

LIONESS

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WRAC
Association

Grand Reunion

2003

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THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 206184

Founded in 1919

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Back cover photograph

"The Story Teller" in the Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum

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EDITORIAL

Sadly, this will be my last editorial. I know that, in the last edition, I said that none of us was leaving, "not even me," but circumstances change and I will have left the Association by the time this edition of the Lioness arrives on your doormat. I have enjoyed my time with the Association and have had great fun meeting and talking to many of you.

Jane Freebairn, our Benevolent Case Secretary, will step into my shoes as General Secretary for, at least, the time being. The new editor of the journal, however, will be Maggie Purkis, the Chairman of the Wales and West Area. Maggie is looking forward to taking on the Lioness and I know that she has some very good ideas for the future. Indeed, as I write, she has already got heavily involved putting together the section on the Grand Reunion which you will find in the centre of this edition. Everyone seemed to enjoy the event and, as you will see, we have got lots of pictures to prove it!

I must just mention that, for those of you who have embraced the new technological age, there is now an official WRAC Association Web-site. The address is <http://www.wracassociation.i12.com>. It has been set up by Herme Emary, the secretary of Winchester Branch. Although still in its infancy, it has all the makings of an excellent site which should raise the profile of the Association and, hopefully, attract a lot more new members to take us forward into the future.

I wish you all the very best for the future and look forward to hearing that the Association is going from strength to strength.

Dee McElligott

Message from the new Vice President of the Association

As the incoming Vice President of the WRAC Association and Chairman of Council, I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to Brigadier Shirley Nield for all she has done for us in the Association during her tenure in Office.

Brigadier Shirley 'stepped into the breach' four years ago at short notice when, sadly, Brigadier Helen Meechie felt she could no longer continue because of her illness. This she did, embracing her responsibilities with enthusiasm, resolution and good humour. As a result, much has been achieved during her tenure not least the rewriting of Association Rules, changing the composition and emphasis of Council, the regeneration of 'Lioness' funding and two very successful Reunions. I could go on.....

She will be a hard act to follow but I will endeavour to take the Association and Council forward into the 21st Century as she has started to do. I would like to offer her our sincere thanks for her considerable contribution, dedication and leadership over the past four years.

We look forward to her continuing active participation in the Association and, in the meantime, hope that she will enjoy her well earned second retirement whether it be in Norfolk or France.



Brigadier S. Nield and Lt. Col. S. Westlake preparing to take the salute at the parade at Birmingham.

It also falls to me to say 'thank you' and farewell to Major Dee McElligott, our General Secretary for the past four years. Despite continuous staff turbulence during her first three years in post, Dee somehow managed "to hold the show" together and maintain 'normal service' by providing that much needed stability within Association HQ. She also 'held the fort' when the Benevolence Case Secretary post was gapped. The Lioness' has flourished under her Editorship and she has masterminded two Reunions in Cardiff and Birmingham. She has been a real asset to the Association and we will miss her.

Dee has decided to return to her nursing 'roots', this time in a training capacity, and we wish her well in her new venture and Good Luck for the future.

Lt Col Sue Westlake

ATS Reminiscences

SEARCHLIGHTS AND FOOTLIGHTS

Hetty Eames, Edificio El Duque, Apt. 4E, Sabinillas 29692
Manilva, Malaga, Spain

I was called up for service in the ATS in 1942. My first posting was to Pontefract in Yorkshire. After much training and a spell at Leeds University, where I passed all my exams for the Searchlight Regiment, I was posted to Rhyl in Wales along with 200 other ATS. We were sent to a very large camp called Bodelwydon, near Rhyl. Twenty of us were separated from the rest and trained apart. We were called the special 20. However, my time at Bodelwydon was one of the best of my life. Whilst I was there, an officer called Brian Price, the actor PC 49 of TV fame, put on a big show in the camp theatre. He asked for recruits to join the show, so I volunteered and was one of his dancing girls. He managed to put on a wonderful show just using the troops. He even sent to London for our costumes, they were beautiful and arrived in a very large Theatre Basket. One number was Spanish, the other Russian, a wonderful show. Brian tried to get me into ENSA but I couldn't be released after being chosen for the special 20. From Bodelwydon we were sent to Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire. We were then put into groups for Searchlight sites around the London area. I was stationed at a site behind the King's Arms on the A1 in Borehamwood. I also took a PE course, as there had to be a PE instructor on every site, I passed all exams.

