

Colchester Branch sends Good Wishes for a Happy Christmas Season to all the branches. God bless you all.

COVENTRY BRANCH

We continue to meet at the Royal Warwick Club on the second Friday of the Month. Sadly, owing to ill health and transport problems, our numbers have fallen slightly, but we still average 22 members.

Our visits have also been limited this year, but we have managed a couple of outings. We went to Stratford-Upon-Avon in June and had a lovely day out. Our driver took us by the scenic route. We called for coffee at a very large Garden Centre, and on reaching Stratford we went sightseeing and then finished the day with a trip on the river Avon.

In September we went to Bourton-on-the-Water. When we set out it was raining, but by the time we got to Bourton-on-the-Water it was fine. We had a good time, and on our return we realised how lucky we had been. It had rained all day in Coventry.

On Saturday 23 September, 8 members went to the Wales and West Reunion at Donnington, Shropshire. The meal was great and so was the music and dancing. Thank you very much Shropshire.

We send our very best wishes to all our members who cannot get to the meetings.

CREWE BRANCH

This year we have not done a lot during the summer for various reasons including holidays. In July Mrs Maggie Purkis, our Area Chairman, took Edith and five other ladies from our area to a Garden Party for The Not Forgotten Association at Buckingham Palace. It was a lovely day which they thoroughly enjoyed. Also in July, Betty Patton went to the Ack Ack Reunion at York which is always a splendid occasion. She met up with her 93rd Searchlight Regt friends and they all enjoyed a happy weekend together.



*Joan Hill, Iris Bell, Dorothy Farr and Betty Patton
at the York Ack Ack Reunion*

In August, Edith and Betty were busy making marmalade and jam and, with Joan, baking cakes etc for the Table Top Stall held at Nantwich on 7 September which, I am pleased to say, did very well.



*L to R: Joan Berry, Betty Patton and Edith Francis
at the Table Top stall*

Later in September several of us went to the Area Reunion hosted by Shropshire Branch at Donnington. We all enjoyed it, the food and the entertainment was very good so thank you Shropshire for a memorable day.

Our AGM was held on 5 October and all our Officers were returned unopposed. We are a small Branch now and there are not many of us to do the fundraising, but we do our best and we have still managed to send £200 to the Benevolent Fund this year.

We shall be holding a Dance at the Crosville Club on 19 October which will be our last fundraiser this year.

Only five of us will be going down to London in November for the Remembrance Weekend.

In December we always go to the Pantomime at Crewe Theatre then we have our Christmas break which lasts until February.

May we send Best Wishes for 2001 to all our friends in the Association.

DACORUM BRANCH

Once again, Greetings from Dacorum. The year seems to have gone so quickly, only thirteen weeks and five days to another New Year.

Our May meeting started with a chat about the Cardiff Reunion and how much we, who were able to go, enjoyed it. This was followed by a quiz.

In June we had a local historian visit us. She explained about the use of straw in local villages where hats and bags etc were the cottage industries, it made us aware of how fortunate we are today.

We had a "guess who" photo display in July. Some people were easily recognised from years ago, but not many. We also had a fund raising raffle.

The August meeting was about the British Legion. Our very interesting speaker was a gentleman called Phil Collins. He made us all aware of how much the British Legion can help any ex-service person who is in need. We followed this with a bring and buy.

In September we heard the sad news that one of our members had died. Joan Welling had been a Sergeant Cook in the Catering Corps during World War II.

After the formalities we had a 50/50 sale (always a success) and a quiz to end the afternoon. The following week a few of us went on a mystery tour that was somewhat shortened because of the fuel strike and we found ourselves at a very old pub where we had an enjoyable lunch.

We, at Dacorum, would like to wish everyone a good Christmas and New Year and thank you to all the helpful staff at Worthy Down.

EASTBOURNE BRANCH

We have had a successful year. Members gave very interesting talks with slides on various countries. We learnt about the Lifeboat and a WI member told us how she and her family escaped from Burma in 1942. Invitations from other Branches were enjoyed, as were Branch Lunches out. We are going on a day trip to Boulogne in October.

Two members attended the Grand Reunion in Cardiff, good venue and weather but not so good dinner. Yes, we did know we were in Wales, one having trained in Manorbier and both stationed there.

Regrettably, the Diocese of Chichester refused us permission to put an ATS plaque in the Parish Church.

Our Standard was carried on 11 November and at the Remembrance Concert held in the Congress Theatre, by kind permission of the Council, on the Sunday. Having our own Standard, we are members of the Eastbourne Combined Ex-Services Association and get a share of the profits, usually £100.

We have recently found that our antecedents go further back than the WAAC in 1917, the Women's Legion having been formed before them by Lady Londonderry. Each Legionary that was drafted into the WAAC was allowed to wear her Women's Legion Badge on her lapel.

Best wishes to all Branches for 2001.

FIFE & TAYSIDE BRANCH

Our Branch now numbers 93 members with another 2 in the pipeline. We would love to get this number up to the 100

before the beginning of another year so we will just have to try that bit harder. Meetings continue to be held at Perth Royal British Legion Club on the last Thursday of each month, where we have lunch and a raffle table. Allowing for holidays etc, we usually have around 30 members come to our meetings. This is very pleasing considering the distance some members have to travel, and we are appreciative of this.

One of our members, Margaret Britchford, and her husband celebrated their Golden Wedding this year on 3 September, so, many congratulations to Margaret and Kenneth from all Branch Members.



Isa Lightfoot at the Memorial Arboretum

Another member, Mrs Isa Lightfoot who is a member of the ACK-ACK Association in York, recently visited The National Memorial Arboretum being created near Lichfield. This is supported by funds from The National Lottery, a grant from the Millennium Commission and donations from many, many, other sources.

We took part in the annual "Big Brew Up" in aid of SSAFA Forces held on the 29 September with a sales table, clothes rails and serving teas. We made £307 by our efforts. The wider membership contributed to this by sending donations. Many thanks to everyone who contributed towards the day, either by baking, bringing things along, serving teas, manning sales tables or washing up – WHAT WOULD WE DO WITHOUT YOU!

On the 28 October we are off to the Scottish AGM and Reunion at Inverness. The competition for the Scottish Shield is for a Christmas Card or a Birthday Card, homemade of course, so we will have to put our "crafty" ideas to work.

Christmas is not far away now, and once more we will be going to the Gramplan Hotel for our Christmas meal.



Lady Martha Bruce and ladies of the Branch admiring the Big Brew Up Cake.

We hope everyone will have had a good Christmas and New Year by the next edition of 'Lioness'.

Our Best Wishes to all Branches.

GRIMSBY & DISTRICT BRANCH

I am not your usual scribe, I am filling the gap as branch new letter writer owing to the untimely death of Pauline Ellis who wrote our letters so brilliantly. So here we go Pauline, I will do my best.

After an exciting Grand Reunion in Wales during April, the branch went to the "Millstones Restaurant" on the outskirts of Harrogate in May for an enjoyable meal, followed by a game of bingo and other activities. The journey home was most pleasant, having the luxury of being able to sit back and watch the world drift by whilst letting someone else do the driving.

Towards the end of May, some of the committee members were invited to the Grimsby Town Hall by the "Royal Navy Presentation Team" and were given a most interesting insight to the Royal Navy of today. It is amazing how many careers are available to the young people of today. The Navy made everyone welcome, and of course, the usual drinks and food were much appreciated by all.

In May Pauline died, she will be sadly missed by all. Her many years of civic duties with the Great Grimsby Council included terms as Mayor, Lady Mayoress and duties as a Magistrate. With her invaluable knowledge she was a great asset to the Branch.

We attended her funeral on 6 June. The Branch Standard was present and carried by our Standard Bearer, Carol Tyler (ex WRAC band). The Standard of The Royal British Legion was also present. Many of the branch members came along and paid their last respects, Wendy Isam our Chaplain officiated over a very moving service assisted by the Rev Jim Muston, a fitting goodbye to a comrade.

At our June branch meeting our Chaplain, Wendy Isam, retired and all the members contributed towards a lovely cut glass crystal basket as a farewell gift. Wendy was thrilled to bits and very sad to be leaving, but she will be keeping in touch with us all.

We have since heard that she had a stroke, but the good news is that she is slowly recovering.

Our June Summer Fayre was a great success. We did quite well from the stalls run by members, a nearly new jumble stall, bric a brac, cake, plants and tombola stalls, not forgetting our big raffle. I really think the people who come to our fayres and jumbles in this area have taken the branch to heart as the attendances are always good.

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We've had two ex-WRAC ladies join us this summer - new blood for us oldies. We need many more to keep our 14 year old branch ticking over, lets hope we get more in the near future.

August was a quiet month with us catching our breath ready for September and the Reunion in York. We did however manage another jumble sale at the beginning of the month, a nice little sum to put towards our outing.

The great day came, our North East Reunion at York Racecourse. We left Grimsby Town Hall on a miserable wet morning, twenty nine old soldiers having a day out, which does not come very often for some of our ladies. We crossed the Humber Bridge and made our way to the pretty old village of Pocklington. Here we stopped for tea or coffee. By now the sun had broken through, and by the time we got to York Racecourse it was a lovely day.

What a crowd of ex-Army ladies, all eager to find someone from their Service years, I never do. I hope some of you did, and talked of the past and your youth, the laughs and pranks.

The Ainsty suite was delightful, Colonel Cook welcomed us all warmly, and the table seating had members from all the North Eastern area mixing together, getting to know one another. The three course meal was a good choice and I think we all enjoyed it. The raffle went down well, some good prizes and the entertainment by Ray Mandell, a singer and comedian from up around Tyneside, was excellent. The afternoon ended with most of us strolling around the room to all the old songs in a big single line, comrades to the end. We said our good-byes and hoped to meet again at the Cleethorpes Winter Gardens in September 2001 for the next North Eastern Area Reunion.

Have a good Christmas everyone, be well and have a very happy New Year.

God Bless from all at the Grimsby and District Branch.

HARROGATE BRANCH

We are a very happy "family", enjoying well-attended, friendly and often hilarious meetings. Although we only meet once a month, we manage to fit everything in.

Here in Harrogate we have a wonderful Hospice - St Michael's. The manager came to show us slides and tell us the history, as well as updating us on the present facilities and financial situation.

A local lady entertained us with her own poetry, and a local gentleman had us guessing with a slide show on "A Tyke's Guide to Paradise" (for the uninitiated, a Tyke is a Yorkshireman). We have been brought to book by a Fire Safety Officer (aren't we old ladies a risk?!), and Age Concern have told us about all the things they can do for us.

This year we held our Annual Lunch at Harrogate Cricket Club (our Chairman is a member), which was most enjoyable, especially as Col Cook, our NE Chairman, joined us. We went over the Pennines - well nearly - to Oswaldtwistle for our outing, which included a tour of Pendle and the history of the Witches.

Sadly, no one was able to go to the National Reunion at Cardiff, but 21 of us attended our NE Reunion at York and had a super time. York Club also invited us to a party in August, which we all enjoyed tremendously.

As a Club, we did not forget our Patron's 100th Birthday, although we would love to have been in London for the celebrations. It's like the Dome - everything in London or the South - who says there isn't a North-South Divide?!

This year brought us a new member (ATS) living in Harrogate, and we welcomed an old Ack Ack member, transferred from London Branch but now living in Glasshouses, near Pateley Bridge.

HASTINGS BRANCH

About this time last year we were considering how to mark the Millennium. The local Association of WRNS was thinking along the same lines so we came up with the idea of a Tri-Service Lunch. The small organising committee, with representatives from each of the three Services, did a magnificent job. Eighty two Ex-Servicewomen attended, together with the Deputy Mayor and Leader of the Council.



Caption: Lady Averil Bryson (AWRNS), the Deputy Mayor, the Leader of the Council and the organising committee

It was a super occasion and as a result we are delighted that two ex-WAAF have joined our Branch as Affiliated Members.

It would be hard for other events to compete with the success of the lunch, but our annual outing to Leeds Castle (Kent) was most enjoyable and we had WRNS and WAAFs with us. Again it was a super day and we thank our Social Secretary, Sue Dash, for arranging it.

The local Division of SSAFA Forces Help holds an annual Church Service in or near Hastings, and again in 2000 some of our members assisted by taking the collection and providing tea and biscuits after the Service. This help really was appreciated by SSAFA who do not have a large membership.

Some of our members are on a local Fund Raising Committee for the Star and Garter Home in Richmond, and as Brenda Moor, one of our members, is in the Home, four of us visited during the summer. We were made most welcome and Brenda showed us a Fund Raising Leaflet on which her photograph is prominent on the front cover. This was most successful and raised a considerable amount for the Home.

Photograph reproduced courtesy of The Hastings Observer

Our thanks to our Vice Chairman, Joan Lovell, for hosting our Strawberry Tea again in June and also our thanks to our drivers who have made it possible for the Luncheon Club to meet at different locations during the summer months, ie Rye, Icklesham, Winchelsea etc, though we reverted to the local Harrow Pub during the winter months.

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At the time of writing we are preparing for the Remembrance Day events - the Parade to the War Memorial in the Park in the morning and the Festival of Remembrance at the White Rock Theatre in the evening. We do hope we will Parade eleven members on the stage as in previous years.

To finish on a sad note – our Welfare member, Nell Wood, died in March and Fanny Frewen-Laton (an authoress) died in June. Both will be greatly missed – Nell for her work on behalf of our sick and suffering and Fanny for her generosity and unceasing interest in Branch activities.

So we hope all Branches have a good year in 2001 and go from strength to strength. It is amazing, we still get ladies appearing with the words: - "I didn't know the WRACA existed". Where have they been?

HEREFORD BRANCH

We were saddened to hear of the death of Brig H Meechie this year, and in our Branch, we lost Mrs Lilian Cross from Shrewsbury. Lilian had just celebrated her 90th Birthday, we shall miss her. We welcome Mrs Margaret Bethel back into the fold after many health problems. We send best wishes for the future to all our members who are not in good health. We thank all those who keep in touch and send raffle prizes and donations to the Branch. I know Lioness is greatly appreciated by us all as is the Branch Newsletter compiled by Joyce Nicholls our Treasurer, and printed by Sue Walton and her husband Kim. It is a particular asset to those unable to get to our meetings. These are still held on the last Wednesday of each month, except December, at the Royal British Legion Hall in Belmont Road, Hereford at 2.30 pm. We are trying to get an evening meeting together, to enable those who work to meet up and chat over a glass or two at a pub. We have so many ex WRAC and serving members whom we have not met and it would be lovely to get their views on the future of the Branch.

We recently sent off cheques to the Association Fund and to the Benevolent Fund; also to BLESMA, SSAFA and the Royal British Legion Poppy Fund. Our July raffle raised over £200 but our aim to run a Car Boot has hit snags. One car park reduced sales from one a week to one a month, and we were unlucky not to get a booking. We hope to be luckier next year. It was lovely to see that the photograph on the back of Lioness 2000 No. 2, was of two Branch members. How proud we are of them and of Liz Kemp's account of "Life in Kosovo". PA to General Jackson is something to be very proud of. Well done girls!

Another photograph that we were proud to see was in the York paper after the Ack Ack Reunion on 29-30 July this year. Miss Betty Boothroyd was guest of honour and several of our members from Hereford Branch were among the hundreds of Ack Ack "girls". One in particular got her photograph in the paper, Mrs Doris Kirton from Tewkesbury who served in 546 (M) HAA. Mrs Phyl Bates and Mrs Win Birt both served in 460 (M) HAA together and now live in Ross-On-Wye. Both attended the reunion.

On 24 June, Hereford Branch members were invited by the Royal British Legion to attend the opening of a Museum to the British Wartime Agent of SOE, Violette Szabo. Violette lived at a house in Wormelow, near Hereford, now owned by Miss Rosemary Rigby MBE. Rosemary has dedicated a lot of time and money in establishing the museum. She invited hundreds of people to attend the opening and we were proud to be at the very moving religious Service and Parade of Regiments and Associations. Jackie Neave, our Standard Bearer, attended as did four of our members. We marched alongside Paras, D Day and Korean Veterans, Burma Star, Royal British Legion, RAF and many others. Virginia McKenna, the film star who portrayed Violette in the film "Carve Her Name With Pride", opened the museum. Violette's daughter Tania was wearing her late mother's decorations and Leo Marks, Violette's Code Master for SOE, was actually present. He wrote her poem "The Life That I Have". Many other MPs and dignitaries were present and the afternoon ended with a March Past and a lone parachutist landing in the field nearby.

On 4 July, what an appropriate day, we welcomed back to Hereford a US Veteran, Leon Standifer, who was here in 1945 in hospital at Foxley, an estate nearby, after being wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. He was only 19 and traumatised, but always remembered the kindness of the locals and longed to return. He brought his wife Marie and we took them both to Foxley. He walked among the woods where the Nissen Huts had been and put a United States flag on the memorial stone which had been set there by American Colonels ten years ago. He was very moved. We then took them for a country pub lunch nearby. He presented our President, Ena Price, with a book he has written about his wartime experiences. Writing from Louisiana on his return home, he thanked us for our hospitality. On 19 July Rosemary Jones and Eva Burton went to the Queen Mother's Birthday Pageant on Horse Guards. They had set off early, so the IRA Bomb at Paddington delayed them but did not deter. We sent Her Majesty an ATS card on the occasion of her 100th Birthday and good wishes for her continued good health. We received a reply of thanks on the 17 August. Jo Anscombe went with six members of Wales and West to Buckingham Palace Garden Party on 27 July where they saw the Princess Royal and met many celebrities and enjoyed the spectacle very much. The tea was lovely too and so was the weather. Thanks go to Maggie Purkis and The "Not Forgotten" Association for the opportunity and for the company of Maggie, Edith Francis, Edna Thomas, Nancy Tipton, Ann Deakin and Daphne Jervis.

Then on 6 September several of us went again to the Violette Szabo Museum, this time to browse among the interesting items inside. It was very poignant and a "Thank you" ATS card to Rosemary Rigby MBE the founder, is now another item on display. We plan another visit next year. When we were having lunch at a nearby pub, we had a surprise visit by our newest member – Mrs Alice Matthews! yes *the* Alice Matthews. It was lovely to meet her at ground level – she was always on a stage or platform before! Welcome Alice to Hereford Branch.

We have arranged our Christmas meal venue at the Imperial in late November so that Eva can attend before jetting off to Canada for Christmas. I have a strong feeling a second meal is planned for December though!

The Wales and West Area Reunion at Donnington on 23 September was a huge success. Shropshire can certainly plan a party. The meal was "absolutely fabulous" and so were

your two councillors. They danced and sang to the great wartime songs, as did we. Thank you Shropshire Branch.

To wind up this report, our AGM will be at The Royal British Legion Hall, Belmont Road on Wednesday 28 February 2001 at 2.30 pm. All members are welcome.

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KEIGHLEY BRANCH

The Annual General Meeting was held on 19 October 1999, and members re-elected the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. The Vice-Chairman's position was left in abeyance. A film show was given at the November meeting, and members enjoyed a dinner at Quarry House at the end of November.

On 7 November 1999 members attended the Festival of Remembrance at St George's Hall Bradford, and a wreath was laid at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday.

At the end of January, the Chairman and members attended a Service in Keighley Parish Church followed by a Parade to the War Memorial where a Millennium Plaque was dedicated. Refreshments were served in the Drill Hall. This had been arranged jointly by the Keighley Branch Royal British Legion and The Duke of Wellington's Regiment Association.

As some members would be on holiday, no meetings were held in February or March. No members to travel to Cardiff, but a donation was sent to help with the raffle. In July four members enjoyed a day out at Eden Camp, and at the August meeting, members and residents of Farish House enjoyed a Pie and Pea lunch. A cake stall, a raffle and a game of bingo made a small profit for branch funds. One member attended the Reunion at York. Arrangements are in hand for St George's Hall and also a dinner in November.

Our meetings are held monthly at Farish House and on average nine members attend.

With our best wishes to other branches for Christmas and the New Year.

LEEDS BRANCH

We continue to attract new members, ex-WRAC being particularly welcome as they will ensure continuation of the Association.

In June seven members enjoyed a wonderful day at the National Memorial Arboretum where the ATS Ack Ack plot was dedicated. Full details of this occasion are set out in a separate article.

July 19th will always be remembered by two members fortunate enough to be part of the Association contingent at the 100th Birthday Tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. In spite of suspect bomb incidents it was a truly never to be forgotten occasion. The weather and organisation were perfect and not even a train delay on the homeward journey could spoil the wonder of actually being there on Horse Guards Parade.

The York Re-union weekend was special this year, being graced by the presence of the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd. Her speech was truly inspiring and she will be an asset to the Committee

responsible for seeing through the Memorial project. The weekend was marred by a nasty accident to Mollie James but she is now recovering.

In August Mrs France and Mrs Clements told the branch all about their day in London at the 100th Birthday Tribute and thanked us for letting them be part of this unique experience.

In September, 13 members attended the NE Area Lunch at York Racecourse which was threatened by the petrol strike but was most enjoyable.

In October we held our AGM, our Treasurer presenting a very favourable Financial Report. One member has offered to help as Assistant Treasurer collecting and counting money and learning the ropes. We were pleased to hear that Mollie James is much better and hoping to go to America for the Christening of her Great Grandchild. We are now making arrangements for our Christmas Party in December, keeping our fingers crossed regarding health and weather.

Best Wishes to all for a busy and friendly 2001.

LEICESTER AND NOTTINGHAM BRANCH

Following from our report in LIONESS 2/2000, we have continued with our programme. In June we held another enjoyable meeting at Nottingham instead of our usual venue in Leicester. Again our thanks to Barbara Danter for supplying the lovely refreshments and arranging for a talk entitled "The Copper Kettle Club". This related to places in Nottingham and ended with an hilarious 'True or False' quiz.

In July we filled the afternoon with a Beetle Drive which is always enjoyed, and in August we were again invited to the Sailing Club, courtesy of Doris and Irene. This time instead of a BBQ, we took our own sandwiches and had desserts, cakes and tea supplied. Many of our members also enjoyed a trip on the lake. Our thanks to Doris, Irene and helpers for a lovely afternoon.

We held our Harvest produce sale in September with the members supplying the produce to boost our funds.

Two members joined Ashby Branch at the Wales and the West Area Reunion and our thanks to Shropshire for a lovely afternoon.

This year we have unfortunately had several members ill, some seriously and sadly we lost one of our faithful members, May Mitchell, after a short illness. We shall miss her cheerfulness at meetings.

Our Standard continues to be paraded at various functions by Vi Rawlins and is sometimes accompanied by a few of our members.

By the time this report goes to print, we will have had our AGM in October and November will find us with our friends from Ashby De-La-Zouch going ahead with arrangements for the Wales and the West Area Reunion, which is being held in Leicester in September 2001. December will end the year with our Christmas party.

To those members unable to get to our meetings, we thank you for your continued support and hope to see many of you at our reunion, and to those who are ill or just under the weather our branch members send you best wishes for your recovery and a better year in 2001.

LONDON BRANCH

We have had 18 new members and the branch strength is now 342, with between fifty and sixty attending our monthly meetings.

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Edith Shaw and Jean Taylor with Chelsea Pensioner Mr Rouse collecting for the Army Benevolent Fund at the Chelsea Flower Show

Two members attended the National Tribute to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on her 100th birthday in July which was a really splendid occasion. We were very proud of the Association contingent and the serving members who looked so smart.

We have had two enjoyable coach outings, in May to Claydon House and in September to Station X at Bletchley Park which is fascinating but so extensive that in a short visit you can only see a fraction of what was such a vital war-time secret place. In June we had a talk from one of London's Pearly Queens, Mrs Peggy Oliver, who told us how the first Pearly King was motivated to decorate his shabby jacket when he was collecting for charity. She then regaled us with all the familiar Cockney songs and it was a great afternoon. It inspired members when we had a Home Entertainment meeting in July, to perform their party pieces and we had lots of fun. In September we were shown beautiful slides of the Austrian Tyrol and this year's Passion Play at Oberammergau.

We are now looking forward to our Christmas Tea Party and then the Millennium will be over but those of us who believe it should have been in 2001 can look forward to another Millennium year!

MEDWAY BRANCH

The Branch had a very successful year regarding fund raising with Cream Teas and Bazaars which boosted the funds.

Two members attended the Queen Mother's Parade in Horse Guards and said what a wonderful day they had.

A combined lunch with the WRNS and WRAF Associations in March of this year was so successful that a further one is on the cards.

The same dedicated twenty members attend the meetings and donate many prizes throughout the year and the branch thanks them.

Grace Hollands writes in her Church Magazine of her service in the ATS. Many of the people who live in the village cannot wait for the next instalment.

We were invited to a social afternoon at Canterbury and sang along with the singer and pianist who had been hired to entertain us. Of course the table was laden with wonderful things to eat which we did tuck into. We were also invited to Pembroke House which has been refurbished and is for ex-Navy personnel. What an eye opener that was, who wouldn't want to retire! Their comradeship was felt as soon as we went inside.

Five members will go to the WRAC Dinner Club and there will be an attendance at the Cenotaph.

Sorry that some of our members have been unwell and hope they are now on their way to recovery. We send a Newsletter out to those members who do not attend in order to keep in touch.

Many thanks to those who send a donation on a regular basis and a special thanks to Kathy Heard.

In April we hope to meet up with old friends at the AGM.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH

We still meet every third Thursday in the month at the Companions Club, Leazes Park Road, Newcastle. If any members from other clubs should be shopping in our city on this day we hope they will join us between 12 noon to 3.00 pm. A friendly welcome awaits.

We now have a list of all Secretaries' names and addresses which arrived after our last report was posted and I note a Secretary's address in Wooler, Northumberland, and there was also a report from Edinburgh, so I was perhaps a little previous in my concern for mid-Northumberland ex-ATS/WRAC.

Mention was also made in the last issue – Lioness 2/2000 Page 45 re the late Winifred Patterson. We have since received from Joan Awberry, Secretary of the Norfolk and Suffolk branch, information in respect of Winifred, and I have given this to Mrs Jewson from the Tynemouth Village Project. Meanwhile, she had obtained other information, found a relative of Winifred and had visited the grave. Also on Joan's list were names of two ATS from our area who were killed in the Great Yarmouth disaster of 1943. They are Pte Dorothy Falks of Hexham and Pte Louisa Maxwell of South Gosforth. Their names are on the plaque at Great Yarmouth.

On the social side, those of us who attended the Northern Area Reunion at York Racecourse restaurant in September thoroughly enjoyed our visit. An excellent meal was followed by a pleasant sing-along session with a seasoned entertainer whose services were no doubt obtained by Gwen, the Northern Area Secretary. Congratulations to Col Cook and Gwen for this successful venture.

The following Saturday we were off again to Droxford Hall, Northumberland, in the company of members of the German and Far East POW Association and ladies of the Land Army. The occasion was the opening day of a maze designed by the owner and reputed to be going to be as big as that of Hampton Court. One thousand Northumberland children had planted small trees and a well known ex-Land Army member, Joan Pringle, had planted the centre tree. Mrs Pringle was present at the opening. When the trees grow, a map will be required to reach the centre! We were greeted by the owner of the estate with tea and coffee and cream cakes and after the opening ceremony everyone had a fish and chip lunch from Seahouses, transported directly to the Hall, hot and delicious!

Our plans for December festivities are in hand. We hope to join the Normandy Veterans for a Christmas meal at the Gosforth Civil Hall restaurant in mid-December. Later in the month, or in January 2001, we shall have our usual celebratory get-together at our meeting place where food etc is plentiful and entertainment provided by our small but talented concert party.

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To those members who cannot get to the meetings due to age and infirmity we send our best wishes. We also salute those who manage, under difficulty, to get here and insist on climbing the stairs because we have better accommodation upstairs than on the ground floor.

Best wishes to all members everywhere.

PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

We still meet every month at 7 pm on the second Thursday at the Hampshire Ex-Services Club, Fratton Road, Portsmouth. As so many of the members who always come to meetings are getting older, we have decided to try different arrangements. From March to November evening meetings as usual, no meetings December to February, but instead, hold social meetings at members homes on Saturday mornings.

The Branch has not had a very good year healthwise. We lost two very dear friends, Daphne Langrish and Lee Clark; the Branch was represented at their funerals. Then just before Christmas our Chairman, Mrs E Metherell, and Treasurer, Mrs P Price, had serious major operations. Our Secretary was also ill on and off for several months. Everyone has now recovered but cannot do as much as before. Our social events have gone well; eight members enjoyed the Cardiff Reunion. The regular lunch at the Isle-of-Wight Branch was good as usual. Services for D Day and The Falklands were well attended. American Tea Parties were held at the homes of Mrs Mary Lindsey and Mrs Phyllis Price; good weather and a nice afternoon at both events. In September, 21 members attended a lunch at a Harvester Pub at Fareham. In spite of the fuel crisis a good time was had by all. October will be a Coffee Morning at Mrs M Moore's house and November a Coffee Morning at the home of Mrs J Jelly.

At our AGM in July Mrs E Metherell resigned as Chairman because of ill health but will remain on the committee. Mrs Mary Moore was elected in her place. We hope to attend the Armistice Parade at the Guildhall although numbers are falling and our Standard will not be on parade as Mrs P Price cannot carry it and may not be able to do so in the future.

We all hope that 2001 will be a good year for the Branch.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH

The Plymouth Branch are still on the march!

The Eden project won the vote for our July day out; and what an amazing trip it was. The structures on disused china clay sites are truly technological visions for the 21st century.

The following week, 15 of our group enjoyed the spectacular "Music of the Night" at the Royal Citadel where we were entertained by the bands of the Royal Artillery and the Royal Marines, together with massed choirs and an enormous cast of singers and dancers performing scenes from the shows. The James Bond scenes from the men of 29 Commando were hilarious and received thunderous applause. The finale

was the 1812 overture complete with guns firing, coloured water fountains, and spectacular firework displays. The event closed with a flag waving 'Land of Hope and Glory' and the promise that they would be back in 2002.

A spectacle of a different kind awaited the two lucky winners of the draw for the tickets to the Queen Mother's birthday pageant. Mrs Queenie Bridle and Mrs Betty Mitchell had a journey to London that was reminiscent of wartime. There were bomb threats with closed bridges and underground etc.

They both agreed that it was all worthwhile when they finally arrived on Horse Guards and saw the spectacular tribute to our most famous centenarian. Betty's descriptive poem of the event has been offered to 'poets corner'.

Much of the time at our monthly meetings has been given over to the report we received from our Area Representative on Council. This report, concerning the way forward for our Association, has been discussed at great length. Our views are on their way to Worthy Down and we hope that any decisions made will ensure the continued prosperity of a happy and friendly Association.

The business of the Branch AGM on 2 October was quite straight forward, all members had received ballot papers in August which they handed back in September. No new volunteers came forward so the existing officers and committee were re-elected. Since the last AGM we have had 5 new members, 3 ex-ATS and 2 ex-WRAC, and 2 existing members transferred to other areas, so our Branch numbers are still going up.

In our lighter moments we have had great fun with our monthly competitions. We've made hats for a garden party, we've written captions for pictures from the national press and then we were asked 'what can you do with a coathanger?'. No we don't want answers on a postcard!! (My Dad would have raised his eyebrows and said, "is that what they taught you in the army?")

Beside all the frivolity, we have been working hard raising money at our table top sales. I think the ladies have all decided to revisit the Eden Project when all the flora is in place. As well as our own group fundraising, we also supplied a group of ladies who took the collecting boxes on the streets in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund and did quite well.

Although illness has taken its toll of some of our members, spirits in the Plymouth Branch remain high, and after the Remembrance Parades we will look forward to our Christmas festivities. In particular we all look forward to the Speaker at



*New Age Builders? No -
Plymouth members invading Eden*

our December meeting, the topic is Astrology!. Let us hope that she forecasts a happy and healthy winter for all.

After Christmas the Plymouth Branch goes into hibernation for the month of January. We look forward to our first meeting for the New Year in February 2001. When, as always, all visitors will be made very welcome.

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RHYL BRANCH

We continue to meet every second Monday of the month, when we have an average attendance of 28 members. We have been very busy again holding coffee mornings, afternoon teas, jumble sales and table tops to raise money to be able to enjoy our trips out to other branches throughout the year. I have outlined by the month our activities for just 9 months. On top of these activities the ladies try to have a lunch date each month.

April Three ladies went to Cardiff for the Reunion and they all said how welcome they were made and what a good time that they had.

May Four ladies went to their Ack Ack Reunion at York and, as in other years, they had a marvellous time meeting up with comrades old and new.

June Sixteen ladies were off travelling again, this time to Bridlington for the Ex-Service Combined Weekend. They had an extra day there this year and have already decided that they will be doing the same next year.

July We were on Parade in Wrexham on the 9th to support the Dunkirk Veterans on the occasion of the laying up of their Standard. On the 23rd we joined the Rhyl branch of the Dunkirk Veterans at St Thomas's Church for their Service and last Parade as they too laid up their Standard.

August The Rhyl branch of the Normandy Veterans invited us to join them at a service of commemoration to mark 'The End of Campaign' which was held around a tree that they had planted in the grounds of St Thomas's Church in memory of their comrades. Unfortunately the tree has been vandalised, but we went ahead with the service and a new tree is being grown and will be planted when it is big enough not to be damaged again.

September This month has been very busy already. The Branch held its AGM on the 11th when the ladies voted unanimously to re-elect Jean Lander as Secretary and Yvonne Sampson as the Treasurer for a term of 2 yrs. We held a buffet after the meeting. We are on Parade again for the 'Battle of Britain' on Sunday 17th in Rhyl with the RAF. We are then guests of the Normandy Veterans on a trip to Blackpool for the Lights and an evening meal.

October We have a lunch at the Nova at Prestatyn, again as guests of the Normandy Veterans. Our 2 WRAC members are going, for the first time, to the WRAC Dinner Club Reunion at Stafford and are anticipating having a great time.

November Remembrance Day is here and we have 20 ladies on Parade here in Rhyl.

December Where has the year gone, we have a Buffet and Drinks at our Christmas Meeting. The Christmas Dinner has been booked at the Aberhod in Rhos-On-Sea, Colwyn Bay this year and we are all looking forward to it.

On top of all the above activities, we have joined forces with the Normandy Veterans to hold Bingo Evenings every other week and 2 Table Tops to raise money for a combined Pilgrimage to Holland in September 2001. There will be 16 ATS and WRAC on the coach, all the travel arrangements are well in hand now.

Finally, I have been requested by one of our WAAF Associates to thank the ladies here in Rhyl for making her feel so welcome. She says that she has not been so active for years, and has enjoyed all the visits to other Branches and trips out.

If the next 6 months are anywhere near as busy as the last 6 months, I for one will be needing the trip to Holland for a break, and rest.

SALISBURY BRANCH

We have had a relatively quiet time since our last report for the Lioness. An outing to Exbury Gardens was much enjoyed in May and our speaker Mrs Joan Hughes has shown some interesting slides taken during her tour of the Holy Land. We have enjoyed another Faith Lunch – much too much to eat!! – and a bring and buy sale boosted our funds.

At the annual meeting in September our officers were re-elected. These are: Chairman Alyson Ogden, Vice-Chair and Press Officer Gladys Pope, Secretary Joan Morgan, Treasurer Veronica Dodkins.

Gladys Pope was very proud to represent our Area at the Queen Mother's 100th Pageant held on Horseguards Parade. She hopes the squad of 10 have all recovered!! It was a memorable and long day, the aching feet soon forgotten.

Sadly two of our members have recently died, Brigadier Helen Meechie and Major Marian Smith. Brigadier Helen's constant support at our branch will be greatly missed.

SHEFFIELD BRANCH

The year 2000 has been quite a busy one so far. We started off with a lovely 2000 New Year Dinner in our favourite pub, "The Bathfield", they treat us so well! Next we had a trip to the theatre to see "Happy as a Sand Bag". Very enjoyable, it was a musical all about the war years, which appealed to us very much. Then came the very enjoyable "Cardiff Reunion". Everyone seemed to enjoy it and especially the march!

A little later in the year we had another Dinner out of funds which we had made from the Bring and Buy sales earlier on in the year. We also had a Day Trip into "Bakewell" in the Peak District. Sadly it rained all day, but we just saw the funny side of it. One of our members, Viv Arrondale, was asked by the Fullwood Townswomen's Guild if she would like to give them a talk on her war years. She was delighted to do so, and everyone enjoyed it very much – and we say well done Viv.

The York Reunion went down very well this year. The Dinner was excellent and the entertainment very good. Everyone who was involved with organising it should be congratulated. They must have worked very hard to make it so enjoyable.



Members of Sheffield Branch at the Area Reunion

The Bridlington Reunion of Combined Services was also the best we have had in years and we can't wait for next years.

SHIPLEY BRANCH

Here is our report once again from Shipley Branch and we are pleased to report that most of our members who were on the sick list are now much improved and we were pleased to welcome them back to our meetings. We were interested to read in the "Lioness" about the Reunion in Cardiff. Unfortunately, none of our members were able to attend, but a mini-bus load of members did manage to attend the Reunion at York of the Northern Area. The lunch was much better than the previous year and they all enjoyed the entertainment. Also it was there that Col Cooke, who had accepted the Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of Mrs Dorothy O'Neill at Cardiff, presented the award to Dorothy to the delight of all our members.

It will soon be our Annual General Meeting once again, when we will discuss our future programme and enjoy the remainder of our winter items which include our Christmas Fayre to help raise the balance of our funds, and our usual Christmas celebrations. So we send our greetings and best wishes to all the hard working staff who produce the "Lioness" and to all the other Branches.

SHROPSHIRE BRANCH

We wish all our friends, near and far, a Happy and Healthy Year 2001. Last year flew by too quickly as usual, even the younger people say so.

In May, some of our Members went to the 60th Anniversary of BOD Donnington. The celebrations included a Film Show recording the daily work from wartime to the present day. We had a free lunch, a tour of the Depot and visited the buildings we used to work in, a very interesting day, and guess what? It resulted in more recruits for us!

In June, four of our members were invited by the 'Not Forgotten Association' to spend the day on the "Severn Valley Steam Railway", travelling from Bridgnorth to Kidderminster. They enjoyed a hot meal and a glass of wine, rather like a slow version of the Orient Express, a wonderful day.

Later in the month, we had a Promotion Stall at the 'Festival 2000' event in Telford Town Park, which resulted in enquiries about the Association and new members. On 17 June, Lucy took our Standard to Bridlington 'Combined Ex-Services Association Reunion', a total of 70 Standards were there. After the Service in the Priory Church, we marched 1½ miles on the hottest day of the year. In the evening we sang and danced to our kind of music at the Spa, it was a wonderful and moving atmosphere of comradeship.

On 24 June, 'Millennium 2000' was celebrated at the foot of the 'Wrekin', (our local beauty spot) with singing and dancing. Many local people performed a Community Play about the history of the area, from Celtic times to the Industrial Revolution. Our Chris and Muriel were very convincing as two gossiping Saxon ladies.

We had a good day on 1 July, 'Dawley Day', with our Tombola Stall which also attracted another recruit for us.

At our July meeting we had a farewell party for Fran Firminger, we were sad to lose her. Fran and husband Peter have now moved to Liverpool.

On 24 July, two of our members, together with other Branch members, had a lovely time at Buckingham Palace Garden Party, once again courtesy of the 'Not Forgotten Association'.

Our energetic Scott Mills has been on manoeuvres again. Climbing with others from Llanberis up Snowdon, she raised £112 for the Shropshire & Mid Wales Hospice. Not only that, she was also sponsored for a walk of 7 miles on the Shropshire/Welsh Border, raising another £58 for the Hospice.

In September we had our AGM, reinstating the same committee. We still have the same venue for our meetings, with a slight name change. Now it's the Heywood/Lonsdale Residents' Lounge, on the first Wednesday of the month, from 2pm until 4pm.



Shropshire Branch Reunion Committee.

L-R: Beryl Lane - Secretary, Lucy Bowyer - Treasurer, Chris Grigg - Vice Chairman, Nancy Tipton - Chairman.

Now we have recovered from our Reunion activities, we thank all our guests for coming, and hope you had a nice day with us. Our guests - Councillor Mason and his wife Brenda certainly did. The profits from the Reunion Raffle, just over £371, were made up to £400 and sent to the WRAC Association.

We give another warm welcome to new members, this time; Brenda Adams, Irene Wardrobe, Flo Poulter, Brenda Hillsley and Sylvia Gilbert.

I think that is all for this time, best wishes to you all. Long live the 'Lioness'.

SOMERSET BRANCH

Sadly the Branch has had 4 bereavements of late. Mrs Janet Arscott, née Spiller on 14 February 2000, Mrs Francis Nabb, née Skinner on 14 June 2000, Miss Dorothy Warren also in June 2000 and Mrs Thora Bright, née Parlett on 4 September 2000. Thora's aim was to meet up with ex-ATS ladies she had served with. Despite enquiries and advertising in the 'Lioness' her aim was never fulfilled.

On a brighter note, the branch continues to thrive, having signed on three new members.

A most enjoyable gathering was had by all at the Dunkirk Memorial House for retired military ladies and gentlemen. During the meeting, Carolyn Hooper, a new member, recognised a resident as Ex-Major Anne Holloway whom Carolyn had served with some time ago. Another resident, Mrs Hilda Smedley, had heard there was an assembly of ATS ladies present, came to meet us and promptly handed over her £5 and an application form. Our other new member is Mrs Sheila Elliot (Provost) who lives near Tiverton.

Our monthly meetings are well attended, mainly by regulars, so if there are any Somerset ladies who read this, please get in touch, you will be made very welcome. At some of the meetings, guest speakers are present to entertain us. One such, an ex-Sergeant of the Somerset Constabulary had the assembly in 'stitches' with his real life stories of "30 years as a copper". Another, an ex-Prison Warder entertained us with a talk and illustrations of life in our jails. What a revelation of life behind bars. Most of the comments were "They have more money and food than we do". A most revealing and humorous experience.

We have lunched at a pleasant local hotel accompanied by husbands and partners. With Christmas just around the corner, this year plans are well in hand for a Grand Christmas Lunch at a local golf club, as a 'combined operations' effort with the Taunton branch of the Royal Military Police Association. Expectations are very high for this event, the first of its kind for the two Branches working together. It is hoped it will be the first of many. If any readers are in Taunton on the second Wednesday of each month, we would love to see you at the Royal British Legion, Mary Street, Taunton from 11am onwards. You would be made very welcome.

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH

Continuing from our previous report, we have been quite active during the last five months with June seeing us enjoying our American Supper to which members of the WRNS and WAAF Associations were invited. Our speaker was one of our own members, Margaret Newcombe, who related her experiences whilst serving on the Queens. Also on 17 June, Gail, the daughter of our Vice-Chairman, Louise Longhurst née Masters, held one of her popular buffet lunches in her garden. It was a very hot summer's day, believe it or not.

July saw us on our first coach trip for a few years, again on a hot summer's day, to Stapehill Abbey and Gardens near Wimborne in Dorset. It was very much enjoyed and hopefully year 2001 will see us on another such outing. Also on the same day, Jean Kingdon née Black and Dorothy Ingles were thrilled to obtain tickets to attend the Queen Mother's 100th Birthday celebrations at Horse

Guards Parade in London. An event not to be missed they said.

Two social evenings and a slide show of the Wild Life Centre on Southampton Common concluded our last three monthly meetings.

Happily our Standard has recently been very busy being paraded by both Standard Bearers Jean Houghton née Apps and Margaret Barham née Hope. Firstly at the Earl Mountbatten's Memorial Service in Romsey Abbey, and at two 60th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain events at Romsey Abbey and at St Marks Church, Woolston, Southampton, and lastly at the unveiling of the new Angel of Victory on the War Memorial at Eastleigh, the original having been stolen ten years ago.

Greetings and best wishes are sent especially to those members who are unable, or rarely able, to attend meetings because of health problems, and to ex-branch member Daphne James now residing in Australia who avidly reads the 'Lioness' from cover to cover and who is also fighting ill-health.

STAFFORD BRANCH

We continue to meet at Trinity Church on the first Wednesday of each month and usually we have a good attendance. No new members since the last issue of the 'Lioness' so we have 49 members and 3 Associate members.

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| May | We celebrated our 35th Anniversary with a meal at the Red Lion, Bradley, a village just outside Stafford. |
| June | A speaker was not booked for this month as there were a number of items to be discussed. We rounded off the meeting with a quiz. |
| July | The Secretary now lives in a small bungalow, and can no longer hold our Annual Coffee Morning at her home so we decided to hold an "Afternoon Tea" at our normal meeting place. We included a Bring and Buy stall, which was very successful. Leftover items were ably auctioned off by Mrs Muriel Lakin. |
| August | We went out to lunch again (we do enjoy our food)! This time we opted for a different venue – the Holly Bush at Seighford. Once again we had a very good meal and will definitely go there again. |
| September | Most of the regular members were enjoying last minute holidays so we were few in number. Our Chairperson, Ann Deakin, gave us a very detailed account of her visit to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, near Lichfield.

Seven of us attended the Wales and West Reunion at Donnington on 23 September and had a really good time. An excellent buffet! Well done Shropshire Branch.

Five members attended the Battle of Britain Service, followed by refreshments in the Civic Offices. Three members attended the ATS Dinner Club lunch held in Coventry on 30 September. |

STIRLING BRANCH

The branch has 4 life members and 40 annual members and continues to have a good attendance at meetings in the Mayfield Centre on the last Saturday of each month.

Due to the generosity of Stirling Council, a grant was made to enable the increased cost of hall rental to be met. Without this aid the branch would have had to close and, hopefully, future grants will be allocated.

Twenty-two members attended the Scottish AGM in Glasgow City Chambers in October and enjoyed a pleasant afternoon renewing old friendships. A buffet lunch was served and a pianist entertained and led the community singing.

Stirling Council organised a Fun Walk for over fifties and this took place around the old part of Stirling on a very wet afternoon. Historical buildings and places of interest were noted and at the end of the walk a quiz was held where some interesting historical facts emerged, but no prizes were awarded. An excellent afternoon tea was then served – under cover!

Difficulty is still being experienced in obtaining speakers for Saturday afternoons, but some of our own members rallied round and talks were given on memories of the "Best Times in the ATS", on "Running a Caravan Site in Glencoe", on "Faith Healing" and Cookery Demonstrations using the "Here's one I made earlier" method.

Members continue to collect "loose change" which is sent annually to Erskine Hospital. A cheque for £50 has been sent, and a cheque for £50 was also sent to the ATS Benevolent Fund.

Four members attended the ACK ACK Reunion in York at the end of July. The usual large crowd of regulars attended and gave a big welcome to Betty Boothroyd who was the guest speaker. She made a hit when she started her speech with "**Order, Order**". She got a rapturous response.

The Branch wishes to express their appreciation of the work that goes into producing the "Lioness" twice a year, and each issue is eagerly awaited.

STOCKPORT BRANCH

We have had a mixed year one way and another. Last November we decided we would hold a birthday party on 16 September this year. Each meeting from then on was taken up with arranging this and getting all our members involved preparing the stalls etc. In the meantime a few of us went to Cardiff. There were a lot of different thoughts about Cardiff but we all had a nice weekend, and look forward to the next one.

Back to our birthday party. As the year wore on, we worried about getting support from other branches, and it became obvious we would have to cancel or spend a lot of money we couldn't afford. However, all that is behind us now and we all say "Better luck next time".

One of our members tentatively rode the London Eye and enjoyed the wonderful views up and down Old Father Thames. The Houses of Parliament do not look quite so big from that angle compared with the width of the river.

The curvature of the earth was also distinctive. It comes highly recommended!!

Back to September again! Two of our members were invited to Telford where they were made very welcome. The Telford ladies were the hosts for the Wales and West Reunion. This was a lovely afternoon, with a super lunch, followed by singing (our songs) and dancing. Thank you ladies.

We wish all our friends a very happy 2001.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH



Sunderland Branch members who attended the Grand Reunion Cardiff 2000

We are still averaging around 20+ at our monthly meetings held on the second Thursday of each month.

We received an invitation to Cleveland Branch's birthday party in July and 24 of our members attended. We hired two mini-buses, one driven by our Chairman, and arrived at Cleveland Branch slightly later than planned due to the lead driver (NOT our Chairman) taking a wrong turning, but we finally arrived and were very warmly welcomed. We had a wonderful afternoon – a very good buffet and excellent entertainment, but I don't know if we'll be quite so welcome another time as Sunderland Branch won most of the raffle prizes. We are now known as "The Sunderland Mauraunders". Joking apart, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, so a big thank you to Cleveland Branch.

We all enjoyed a "Pies and Peas" lunch in August and the list for the Christmas lunch was circulated so members could indicate their choice of menu.

We were all saddened to learn of the death of one of our most stalwart members – Mrs Ena Hold. Ena had had a heart attack earlier in the year but seemed to be making a good recovery and had accompanied her husband to France with the Normandy Veterans, so it came as a shock to all of us when she died. We will all miss her, and her dry sense of humour.

On a happier note, our youngest member, Donna Watson, gave birth to a son – Alexander Trevor – on 31 July. He had to have an emergency operation when he was only three weeks old, but happily he is now recovering and doing well. Congratulations Donna – hope to see you at the Christmas lunch.

SWANSEA BRANCH



Members of the branch at Veronica Barrington's house where we held our Bring and Buy Sale

After the busy months leading up to the Grand Reunion, life is a little quieter at our meetings.

Unfortunately our members are dwindling, we have lost another loyal member, Mrs Ena Davies. Ena always managed to attend meetings although not in the best of health, she is sadly missed.

Our meetings are still held at the Guildhall Swansea on the first Wednesday in the month. We had an interesting talk by the Head Chef of the Guildhall in June with tales from the kitchen. A few members went on an outing in July to Llancaiach Fawr Manor House, which was very interesting. In August we had our usual Bring and Buy sale at Veronica's house on the front of Swansea Bay which helped to boost our funds. This was followed by a lovely tea with the help of Veronica's husband and our Chairman's sister. Our September meeting was dominated by a discussion regarding the Remembrance Service on 11 November at the Brangwyn Hall. Instead of free admittance, a charge of £5-£10 was to be made with added entertainment. However, the problem has been solved, we now pay £1 for programme and entrance.

We are now looking forward to our speaker in November and our Christmas lunch at 'The Oxwich Bay Hotel'.

On a personal note it is sad to see the Wembley Towers disappear, as that is where I did my 'square bashing'.

Wishing all members of the Association a Happy and Healthy New year.

ULSTER BRANCH

On the whole Northern Ireland has had one of our better summer seasons. "April is the cruellest month" the poet declaims – but with us the sun shone and it was warm and dry. So preparations for the Association's Summer Outing on 20 May went with a swing. Enniskillen, here we come ... and so did the rain and the wind. But not all day and anyway the 'crack' was good. (And that means conversation over here – not cocaine!) The rest of the

summer behaved itself and our memories are of barbecues and sleeveless dresses and warm evenings.

Our annual invitation to Kathleen Twist's Omagh group of the Association was for 7 October. The sun shone on our assorted group of 20 ATS, WRAC and wrecks (whoops! – speaking personally!). Our coffee-stop was in a new location, the SUITOR GALLERY in Ballygawley. Its title does not indicate proposals of marriage, by the way – just offers of excellent coffee, home-baked scones and a touch of culture in its adjoining art gallery. The afternoon passed all too quickly – an excellent lunch, exchange of news and views with old friends, the prescribed ballot. Later, the coach took some people down town where a beautiful Garden of Remembrance has been created to honour the victims of the bomb outrage of 1998 when 29 men, women and children lost their lives as well as unborn twins who had been within a month of finding life.

Our next get-together will be in November for our AGM in Bangor, Co. Down. I enclose 2 'then and now' photographs which turned up in one of my sorting-out campaigns. Does anyone recognise Private Trudy Osborne, 1943, or Mrs (ex-Sgt) Trudy Watson, 1996? Same uniform, with the odd moth hole, similar face! A year as Hon. Secretary of the Ulster Branch hasn't added too many wrinkles – YET.



1943

And didn't the 50 year old uniform do well! ...



1996

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND BRANCH

Quite a lot has happened in the last twelve months. We are pleased to have four new members, one ex-ATS and 3 ex-WRAC. We wish more ex-WRAC would join us, we need younger blood!

The death of Joan Biddlecombe in June saddened us all. She was a very dear member, and some of us attended her funeral in Bridport to say "Goodbye".

Our meetings restarted in September 1999 and included talks on the ancient Portland Court Leet, the second part of "Nursing in SE Africa", and the Weymouth Lifeboat. We were invited to visit the Lifeboat Station, and a dozen of us went a few days later. We found it all very interesting, especially going on the Lifeboat, but not out to sea!

We supported our Standard Bearer, Esther Pring, at the Remembrance Sunday Parade in Weymouth. Our usual Christmas Social in December went well, then we had a break until February 2000, when our meetings restarted. In March, we enjoyed a very good lunch at the "Sea Cow Restaurant".

Several members went to the Grand Re-Union in Cardiff and had a very good weekend. We were all disappointed not to win a Raffle Prize, but two of the members got their photograph printed in the No. 2/2000 edition of 'The Lioness'.

We were in the Annual Veterans' Parade in Weymouth on 18 June and were joined by members of other branches. Esther Pring carried our Branch Standard, looking very smart as always. The weather was excellent and all the WWII vehicles brought back memories. Later that week we had our stall on the Sea Front and were pleased to send £120 to the Benevolent Fund.

The Summer Outing in July was to Powderham Castle and Dawlish Warren. The weather was perfect which helped to make it a good day.

We had our summer break and returned "fresh" in September.

Esther carried our Standard at the 60th Anniversary Service of the Battle of Britain. She had a fall leaving the church and has decided to retire. We are all sorry, but understand that her health and (dare I say it) advancing years, have made it increasingly harder for her to carry on. Well done Esther, you did us proud. Any volunteers?

The Borough Millennium quilted wall hanging was unveiled in July and it was nice to see our ATS badge on it. The final resting place is yet to be decided.

At the Branch AGM on 3 October, all the Committee, except Edna Kerry, were re-elected. Edna has had health problems, but, despite this, worked hard for two years. Thank you Edna. One of our new ex-WRAC members, Diane Lawrence has accepted the post, and we know she will be a great asset to us (she has a Word Processor!). Edna will be her Assistant Secretary.

We are hosting the Area Re-Union on 6 May 2001 and the plans have all been completed. We welcome all the members of our Area to sunny Weymouth.

Our membership is still strong and we hold meetings in the RNA Club at Weymouth on the first and third Tuesday of the month.

WILMSLOW BRANCH

Since the last report we have been very active in our own way.

Martin Bell came to our Anniversary Lunch at The Pinewood. He spoke to us about his life as a BBC journalist and later as our MP. He invited us to visit the Houses of Parliament and this we will do in November when we are in London for the Remembrance Parade. Whilst there we will go to St Margarets and place our crosses in memory of family and friends we have lost.

On Saturday 11 November we are having afternoon tea at the Savoy Hotel, a far cry from the NAAFI during the war.

The British Legion of Cheshire is holding a Festival of Remembrance on 4 November at the Leisure Centre, Wilmslow, and some of us hope to attend.

It is with a tinge of sadness that we say goodbye to Betty Masterman, but our loss is Wales's gain. We have enjoyed her membership of our branch, but we wish her well in her new life. We will be seeing her in London in November.

Our Christmas Lunch is at our usual watering hole, The Pinewood, and will be on Thursday 7 December 2000. We look forward to the next year's activities.

WIMBLEDON BRANCH

We continue to meet, usually on the second Friday of each month at the Wimbledon Community Centre. Our attendances vary between 20 and 25 members subject to weather and transport.

In April we held a Bring and Buy Sale which helped us to meet the ever increasing cost of our meeting room.

We were joined in May by Joanna Bogle, a local author, who spoke about "Celebrating Traditional Feats and Seasons".

Eight of our members met in Kingston on 7 June and caught a bus to Richmond to visit The Star and Garter Home on Richmond Hill. We were given a guided tour of the Home and told the history of its foundation. We all admired the view of the sweep of the Thames from the grounds at the back of the Home. We had a most enjoyable and interesting afternoon and plan to visit the local Poppy factory in the future.

We always hold a mid-season Tea Party in June and were pleased to welcome Mrs Eileen Carter as our guest of honour.

In July we asked our members to tell us of their hobbies and interests. One brought along a collection of wrapped sugar lumps from many different countries; another researched Family Histories and explained how to find out about our ancestors. Knitting and handicrafts were also brought along for us to admire.

We do not have an indoor meeting in August but our President opens her garden and invites us to tea on a Sunday afternoon. This year the weather smiled on us and seventeen people including husbands met to enjoy delicious refreshments and lots of chatter. Thank you Iris for making us so welcome.

In September we were visited by an officer from the local police station. He brought with him literature on crime prevention and how to make your homes secure. He also spoke of how to be aware when out on the street and showed us samples of drugs which are in common use and told of the methods by which they are inhaled, injected etc. Although he thought he would be unable to talk for more than three quarters of an hour – it was an hour and a half by the time he answered all our members' questions and took his leave. Thank you Inspector Simons for a very interesting afternoon.

WINCANTON BRANCH

We have had another busy time since our last Report, but tinged with sadness at the death of our Chairman Molly Clay, a founder member. She is greatly missed.

We enjoyed a Christmas buffet and lunch with delicious food provided by members. This was followed by a hilarious Beetle Drive, with Santa Claus instead of Beetle.



Wincanton Branch enjoying their annual outing

In May we had a coffee morning with a Cake & Bric-a-Brac stall which raised £160. Many thanks to all those hard working members. June saw us manning a stall in Wincanton Street Market to celebrate the Millennium.

Our outing this year was to the Blandford Signals Museum with lunch first at the delightful Plough Inn.

The Museum was very interesting, giving all aspects of signalling, and one of our members amazed us by receiving and sending the Morse she had learnt 60 years ago.

We had our Summer Meeting in the lovely gardens of one of our members. It was a hot sunny day and we enjoyed our picnic under shady garden umbrellas – this was followed by a fiendish quiz of anagrams prepared by our Secretary Beryl.

We have had a number of interesting speakers. These included a family doctor who spoke about New Zealand from whence he had just returned, and Miss Betty Clay who spoke about Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) where she had lived for many years.

We are only a small branch, but our monthly meetings are well attended. New members would be warmly welcomed.

WORTHING BRANCH

Our happy branch continues to meet on the second Friday of each month, excepting August. Our members come from a few miles out of Worthing, which makes organising transport for outings quite difficult to arrange.

Our activities have been quite varied, starting last December (99) with a Christmas Lunch at the Kingsway Hotel in Worthing which 34 members enjoyed, and will be repeated again this year.

On 14 January the committee and many helpers arranged a Buffet Lunch for approximately 50 guests including 3 members from Bexhill, Eastbourne, and Hastings, also 3 WRNS and 3 WAAFs from local branches.

We aim to give our members items of interest throughout the year whenever possible.

February	A talk and demonstration was given called costumes through the ages.
March	Bring and Buy and chatter.
April	Hearing Dogs for the Deaf.
May	The Water Board (flow how).
June	AGM.
July	Smith Klein Beecham
September	Memorabilia meeting and Bring/Buy.
October	Amusing meeting on B/B guests.
November	Speaker on Re-cycling our Waste.
December	Christmas Lunch.

In April our Secretary and one other member represented us at Cardiff AGM. They met many familiar faces and reported back to members.

A small party of us joined the local British Legion on a trip to the Poppy Factory at Richmond. In May we had a visit to the Houses of Parliament and were given a guided tour. Again with the British Legion, we went to the Royal Hospital at Chelsea and visited their very interesting exhibition.

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In July, 4 members went to Bexhill Branch for a strawberry and cream tea which was enjoyed by all.

WOLVERHAMPTON BRANCH

Our membership is more or less static. We have had three new members notified by Association HQ. All have been contacted, and to date one has attended the meetings. One member has recently died and three members have fallen by the wayside – in other words they have not kept up their subscriptions. We still have approximately 20 members attending the meeting each month, which is quite a good showing as some of our members live over a wide area.

This has been the year of the Grand Reunion which took place at Cardiff. It was a great success and everyone who attended enjoyed it. An outing was arranged for a Canal Trip and this was pronounced a success. In July one of our members, Dorothy Haydon, invited us to visit her home in Stafford. This was thoroughly enjoyed by all. The Area Reunion was held at Shropshire in September. Next year 2001 will be hosted by Leicester with the help of Ashby de la Zouch. Our AGM is in October and plans are going ahead for the Christmas Lunch.

AUSTRALIAN STYLE

Joyce Seward, Unit 32 – 6 Sepia Court, Rockingham,
Western Australia 6168

News of our little crowd in the Perth Metropolitan region in this our Olympic Year.

Whilst we do not meet on a regular basis it seems we are settling into a pattern of having at least two lunch 'get togethers' per year, when those ex-ATS/WRAC who are interested gather at the Returned Services League Club in Perth for what is termed a "Blackboard Lunch". Whilst about 70 invitations are sent out, our attendance numbers average about 30-35, and believe me, we all thoroughly enjoy the occasion. When we had our last lunch in May it was unfortunate that the buses in our Northern suburbs went on strike, and some ladies were left with no means of getting into the City. Their presence was missed but the numbers were supplemented by an equal number who arrived unexpectedly. Again when leaving I was asked, "When's the next one?" which will be in November, before the hectic Christmas round of barbeques and "wind-ups".

Locally here in Rockingham, the area from where most of our 'girls' come, we meet more often for a cup of coffee, a laugh and a natter at one of our beachfront cafes - very enjoyable in the summer weather, a wee bit draughty just now! (July)

Of course "Olympics" is 'hot' in this country, and whilst many from Western Australia (WA) will be unable to attend in person, we have at least had the thrill of having - and seeing - the Olympic Flame touring around the country. Hundreds of selected volunteers of all ages, (12 - 85 that I know of) and of all types of physical capability, have participated. Each chosen runner, carrying an Olympic torch, runs in relay a distance of 500 metres at the end of which they ignite the torch of the next runner. And so in like manner will the Flame travel to Sydney. I am enclosing a photograph which I thought the readers of the "Lioness" might be interested in.

It is one of our 'girls' who had the thrill of being a 'runner' in her locality of Mandurah. JOY JEFFES (née FEATHER) W/175850 served as a clerk from 1942-46. Joy says she was overwhelmed by the wondrous reception the runners received from the crowds lining the streets, cheering, clapping and waving flags. Then, at the end of her run, she experienced 'fame' as adults and children crowded around, eager to touch or hold the torch and be photographed holding the torch or with Joy. Never has she had so many photographs taken, or autographed so many T-Shirts!! As a matter of interest each runner was given their shirt, socks and shorts. They were also given the option to purchase the torch they carried at a cost of \$352 (£141.00) if bought before the introduction of our GST (Goods and Services Tax), or \$375 (£150.00) if bought on the day of the 'run'.



*Olympic Torch Runner
5th July 2000, Mandurah, Western Australia*

One of our number has left WA for Queensland. MAISIE SIMS (née CRAFTS) W/361848 Driver 1948-51 has gone to settle in Queensland. I have extracted a promise from her that she too, via the use of letters to the Community Paper will try and contact local ex- ATS/WRAC. We will miss her but look forward to hearing from her once she has settled.

I am looking forward to my copy of the "Lioness", due to arrive any day now, and am eagerly awaiting news of your Reunion, and hopefully more articles from ex-WRAC members from 1949 onwards.

One comment from my grand daughter when looking at the photographs published of 'girls' in uniform, whether taken in groups or singularly - "Granny you all looked and dressed alike!!!"

Our best wishes to all.

Letters

Dear Editor

I was horrified at the latest report we received from our area representative on Council, the fact that Branches are not making welcome the ex WRAC members, and talk of possible solutions such as virtually separating the ex ATS and ex WRAC or putting a new rule in the book stating we must be made welcome is surely an insult to the intelligence of all members. If only all members would read the latest enrolment form they may realise that the Association does not spring from the ATS we were formed in 1919, twenty years before the existence of the ATS.

Looking at our family history, this makes the former QMAAC the Grandmothers, the ATS are the mothers and the former WRAC the daughters.

In normal families does mum say you are younger than me and have different interests therefore I won't meet you? Of course not, with a little give and take on both sides views can be exchanged and both parties can learn from the other and even begin to enjoy the company of the other generation.

Please ladies start acting like adults and not like members of 3 different political parties. Life is too short for petty family squabbles and after all we don't really want the 'family' to die out do we?

Jean Cundy-Borge
former Driver Jean Evans (acting L/Cpl) W371578

DO YOU WANT THE LIONESSE?

Dear Editor

I was concerned to hear at the 2000 AGM that our magazine, "The Lioness", is in the red by several thousand pounds. This vital link between members, branches, and Headquarters seems to be in danger of bankruptcy.

Anyone who has had to balance the books of an organisation would feel that there are two courses of action open to them when they are in deficit. They are:-

1. To reduce expenditure, and
2. To increase income.

Could we not use a less expensive glossy format, or find a cheaper printer? Is it possible to carry more advertising? Judging by the amount of mail, and TV adverts aimed at the retired e.g. bath hoists, stair-lifts, pension schemes – and, dare I say funeral expenses! -, "The Lioness" would seem to be a useful advertising outlet.

What do other branch members think about the future of *THEIR* magazine, and how to make it viable?

Mrs Betty Mitchell,
50 Revell Park Road, Plympton, Plymouth PL7 4EL

WHY WE NEED THE LIONESSE

Dear Editor

Many thanks to those who helped me contact Sandra Brownbridge (Lioness 2/2000), especially Jill and Yvonne. Sandra's sister was most grateful.

Sandra asked "What is the Lioness"?!! So to everyone reading this wonderful magazine can I ask – do you have old contacts who do not know about the WRAC Association? Get in touch, get them to join. Too many of us were never told about it.

Gladys W Pope (née Jones) W/389156
11 Lynch Close, Mere, Wiltshire BA12 6EL

Dear Editor

Over the years I have often wondered what has happened to my ex (and now old) Army friends.

However, I recently met Jo Anscombe, a member of the Hereford branch, when she was visiting a neighbour of mine. We had an interesting chat and she gave me details of your Association which I joined immediately. I was surprised, and pleased, to see in Lioness 2/2000, details of the ex members of 504 Bty together with an excellent photo of them at the Westminster Field of Remembrance. I have since been in contact with Mrs Betty Deeny of the Greater London Branch and have sent her photostats of snaps taken at Blandford in 1941.

She has been in contact with another ex member of 504 Bty in the hope that someone will remember me, and that we may be able to make contact.

Hoping to hear some good news.

Mrs K Cooke,
8 St Ives Court, Albert Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 3JY (Ex 504(M) HAA Bty RA (1941-2))

Dear Editor

Mrs M Dowson, Lioness 2/2000 was concerned that Dovercourt was unknown to people. In early 1943, I and another soldier were returning from a course early one day. Knowing this meant Guard Duties he suggested we spend the day at a mixed gun-site he had been attached to. This Battery was 554 at Dovercourt. On this visit I met a seventeen year old ATS Mavis Fry, who became my wonderful wife till I lost her in 1992.

Mrs Dowson, hardly a day goes by without me thinking of Dovercourt and meeting my future wife.

Mr W Court (ex Honourable Artillery Company),
Marsh Acres, High Lane, Sloothby, Alford, Lincs LN13 9NR

Dear Editor

I am writing to thank you for publishing in the Lioness 2/2000, Page 14, my resume of my service in the WRAC from 1952 to 1959.

I am very pleased that I have been reunited with Val Young, Dorothy Hill (Slym Whiles) and Stella Fogg (née Hills), all from BAOR. I attended the WRAC Dinner Club at Stafford, where I met up with Kath Hughes - great memories of the car which four of us bought for £20. It was tied together with string and its clutch held together with a hairpin. (None of us could even drive!). A visit to the drivers' block got us on the road for a very little while, but the CO wasn't very happy about the car's condition, so it had to go, but where to we don't know!

I would like to thank Ann Butler Deakin for all her efforts in making a memorable weekend. It was such a success that I am looking forward to the next. My advice to those who haven't been because they haven't anybody to go with, go on your own – you won't be alone for long.

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Thank you Lioness. Thank you Ann and your Committee.

Mrs D Simpson (W/379013 Cpl Daphne Lane), 56 Latimer Drive, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 3HT

Dear Editor

I read the letter from Mrs E Powell, Mandurah W A, asking if any member was in a Drum and Bugle Band. I was in 484 H(M) AA Bty and in 1942 our Site Commander wanted to form a marching band, we practised between our duties.



We played at church parades, football matches in East Anglia and Belgium in 1944 and then, when the war ended, we went on a tour of West Germany and Denmark.

Mrs Evelyn O'Neill, 33 Bede Burn View, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear NE32 5PQ

CALLING LIFE MEMBERS

Dear Editor

I recently realised how many years it is since I took out life membership, and as a result how little the Lioness had cost me for the pleasures of keeping in touch with the Corps and its successors since my retirement. A call to Corps HQ determined that Life membership is for life, but a donation to the Association for the Lioness would be appreciated. I wonder if there are others like me who over the years have just read the Lioness with pleasure, and attended reunions, but not thought about the amazing value one was getting from Life Membership subscription? If reading this you feel a further donation would be a good idea and you pay income tax do contact Corps HQ for a Gift Aid Declaration to accompany your cheque then they can reclaim the Tax, better it goes to the Lioness than to the Chancellor!

Name and Address supplied

BRANCH LOCATIONS

Dear Editor

I read with interest the letter from J K Green (Lioness 2/2000 page 56) prompting more ex-WRACs to become members of the Association. I became a life member on 12 February 1996. Since becoming a member I have unfortunately not been able to attend any of the Branch meetings. When I lived in Surrey, my nearest branch was in Hampshire, when I lived in Bridgwater my nearest Branch was Western-Super-Mare, now I live in Boston my nearest Branch is the Norfolk and Suffolk Branch, situated in Norwich. I don't drive so have no way of attending any of the meetings as the distance is too great. Surely I am not the only member living in the county of Lincolnshire, there must be more of you out there who are in the same boat as me. I would be very interested to hear from any members who would like to start a branch in or around the Boston area. I am sure that if branches were more accessible more members would take an active part thereby getting more new members by being able to publicise the Association.

Finally, I wholeheartedly support J K Green, so come on girls, get recruiting.

J V Burchett-Vass (née Veness)
"Hi Holme", Station Road, Old Leake, Boston,
Lincolnshire PE22 9QQ

"JOIN THE ATS"

Dear Editor

For the past few years I have visited Liangollen with my husband and as he is a Rail Enthusiast, we always visit the Railway Station.

Approaching the Booking Office is a Poster "Join the ATS" and when I have seen it over the years I get a feeling of nostalgia.

Enclosed is a photo of the Poster, I thought ex ATS members would be interested.

Barbara Larman Ex ATS W/131299 LCpl
12 Freeboard Road, Narborough Road South,
Leicester LE3 2UN



HEAD OF WRAF, BUT, WHERE DID SHE START?

Dear Editor

Air Commandant Dame Anne Stephens DBE was head of the Women's Royal Air Force from 1960 to 1963.

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After she left school she joined the ATS and six months before the war in 1939 she was appointed Commander of No. 27 (County of Gloucester) RAF Company, a component of the ATS. She subsequently became a WAAF but she started as an ATS.

Maybe, we now elderly ATS were considered not quite as "upmarket" as the WAAF and WRNS. So, put a feather in your caps ladies, Dame Anne rose from the ATS.

Best wishes to all Lioness staff. Keep up the good work.

Mary Santer,
74 Walkern Road, Benington, Herts SG2 7LS

ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

Dear Editor

Former ATS and WRAC personnel who served with or were attached to a Royal Engineer unit should be eligible to join the Royal Engineers Association if they wish.

The Crawley branch is primarily concerned with S E England, South London, Surrey, Kent, East and West Sussex. However I do have a list of other branches and contact addresses but not phone numbers. Alternatively anybody can contact Chatham direct on 01634 822407/9 or write to:

The Deputy Controller R E A
Brompton Barracks
Chatham
Kent ME4 4UG

Tony Muir, Hon Treasurer/Membership Secretary,
"Dockray", No. 1 Perryfield Road, Southgate, Crawley, West
Sussex RH11 8AA Tel No: 01293 520515

LIFE IN KOSOVO

Dear Editor

The article "Memories of Kosovo" from WOII Kemp was very interesting. I had heard about the shoe factory in Skopje, also the accommodation in Pristina from my grand-daughter who is in the Army and now back in Germany. I used to send her parcels quite often, toiletries, chocolate and foot spray (for the boys) - she said they all had smelly feet. She was very annoyed when the mice got into their tents. The raspberry ruffles I sent out in the parcel were eaten by the mice. She was with Allied Rapid Reaction Corps and says the sight of the refugees will stay with her forever and that when they started to come back to Kosovo the children were waving banners and shouting, "we love you NATO". They had flowers and would give them to the troops.

My eldest son joined the Royal Marines, my second son joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and now my grand-daughter is in the Army. They all say I influenced them with my stories of life in the Army.

Mrs Irene Pugh (ex W/342867 Lewis I 144 Provo Coy,
M.E.L.F.), 48 Compton Close, Breacon, Powys LD3 9PH

EXPLODING RATS & COW DUNG!

Dear Editor

Wimbledon Branch members certainly had cause to sit up when watching the 6 o'clock TV News on the BBC recently. We were surprised to see our Marjorie Hindley talking about exploding rats and imitation cow and camel dung being designed during her service with the SOE. What a pity she was unable to give a talk at the London Area Reunion Dinner, which she organised, because of the 60 year secrecy ban.

Marjorie has talked to us about her career as a dress designer. Maybe we can look forward to some very interesting tales in the future.

Doris Lee, 5A Burbank, 71 Dukes Avenue, New Malden,
Surrey KT3 4HP

THANKYOU

Dear Editor

On 29 October 2000 I did a three mile sponsored walk for Breast Cancer, in Birmingham. It was called "Walk for Hope".

I would like to thank all the ladies from the WRAC Dinner Club who sponsored me, also all the ladies in the Birmingham Branch. I raised £305.50.

So once again thankyou for all your support.

Maureen Deeley, 5 Bayston Road, Kingsheath
Birmingham B14 5AS

"THANKS FOR CARDIFF"

Dear Editor

I've just read through your Lioness 2/2000. I am an Honorary Member of "The British Ex-Service Women's Association" in Adelaide, South Australia and was very lucky and privileged to travel with the "girls" to England at the end of March to attend the Reunion in Cardiff 2000.

Although unable to attend the Dinner, I did go along in the afternoon and was able to purchase some souvenirs and meet lots of friendly people.

I again attended the Sunday Church Service, it was a wonderful feeling to be there and something I will never forget.

Our accommodation at Lincoln House Hotel was excellent, I'm so glad that I was able to join the celebrations. It was great to see our President Mrs Edna Simson in one of the photos featured in the Lioness.

I travelled to Cardiff with my friend Mrs Grace Perrott (née Calder) ex-ATS. Although she never met any of her old wartime friends, we certainly enjoyed a fantastic weekend and say a big thank you to everyone involved, it was great.

Lesley Mackay,
16 Albert Street, Seaton 5023, South Australia

Application for Membership

To the General Secretary
THE WRAC ASSOCIATION
AGC Centre Worthy Down
Winchester Hampshire
SO21 2RG

PDF Compressor Free Version

I wish to join the WRAC Association as a Life Member and enclose £50 cheque

OR

I enclose £5 cheque for Annual membership which is in payment of the first annual subscription up to the 31 December.

Date..... Signature

Subscriptions include “LIONESSE” (Please complete in Block Letters)

QMAAC/ATS/WRAC/TAVR Army Number

Last Rank held (Present Rank if still serving)

Surname Miss/Mrs/Ms

Christian Names.....

Surname when serving

Address for Correspondence

.....

.....

..... Post Code.....

Telephone

Units during service.....

.....

Date of Enrolment..... Date of Release

Decorations..... Date of Birth

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Please note that in future, all payments for
subscriptions, postage and memorabilia will
only be accepted In Sterling.

Please ask your bank for a Money Order
or Sterling Cheque.

We regret to have to impose this restriction,
but due to the vagaries of exchange rates,
the majority of overseas payments fall
significantly short of the amount due.

Poems

"FRIENDSHIP"

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Submitted by Bristol Branch

There's a miracle of friendship that dwells within the heart
And you don't know how it happens or where it gets its start.

But the happiness it brings you always gives a special lift,
And you realise that friendship is God's most perfect gift.

Anon

"DEAR LORD"

Submitted by Newcastle Branch

Today Dear Lord, I'm 80 and
There's so much I haven't done
I hope, Dear Lord, you'll let me live until I'm 81
But then, if I haven't finished all I want to do,
Would you let me stay awhile –
Until I'm 82.

So many places I want to go
So very much to see –
Do you think you could manage to make it 83?
There is so much in store
I'd like it very much to live until I'm 84.

And if by then, I'm still alive,
I'd like to stay 'til 85 –
More planes will be up in the air,
So I'd really like to stick around
And see what happens to the world when I am 86
I know, Dear Lord, it's much to ask
(And it must be nice in heaven)
But I would really like to stay until I'm 87.

Now by then I won't be fast and sometimes will be late:
But it would be so pleasant to be around at 88
I will have seen so many things and had a wonderful time
So, I'm sure that I'll be willing to leave at 89....
Maybe.

I'm 90, Lord, my mind is sound;
I like it here – I can still walk around,
My time is limited, I know, and someday, I'll have to go!
I'm not greedy or guided by fears;
I want to see what happens in the next few years.
I'm sure you've heard this plea before,
But my bags *will* be packed at 104.

"Gladys"

THE QUEEN MOTHER'S PAGEANT 19TH JULY

After weeks of rain the forecast was good,
The sun would shine down the whole day,
The IRA had different ideas
To spoil this centenary

A bomb on the line – Ealing Broadway it was
Another in Whitehall I heard.
Parliament Square was targeted too,
That's where they planted the third

But they reckoned without our English pride
We weren't defeated – oh no!
We got into London by different routes
Determined to get to the show.
Queenie and Bet, just two in the crowd
Ending up South of the river –
Westminster Bridge closed and the Underground too,
'Oh Lord can you please deliver?'

He must have been with them as Betty queued
For a taxi – it took half an hour,
Then that bridge-once too far – was open again,
What's the time? – a quarter to four!

They crept and they crawled through traffic and heat
To a point near to Horse Guards Parade.
Then they walked quite a way-up steps and up stairs
To their seats – 'Thank you God' – in the shade.

Well you've all seen the show, you know it was good,
The only remark they would add,
The atmosphere was so friendly and warm,
What a great time everyone had.

To finish the day they had a young man
Who took them out on the town,
He wined them and dined them, escorted them back
Thank you Andrew – time for us to lie down.

Mrs Betty Mitchell W/42300

SCARLET POPPIES

Scarlet poppies growing in the field
Where so many soldiers were killed
Fighting to help to win the war
And preserve the peace for evermore

They braved the very heavy guns,
The shells and wire they did not shun.
Over the top they made their way -
For some it was the end of day

The guns went on roaring away
And lads died where they lay
But the struggle had to go on
For this was the "Battle of the Somme"

Yes, poppies grow where brave hearts lay
And are a symbol to this day.
They fought for Britain and peace
And remembrance we will always keep

C E Brimfield

WHAT ARE SENIORS WORTH ?

Did you know that old folk are worth a fortune.

Silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys,
lead in their feet and gas in their stomachs. I have become
a little older since I last saw you. A few changes have come
into my life. Frankly, I have become a frivolous old girl. I
am seeing five gentlemen every day.

As soon as I wake up Will Power helps me out of bed. Then
I visit John. Next it is time for Mr Kellogg, followed by the
refreshing company of Mr Tetley, or my other friend I just
call by his initials P.G. Then comes someone I do not like
Arthur Ritis. He knows he is not welcome but he insists and
what is more, he stays for the rest of the day. He does not
like to stay in one place at a time so he takes me from joint
to joint. After such a busy day, I am really tired and glad to
go to bed with Johnny Walker. What a life. Oh yes, I am
flirting. The minister called the other day and said "at my
age I should be thinking of the hereafter". I told him, "Oh I
do, all the time. No matter where I am, in the bedroom,
kitchen, sitting room, or even in the garden. I stop and ask
myselfnow what am I here after?

Anon

DAYDREAMS

Why do I behave this way?
I am so wise most people say.
I'm in a daze, what's on my mind?
Reality is far behind.
Forgotten daily routine things
I live the joy that a daydream brings.

My daydream is a peaceful place,
With mountains, lake and open space,
With no one near to bother me
I'm like a child, young and free.
But daydreams have to end sometime,
And this I'm afraid, is the end of mine.

A poem for you from me.

Anon

A DAY TO REMEMBER!!

Another poem from "Mary", submitted by Capt Bill Leonard.

At last, at last – oh wondrous day
For we've been praised, yes, praised, today.
The CSM came with a beam
- Said ours the nicest room she'd seen.
(The shock it very nearly killed us
and yet with cheer and courage filled us)
We staggered round the camp a daze
She so inspired us with her praise.
We argued as we ironed the frills –
Removed all dust from window sills.
Scrambled aloft to dust the beams –
We argued till our throats were sore
Should we buy oak stain for the floor???
We argued morning noon and night
On plans to make the room more bright.

"Mary"

THE SECOND WORLD WAR EXPERIENCE

The Second World War Experience Centre was created to save a crucial part of our heritage. The aim of the Centre is to rescue the surviving personal evidence of the men and women who participated in the Second World War in whatever capacity. The Centre is not only concerned with prominent soldiers, sailors and airmen, but with the daily civilian and military experience of all manner of men, women and children in every community during wartime, both Allied and Axis. The collection being preserved for posterity includes wartime letters, diaries, photographs, maps, newspapers, books, official papers and "three dimensional material" evoking the period as well as tape-recorded interviews with veterans. The intention is to make such material available to researchers, students and to the general public so that an understanding of the experience of those who fought in this conflict can be developed and remembered.

The Centre has approached our Association to see if anyone would like to assist them in their work in any of the following ways:

- Donating relevant material or recording your recollections in writing or on tape
- Giving a few hours voluntary help on a regular basis, for example in tape recording veterans for the oral archive
- Becoming a Friend of the Centre. In return for an annual subscription, currently £15 within UK, Friends receive twice yearly copies of the journal "Everyone's War" together with other benefits, including advance notice of events organised by the Centre.

If you are interested in the Second World War Experience Centre and would like to get more information, please contact:

The Second World War Experience Centre
6 – 8 York Place, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS1 2DS
Tel: 0113 2450475
E-mail: enquiries@war-experience.org
Website: <http://www.war-experience.org>

WRAC SNCOs AND WOs ANNUAL DINNER

The WRAC SNCOs and WOs Annual Dinner for the year 2001 is due to be held at Louisburg Sergeants' Mess, Bordon on Saturday 16 June.

Any ex or serving member wishing to attend should contact:

WO2 (CSM) Kaz Smith,
14 GS Coy, 6 Bn REME, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7DR
Tel: 01980 603156 Mil: 94342 3156

Numbers will be limited, so a first come first served basis will apply.

Accommodation will be available.
More details on application.

Book early – avoid disappointment!

Obituary

BRIGADIER HELEN GUILD MEECHIE CBE, MA, LLD – 1938-2000

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It is fitting that we should remember Helen here in St Andrew's Church of Scotland on Queen's Avenue at Aldershot; the home of the British Army, where so many soldiers and not least Helen have served at some time since North and South Camps were created; soldiers to whom names such as Rushmoor, Long Valley, Tweseldown and Laffans Plain were commonplace.

Helen, born in Dundee in 1938 and with a degree of Modern Languages from St Andrew's University, reported to the Womens Royal Army Corps School of Instruction in August 1960. This establishment was always known as Liphook because in those days of fewer motor cars (and particularly not for students!) the detraining station was Liphook. As a University entrant, Helen lived in the Officer Cadet Mess but was required to attend only a short Commissioning Course which, for her, was completed in December of that year.

Postings as a Subaltern Officer followed. Who nowadays has heard of Robin Hood Gate or Marchington?

It soon became apparent to her contemporaries, amongst others, that Helen was a 'flyer' and that she warranted

'career postings'. These were not of her choice but were those of senior officers of the day who wished her Army experience and background to be broadened.

Of these postings one was to Cyprus as a Staff Captain 'A': (for those not conversant with Army abbreviations of those days, 'A' Branch dealt with all matters affecting the soldier as an individual; not operational matters nor supplying the Army with its material needs). She was, in fact, later posted to Hong Kong where she did deal with these other staff subjects.

Whilst in Dhekalia, Helen was tasked with the revision of a Families Guide Book. This book received universal acclaim, fuelled as it was by the outpourings of the ubiquitous coffee pot of a fellow WRAC officer on the staff there at the time.

It is also now known that whilst in Cyprus a performance of "Noyes Fludde" was arranged. Helen played the cello in the orchestra. An informant states "I do not think that many people know that she was a cellist". The informant was undoubtedly right!

Helen's career was not that of a "blue stocking" and it would therefore not do her justice simply to provide a detailed list of postings.

She represented the Army at Inter-Service level in both tennis and hockey; and her introduction to golf is now known to have occurred long before she was stationed in Aldershot. With friends, she was camping under canvas somewhere in UK and at nightfall had pitched tent on an apparently suitable stretch of greensward. At dawn, unaccountable objects were falling on the tent, and investigation caused equally unrecognised shouts of "fore". History does not relate on which fairway of which golf course this happened, but undoubtedly it did.

Before her posting to Germany, on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, Helen attended a course at the National Defence College at Latimer.

She felt at home in RHEINDAHLEN, the "Home of the British Army Of the Rhine", with another Queen's Avenue as its main thorough-fare; a road which led not only to Holland in minutes but passport free travel to all other surrounding countries. She enjoyed this facility to the full with the freedom that fast roads gave her.

Other long journeys by road were taken, mainly after retirement, to visit friends in Scotland for whom she was always a welcome guest. Some will remember Helen for her own generous hospitality at her flat in Frimley whilst she was stationed in Aldershot – a flat owned by a retired officer of the Corps, which was to be occupied by others as postings permitted.

Helen's progress to becoming Director can perhaps best be described in modern parlance as "seamless". One of her achievements in this appointment was to instigate the publication of "The Corps Today", complete sets of which are held in the Public Record Office and the National

Army Museum.

A Retired Officer on Helen's staff at that time has said of her "I found Helen a very understanding boss". Another officer, very much her junior, says of Helen "what a demanding employer she could be but as always as always with humour and was always for my benefit". Helen might have concurred happily had she known of that 'assessment' of her at the time!

Helen's successor as Director Womens Royal Army Corps writes:-

"During her tenure as DWRAC Helen was elected to hold the Chairmanship of the NATO Committee on Women. The Committee met each year at NATO Headquarters. Its membership consisted of the most senior serving women from all the services from each NATO country; its remit, to study and make recommendations on the employment of women in the armed services of NATO.

In many ways she came to carry the hopes not only of women in this country but also of the senior serving women throughout NATO".

Expectations and hopes were high and there was genuine rejoicing when after her tour as Director (at a particularly early age) she was selected to attend the course at the Royal College of Defence Studies; another "career posting" for only the most promising of senior officers and in Helen's case, a 'first' for a female officer of any service.

She was posted on completion of the course to the appointment of Deputy Director General Personnel Services (Army) in the Ministry of Defence.

Sadly, her undoubted talents were not rewarded by the great prize of the next step up the promotion ladder. However, her qualities were to be acknowledged in other spheres.

- She was appointed Honorary Colonel of Tayforth Officers' Training Corps – another 'first' for a female officer.
- She received an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from Dundee University
- and she had become a Freeman of the City of London.

In 1993 she was appointed, and completed, a five year tenure as a Deputy Colonel Commandant of the Adjutant General's Corps; in recognition of the fact that the WRAC on disbandment had been one of the antecedent Corps from which the AG Corps had been formed.

In 1997 Helen became Vice President and Chairman of the WRAC Association, but retired with grace at what she judged to be an appropriate time after the onset of her illness.

In retirement, Helen had moved to Wiltshire and continued her passion for golf. Typically, when it became obvious to her that she would never play golf again, she gave her Hill Billy electric golf trolley away. This apparently simple act of generosity must have been a heart rending step for Helen. The wife of the recipient says now "whenever I see the batteries being charged, I

shall remember seeing Helen playing a tee shot which seemed nearly to reach the green 343 yards distant". Helen was a 'big hitter' in many ways and it is arguable in this context that Laura Davis was quaking in her golf shoes at nearby Weybridge!

Perhaps Helen's character and qualities have already been summed up appropriately by the author of a book entitled "On Laffans Plain" (a history of Army Golf Club and its courses 1883 – 2000). He, a retired senior Army Officer and a golfer, has written an enduring epithet.

His words read:-

Reference to Service Ladies would not be complete without mention of Brigadier Helen Meechie. This remarkable person was Director of her Corps and formed the WRAC Golfing Society. She was Chairman (none of this 'Madam Chair', 'Chair Lady' or 'Chair Person' nonsense for Helen) of the society which made Army Golf Club its home. The style and spirit that Helen helped to create were remarkable and the WRAC were always among the most competitive of service teams. The happy, sporting atmosphere that pervaded the WRAC Golfing Society continued after the demise of the WRAC and translated easily into the formation of the Army Golfing Association, Ladies Section.

The AGA Ladies Championships were played at Army Golf Club in June of this year. The serving competitors played the 36 hole scratch competition for the "Meechie Shield". Helen attended although she was very unwell. But, characteristically and bravely, she attended to support an event that her drive and enthusiasm had generated at a club with which she had a long association.

We can hope that Helen's bravery, above all, will be remembered. This will certainly be so at Woodhall Spa today where the Ladies Inter Service Golf Championships are being played. Although this reduces the numbers able to pay their respects here, we can be sure that a Minute's Silence will be observed there in Helen's memory.

Col E Bowles

For the last few days, I have been trying to think of the words that would best describe Helen, and to be frank, it has not been easy. Helen had many qualities, and it is difficult to sum up her life in a few sentences.

I think when my sisters and I were children, we saw Helen as a fairly exciting figure. To a child in early 1970s Glasgow, an Aunt who worked in Hong Kong, who was an army Major, and, who, most importantly of all, possessed a soft-top red sportscar (in which she was not adverse to giving small children fast drives with the roof down), was someone whose visits were to be looked forward to. The scarcity of these visits due to her army duties made the occasional times we did see her all the better. She always had been somewhere or done something unusual, and a visit from Helen was something to be looked forward to. The fact that she did not conform to the stereotype of a typical Auntie (and none of us would EVER have dared call her Auntie) made it all the better.

When I look back on her achievements, popular school captain at the famous Morgan School in Dundee, first in the family to go to University, a good degree, her career, her sporting and musical prowess, and her CBE, I do feel a little sad that I don't think she appreciated how proud the whole family were of her. We are not a family who spends a lot of time on that sort of thing, and, I wish in retrospect, we had told her more how much we admired her and what she had made of her life. I know that to her parents, John and Ruby, and brothers Jack and David, her successes were a source of great pride. But in the end, I am not sure how she would have reacted if we had. She never made much of her achievements. She did allow herself one exception however. After attaining the status of Brigadier, she pulled rank mercilessly on my father, an RAF Reserve Wing Commander. This was in no way a boast, just the vengeance of a younger sister on an older brother.

I do not however, want to make her out to be a paragon. We all know that she could be demanding and her family nickname "Madam" was more than just a reference to her rank. But, I would like to think that the formidable Helen who could effortlessly make nephews, nieces, brothers, and the occasional junior officer quake in their shoes was something of an act. She was essentially a humorous and kind-hearted woman who perhaps adopted a faintly imperious attitude to mask certain shyness. The thing is, she did not fool anyone. I cannot imagine there is anyone who has been on the sharp end of Helen's tongue who was taken in for a second. Her bark was way, way worse than her bite and everybody knew it. The fundamental warmth of her personality is borne out by her popularity and in the range and number of her friendships. Particularly of course with Val who played such a large role in her life and in making her last months as comfortable as possible, but also her friends from Dundee, University, the Army and almost every walk of life, many of whom are here today. She was undoubtedly much loved.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Helen's bravery. Her final illness was horrendous but she approached it with a stoicism one could only admire. Even at the end when she was robbed of the power of communication and movement, her sense of humour and strong personality remained intact. The bravery with which she faced her death was for me her last and possibly even best achievement after a lifetime of so many. We will all certainly miss her.

David Meechie

I met Brigadier Helen for the first time over 30 years ago when we served together in Cyprus. It has been since she retired and through playing golf together that we became really good friends. Most of this time she was suffering from a cruel, relentless illness that she knew was finally going to rob her of her life.

Many people will speak about Brigadier Helen's remarkable achievements and the contribution she made to so many of us. I can only speak personally about the things she taught me which have added value to my life, particularly at a time when she was losing her battle with her own. Her mind and her spirit always prevailed, her courage knew no bounds nor did her sense of humour ever desert her.

I know she became angry and frustrated at not being able to do things for herself and yet I never heard her complain or indulge in self-pity throughout the years she suffered a rare and callously ravaging disease. She remained the strongest and bravest woman I know.

I remember a visit we made to Chichester some three months before she died. Although wheelchair bound, she always loved an outing so we thought we would go to the Cathedral. When we arrived we found that a RAF Squadron was having a Memorial Service and March Past. We positioned ourselves by the Market Cross to watch the old boys form up to get on parade.

They then marched towards us in time to music provided by the Hampshire Police Band before wheeling around the Cross to the Town Hall, where the Lord Lieutenant of the County and Lady Mayoress were taking the salute. As they passed by us we automatically fell in between the Standard Bearers and the St John's Ambulance people.

Imagine our surprise when we rounded the corner and found the street lined with flag waving and cheering onlookers. Brigadier Helen immediately sat to attention and we audaciously marched all the way past the dais to the applaud of the crowd, her wicked sense of humour revelling in being able to gate-crash someone else's parade.

We did eventually visit the Cathedral where she marvelled at the Chagall window. We lit candles and silently prayed together in the Chapel, sharing a spiritual moment at the end of a lovely day.

If, as Dr Steven Covey says, the purpose of life is:- 'To Live, To Love, To Learn, To Leave a Legacy', this certainly applied to Helen. We, who knew, admired and respected her, are deeply saddened by her loss, but are privileged to share the legacy she has left us. This is: Who she was: What she did: How she influenced our lives.

Mrs Kathy Holloway (née Rennie)

BARBER Mrs Anne Barber, née Thomas, of Ramsgate on 13 May 2000. ATS

BARNABY Mrs J Barnaby, née Gordon, of Falkirk on 17 November 2000. ATS

BAXTER Lt Col (Retd) Jocelyn St John Baxter CBE, RE (Bertie), of West Horsley on 18 November 2000. Adjutant WRAC College 1976 - 1984

BENNETT Mrs Pamela Bennett, née Hearn, of Salisbury on 29 June 2000. ATS

BERRY Lt Col (Retd) Margaret Maude Berry, of Adelaide, Australia on 16 September 2000. ATS/WRAC

BIDDLECOMBE Miss Joan Biddlecombe, of Allington, Bridport. ATS

BLAIR Mrs C R Blair, née Milligan, of Glasgow on 14 October 2000. ATS

BOYLE Mrs Joyce Hazel Boyle, née Smith, of London on 1 August 2000. ATS

BRIGHT Mrs Thora Phyllis Bright, née Parlett, of Taunton on 4 September 2000. ATS

BURROWS Mrs Elizabeth Burrows, née Wright, of Downton on 29 June 2000. ATS

CARMAN Mrs Peggy Carman, née O'Brien, of Hemel Hempstead in October 2000. ATS

CHAPMAN Mrs Marion May Chapman, née Field, of Darlington on 26 June 2000. ATS

CLARKE Mrs Violet Clarke, née Williams, of Doncaster on 1 November 2000. ATS

COBB Mrs Hilda Muriel Cobb, née Hayler, of Doncaster on 9 July 2000. ATS/WRAC

COE Mrs D M Coe, née Roe, of Skipton. ATS

COLLINGE Mrs S Collinge, née Buckland, of Southport. ATS

CROSS Mrs Lilian Elizabeth Cross, of Shrewsbury on 29 August 2000. ATS

DALIGA Mrs Elsie May Daliga, née Knight, of Hornchurch on 26 August 2000. ATS

DAWSON Miss Margery I Dawson, of Romford on 12 November 2000. ATS

DENNY Mrs Lily Robertson Denney, née Hopkinson, of Saltburn in June 2000. ATS

DIFFEY Mrs Thelma Mavis Diffey, née Hart, of St Albans on 29 July 2000. ATS

DIXON Mrs E L Dixon on 14 September 2000. WRAC

ELLERY Mrs Dorothy Margaret Ellery, of London on 1 April 2000. ATS

EVEREST Mrs Phyllis Marjorie Everest, née Bethell, of Peterborough, Ontario on 16 August 1999. ATS

FELL Miss Phyllis Fell, of Colchester. ATS

FELTON Miss D Felton, of Bracknell in August 2000. ATS

FRENCH Mrs Joyce Marjorie French, née Sharpe, of Rotherham on 13 August 2000. ATS

FREWEN-LATON Mrs Fanny Frewen-Laton, née Jaffray, of Tenterden on 18 June 2000. ATS

FROOM Miss Pamela M Froom, of Mortimer, Berks in March 2000. ATS/FANY

GIERASIK Mrs Isabella Gierasik, née Ramsay, of Dunbarton on 18 October 2000. WRNS

GOLDTHORPE Mrs Betty Goldthorpe, née Greenfield, of Osset on 14 October 2000. ATS

GORDON Mrs Olive Gordon, of Belfast on 30 June 2000. ATS

GREENLAND Mrs Joan Greenland, née Warr, of Toronto on 7 September 2000. ATS

GREGORY Mrs Marjorie Gregory, née Knowles, of Great Sutton on 1 July 2000. ATS

GRIEVE Mrs Margaret (Peggy) Grieve MBE, née Douglas, of Folkestone on 3 September 2000. ATS

HALL Mrs Jean Henderson Hall, née Shirley, of York on 5 October 2000. WRAC

HALLIDAY Mrs Betty Halliday, née Clarke, of Watnall, Notts on 18 June 2000. ATS/WRAC

HENLY Mrs Rachel Henly, née Coupar, of Lymington on 28 November 2000. ATS

HILL Miss Mollie Hill, at Farnham Royal on 18 August 2000. ATS

HISCOCK Miss Midge Hiscock, of Eltham on 7 May 2000. ATS

HOLD Mrs Georgina (Ena) Hold, née Hall, of Roker, Sunderland on 15 August 2000. ATS

HOLE Mrs Audrey Vera Hole, née Bailey, of Bath on 6 August 2000. ATS

HUNTER Miss Mabel Patricia (Pat) Hunter, of Chester on 14 September 2000. ATS/WRAC

JOHNSON Mrs Gladys Johnson, née Johnson, of Hull in October 2000. ATS

LANE Miss Eunice Lane, of Andover on 22 December 2000. WRAC

LITTLE Miss Florence Jane Little, of Poole on 8 August 2000. ATS/WRAC

LODGE Mrs Olive Lodge, née Andrews, of Worthing on 27 July 2000. ATS

LUCAS Mrs Daphne Lucas, née Davidson, of West Byfleet on 29 October 2000. WRAC

McALLISTER Mrs Estella McAllister, née Garrett, of Hall Green, Birmingham on 19 August 2000. ATS

McWILLIAMS Miss Isabella McWilliams, of Wilmslow on 15 October 2000. ATS

MEECHIE Brig Helen Meechie CBE, of Amesbury on 24 August 2000. WRAC

MERRELLS Mrs Winifred Merrells on 27 September 2000. ATS/WRAC

MILES Mrs Blanche Lois Miles, née Martin, of Eastbourne on 1 October 2000. ATS

MITCHELL Mrs May Mitchell, of Leicester on 5 August 2000. ATS

MOORE Mrs Edna Moore, née O'Neil, of South Wirral in April 2000. ATS

MORRIS Mrs Janet Morris, née Summers, of Australia. ATS

MOULD Miss Charmain Mary Mould, of Hemyock, Devon on 12 July 2000. ATS/WRAC

NABB Mrs Frances Nabb, of Cossington on 14 Jun 2000. ATS

NEIGHBOUR Mrs Edna Neighbour, née Cannon, of Bridgwater on 16 November 2000. ATS

PALPHRAMAND Mrs Florence Palphramand, née Williams, of York on 9 June 2000. ATS

PEACOCK Mrs Joan Peacock, née Fry, of Crawley on 25 October 2000. ATS

PEARCE Mrs Daisy Pearce, née McEntivy, of Sutton on 1 October 1999. ATS

PENTLAND Mrs Margaret Pentland BEM, née Dodds, of Inverness of 16 December 1999. ATS

PLANT Mrs Edith Plant, of Blackpool in April 2000. ATS

PRETT Mrs Gwendoline Rose Prett, née Prett, of Bexhill-On-Sea on 1 November 2000. ATS

PURSER Mrs Janet Oswald Purser, née Stevenson, of Ashford on 3 November 2000. ATS

RICE Mrs Margaret Doris Rice, née Dance, of Orpington on 27 July 2000. ATS

RANOLE Mrs Ann Ranole, née Coleman, of Walsall on 7 November 2000. ATS

RIDOUT Mrs Olive Ridout, née Quayle, of Bournemouth on 29 September 1998. ATS/WRAC

RIGGS Mrs Joan Riggs, née Crookes, of Exmouth on 20 June 2000. ATS

ROBINSON Mrs Philippa Robinson, of Bradford on 1 November 2000. ATS

ROGERS Mrs F Rogers, of Keighley in May 2000. ATS

ROSS Mrs E Ross, née Cookson, of Stockport in December 1999. ATS

SHOOTER Miss Freda Shooter BEM, of Ash, Nr Aldershot on 10 August 2000. ATS/WRAC

SLEEP Mrs Agnes Sleep, in November 1999. ATS

SMITH Mrs Ellan Dorothy Smith, née Serella, in S Australia on 11 September 2000. ATS

SMITH Miss Vera Smith, of Gorleston on 24 July 2000. ATS

SMITH Maj (Retd) Ida Marion, of Pitton, Salisbury, on 13 September 2000.

SMITH Mrs Sue Smith, née McCaffery, of Sunderland on 18 October 2000. ATS

STARLING Mrs Betty Starling, née Reeves, of Cannock on 24 October 2000. ATS

STUDZINSKI Mrs Esther Calvert Studzinski, née Lupton, of Alexandria on 18 October 2000. ATS

TAYLOR Mrs M M (Lee) Taylor, of Worthing on 28 February 2000. ATS

THOMAS Mrs Helen Georgina Thomas, née Johnson, of Birmingham on 4 July 2000. ATS

TURPIN Mrs Beryl Jean Turpin, née Carroll, of Southport on 18 August 2000. ATS

VARNEY Mrs Rosemary Varney, née Wilson, of Abingdon on 31 January 2000. ATS

VINALL Mrs Marjorie Rose Vinall, née Ballam, of London on 17 April 2000. ATS

WARREN Miss Dorothy Warren, of Burnham-on-Sea in June 2000. ATS

WELLING Mrs Joan Welling, née White, of Abbots Langley on 4 August 2000. ATS

WOODS Mrs Margaret F Woods, of Chelmsford in August 2000. ATS

THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the year ended 31 October 2000

	Notes	Unrestricted General Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2000	Total 1999
INCOME & EXPENDITURE						
Incoming resources:						
Subscriptions	1	1,687	2,352	-	4,039	7,851
Income from branches		78,976	-	-	78,976	73,030
Lioness publication income	2	12,167	-	-	12,167	10,314
Investment income	3	10,373	-	167,332	177,705	181,660
Donations	4	1,513	-	122,470	123,983	54,092
Other income	5	6,272	-	-	6,272	2,005
Grand Reunion		16,663	-	-	16,663	-
Total incoming resources		127,651	2,352	289,802	419,805	328,952
Resources expended:						
Direct charitable expenditure:						
Grants & donations	6	70	-	174,589	174,689	183,337
Expenditure by branches		84,663	-	-	84,663	73,213
Lioness publication costs		19,951	-	-	19,951	23,413
Other expenditure:						
Management & administration	7	12,835	-	24,998	37,833	58,659
Grand Reunion		31,113	-	-	31,113	-
Total resources expended		148,632		199,587	348,219	338,622
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES BEFORE TRANSFERS		(2,0981)	2,352	90,215	71,586	(9,670)
Transfers between funds		3,150	(3,150)	-	-	-
NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR		(17,831)	(798)	90,215	71,586	(9,670)
OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS & LOSSES						
Gains on investments:						
Unrealised		27,238	-	276,486	303,724	305,531
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	16	9,407	(798)	366,701	375,310	295,861
Fund balances brought forward at 1 November 1999		301,731	37,402	4,004,954	4,344,087	4,005,090
Fund balances brought forward at 1 November 1998 relating to branches		-	-	-	-	43,136
Fund balances carried forward at 31 October 2000		£ 311,138	£ 36,604	£ 4,371,655	£ 4,719,397	£ 4,344,087

The net movement in funds for the year arises from the charity's continuing activities.

No separate Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses has been presented as all such gains and losses have been dealt with in the Statement of Financial Activities.

BALANCE SHEET
31 October 2000

	Notes	2000	1999
FIXED ASSETS			
Investments	9	4,497,156	4,093,432
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stock of badges & souvenirs		3,248	4,616
Association standard		199	199
Debtors	10	818	15,093
Cash at bank & in hand	11	226,904	252,548
		231,169	272,456
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	12	8,928	21,801
NET CURRENT ASSETS		222,241	250,655
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		£ 4,719,397	£ 4,344,087
FUNDS OF THE ASSOCIATION			
Unrestricted funds:			
General funds		311,138	301,731
Designated funds:			
Membership life subscription fund	13	10,108	10,619
Lioness life subscription fund	13	26,496	26,783
Restricted funds:			
The Benevolent Funds	14	3,788,301	3,470,735
The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund	15	583,354	534,219
TOTAL FUNDS	16	£ 4,719,397	£ 4,344,087

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
for the year ended 31 October 2000

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1.	SUBSCRIPTIONS			2000	1999
	Unrestricted				
	Annual Association subscriptions			1,687	2,924
	Designated life subscriptions				
	Membership subscriptions			470	985
	Lioness subscriptions			1,882	3,942
				<u>£ 4,039</u>	<u>£ 7,851</u>
2.	LIONESS PUBLICATION INCOME				
	Unrestricted				
	Subscription income			11,476	10,314
	Advertising revenues			355	
	Donations			336	
				<u>£ 12,167</u>	<u>£ 10,314</u>
3.	INVESTMENT INCOME				
	Unrestricted				
	Dividend income			8,945	10,062
	Deposit account interest			1,428	1,412
				<u>10,373</u>	<u>11,474</u>
	Restricted				
	The Benevolent Funds:				
	Dividend income			139,403	140,450
	Deposit account interest			4,898	6,656
	The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund:				
	Dividend income			22,598	22,652
	Deposit account interest			433	428
				<u>167,332</u>	<u>170,186</u>
				<u>£ 177,705</u>	<u>£ 181,660</u>
4.	DONATIONS				
	Unrestricted				
	Donations to the Association			1,513	16,035
	Restricted				
	Donations to The Benevolent Funds			118,495	37,117
	Donations to The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund			3,975	940
				<u>122,470</u>	<u>38,057</u>
				<u>£ 123,983</u>	<u>£ 54,092</u>
5.	OTHER INCOME				
	Unrestricted				
	Sales of badges & souvenirs			3,974	2,005
	Miscellaneous income			2,298	-
				<u>£ 6,272</u>	<u>£ 2,005</u>
6.	GRANTS & DONATIONS				
	Unrestricted				
	Association grants & donations to 2 branches			70	201
	Restricted				
	Benevolent Funds grants & donations to 1,020 individuals			158,939	165,486
	Princess Royal's Memorial Fund grants & donations to 31 individuals			15,650	17,650
				<u>174,589</u>	<u>183,136</u>
				<u>£ 174,659</u>	<u>£ 183,337</u>
7.	MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION				
		Unrestricted General Funds	Restricted Benevolent Funds	Total 2000	Total 1999
	Staff costs	816	20,634	21,450	40,743
	Travel & meeting expenses	2,620	343	2,963	4,467
	Printing, postage & stationery	2,497	310	2,807	2,616
	Audit and accountancy	1,415	2,831*	4,246	7,633
	Badge & souvenir costs	4,013		4,013	1,520
	Sundry office expenses	1,474	880	2,354	1,680
		<u>12,835</u>	<u>24,998</u>	<u>37,833</u>	<u>£ 58,659</u>

(* PRMF – £1,425. Benovolent Fund - £1,406)

8. EMPLOYEES	2000	1999
The average weekly number of persons (excluding trustees) employed by the Association during the year was:		
Office and administration	1	1
Staff costs for the above persons:		
Wages and salaries	20,243	23,809
Ex-gratia payment		15,000
Social security costs	1,207	1,934
	<u>£ 21,450</u>	<u>£ 40,743</u>

An ex-gratia payment of £15,000 was made to the retiring Case Secretary, which was authorised by the trustees at their meeting on 28 January 1999. No trustee received any remuneration for services to the Association in the current or previous year. Reimbursement to a total of £370 for travel and subsistence was made to 8 trustees. (1999: £Nil)

9. INVESTMENTS	2000	1999
Unrestricted general funds:		
<i>Listed investments at market value:</i>		
M & G Charifund Units (9,005 units)	101,793	91,977
Schroder Charity Equity Fund Units (61,891 units)	160,192	142,770
	<u>261,985</u>	<u>234,747</u>
Restricted Benevolent Funds:		
<i>Listed investments at market value:</i>		
M & G Charifund Units (68,340 units)	772,516	698,025
UST Combined Charitable Income Fund Units (564,284 units)	1,080,378	1,060,741
UST Combined Charitable Capital Fund Units (121,284 units)	1,470,251	1,313,979
Schroder Charity Equity Fund Units (123,395 units)	371,530	284,647
<i>Unlisted investments:</i>		
Mortgage loan secured on a freehold property at Penarth	800	800
	<u>3,695,475</u>	<u>3,358,192</u>
Restricted Princess Royal's Memorial Fund:		
<i>Listed investments at market value:</i>		
M & G Charifund Units (21,779 units)	246,190	222,451
UST Combined Charitable Income Fund Units (68,540 units)	131,226	128,841
UST Combined Charitable Capital Fund Units (10,926 units)	127,688	118,371
Schroder Charity Equity Fund Units (13,365 units)	34,592	30,830
	<u>539,696</u>	<u>500,493</u>
Total market value	<u>£ 4,497,156</u>	<u>£ 4,093,432</u>

All investments are monitored and administered by CCLA Investment Management Limited. The historical cost of these investments, purchased at various dates, is as follows:

	2000	1999
Unrestricted general funds	242,800	242,800
Restricted funds:		
The Benevolent Funds	1,476,222	1,376,222
The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund	171,614	171,614
	<u>£ 1,890,636</u>	<u>£ 1,790,636</u>
Market value brought forward at 1 November 1999	4,093,432	3,787,901
Additions at cost	100,000	-
Disposal proceeds	-	-
Realised gains	-	-
Unrealised gains	303,724	305,531
Market value carried forward at 31 October 2000	<u>£ 4,497,156</u>	<u>£ 4,093,432</u>
10. DEBTORS	2000	1999
Due within one year:		
Tax recoverable	818	962
Accrued income	-	14,131
	<u>£ 818</u>	<u>£ 15,093</u>
11. CASH AT BANK & IN HAND		
Current accounts	42,709	56,823
Deposit accounts	146,892	151,892
Branch bank accounts	37,266	42,953
Cash in hand	37	880
	<u>£ 226,904</u>	<u>£ 252,548</u>
12. CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Other tax & social security costs	342	705
Accruals	4,000	7,702
Deferred income	4,586	13,394
	<u>£ 8,928</u>	<u>£ 21,801</u>

13. DESIGNATED FUNDS	Membership	Lioness	Total
Life subscription funds:			
1 November 1999	10,619	26,783	37,402
Subscription income	470	1,882	2,352
Transfers to general funds	(981)	(2,169)	(3,150)
31 October 2000	<u>10,108</u>	<u>26,496</u>	<u>36,604</u>

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Life subscriptions are divided into two elements, one fifth being a general subscription and four fifths being allocated for Lioness production. The funds are released from the designated funds to general funds over a 20 year period in accordance with the accounting policies described on page 13.

14. THE BENVOLENT FUNDS	2000	1999
1 November 1999	3,470,735	3,248,846
Incoming Resources:		
Investment income	144,301	147,106
Donation income	118,494	37,117
Unrealised gains on investments	237,283	250,557
Resources Expended:		
Grants & donations	(158,939)	(165,486)
Management & administration expenses	(23,573)	(47,405)
31 October 2000	<u>£ 3,788,301</u>	<u>£ 3,470,735</u>

The Benevolent Funds is the restricted fund representing the activities of The Auxiliary Territorial Service Benevolent Fund and The Women's Royal Army Corps Benevolent Fund, which is a registered charity under the number 247793. The funds may be applied only in pursuance of the objects of this charity, namely:

- to provide assistance to ex-service members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC), the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), and serving or ex-service members of the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) or their dependants, who may be in need of charitable assistance or benefit.

Unrealised gains on investments included in the Benevolent Funds balance at the year end amounted to £2,219,253 (1999:£1,981,970).

15. THE PRINCESS ROYAL'S MEMORIAL FUND	2000	1999
1 November 1999	534,219	497,366
Incoming Resources:		
Investment income	23,032	23,080
Donation income	3,975	940
Unrealised gains on investments	39,203	31,760
Resources Expended:		
Grants & donations	(15,680)	(17,650)
Management & administration expenses	(1,425)	(1,277)
31 October 2000	<u>£ 583,354</u>	<u>£ 534,219</u>

The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund is a restricted fund. The funds may be applied only in pursuance of the following objectives:

- to provide charitable assistance to ex-servicewomen, other than of the nursing services, who are in need, and to provide a permanent memorial to the late Princess Royal.
- to provide assistance to ex-service members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC), the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), and serving or ex-service members of the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) or their dependants, who may be in need of charitable assistance or benefit.

Unrealised gains on investments included in PRMF funds at the year end amounted to £368,802 (1999:£328,879).

16. TOTAL FUNDS OF THE ASSOCIATION	1 November 1999	Movement Incoming	In Resources Outgoing	31 October 2000
Unrestricted funds:				
General funds	301,731	27,238	17,831	311,138
Designated funds:				
Membership life subscription fund	10,619	470	981	10,108
Lioness life subscription fund	26,783	1,882	2,169	26,496
Restricted funds:				
The Benevolent Funds	3,470,735	500,078	182,512	3,788,301
The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund	534,219	66,210	17,075	583,354
	<u>£ 4,344,087</u>	<u>595,878</u>	<u>220,568</u>	<u>£ 4,719,397</u>

17. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS	Tangible Fixed Assets	Net Current Assets	TOTAL
Unrestricted funds:			
General funds	261,985	49,153	311,138
Designated funds:			
Membership life subscription fund	-	10,108	10,108
Lioness life subscription fund	-	26,496	26,496
Restricted funds:			
The Benevolent Funds	3,695,475	92,826	3,788,301
The Princess Royal's Memorial Fund	539,696	43,658	583,354
	<u>£ 4,497,156</u>	<u>£ 222,241</u>	<u>£ 4,719,397</u>

Unrealised gains on investments included within unrestricted general funds are at the year end amounted to £19,985 (1999: £7,253 losses).

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