I would very much like to hear from anyone who happened to be on Searchlights during that time 1942 - 1945. My telephone number is 0034 952892485. I visit England and my family often. I am a member of the RBL Estepoua Branch of which I was Vice Chairman for years and Chairman for a year. At 81 years of age, I am healthy and active and a very active member of the community over here.

I would like to hear from anyone from those happy army days.

MY CAREER IN THE ATS & WRAC

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I joined up in 1944 and celebrated my 18th birthday at Queens Camp, Guildford on 07 September. My mother sent me a birthday cake which we tried to cut into 25 pieces, the number in our hut. I particularly remember how hard it was to mark our kit with a pen and nib.

I was posted to Fleet, to be trained as a driver. I was billeted in the grounds of a large house called 'Denorben Court'. At first we lived in two Nissan huts which were in a field. It snowed quite a lot and we had to wade through it to go up to the house for orders and meals. When on fire piquet we peeled two fire buckets of potatoes. I remember being given a tin mug of cocoa made with water to keep us warm. Later we were moved up to the big house. On one of my driving routes, when we stopped

for a tea break, I lost my lovely yellow leather driving gloves. I was put on a charge and 2/6p was deducted from my 13 shilling pay each week until they were paid for. However, I was quite proud when, on our drill competition, I was the only one with new clean gloves.

My best friend was Eileen Farrell. When we were posted I went to North West Common, London and Eileen went to Weymouth. I then had various postings - 598 Coy Tavistock & Plymouth, 597 Coy Salisbury and 721 Car Coy Bad Oyenhausen, Germany. When we went to Germany we had to make a will in the back of our AB 64 and we were each issued with a burial blanket! We were billeted in houses and I drove all over Germany. Leave was supposed to be every six months, but we were given short leave in Germany every three months. I went to Bad Hazburg, Winterburg and Nordeny and learned to ski and ride. I was so lucky.

In 1947 I was demobbed but joined up again and stayed for 22 years. I was posted to Germany on three two year stints. 721 Car Coy became 36 Car Coy and there was a lot for the drivers to do with the 'Berlin Air Lift' and the 'Nuremberg Trials'.

In 1954, as my parents were getting older, I applied for a Type 'R' posting which was Exmouth. I was posted to Dartmouth as PSI with the TA in Devon.

Many of my friends are no longer with us but I would like to know if Eileen Farrell has made it into being a senior citizen and how her life turned out over the years. I did hear that she was once a driver instructor at Gresford. If anyone has a more recent address please get in touch with me. My telephone number is 01803 326850. If you are reading this Eileen, please let me know if you have qualified for your bus pass?

LONDON IN WARTIME

Eileen Langman nee Dempsey (nickname Jackie)
84 Estcourt Road, Gloucester GL1 3LQ

I was 17 when I joined the ATS in February 1941.

After my training in Aldermaston, I was sent to London where I first worked as a messenger at HQ London District, Leconfield House in Curzon Street. I had to deliver files and correspondence to the various departments. Later, I was sent on a course in Strathpeffer, Scotland, to learn shorthand and typing which I used on my return. The course was only three months and I never became really proficient in shorthand!

I was accommodated at Queen Alexandra's House (known as Q.A.). It was a huge building which had previously been the Royal College of Organists and was in Kensington, opposite the Albert Hall. We were regularly given tickets for performances! 1942 was a bad year for air raids. We spent a lot of nights down in the cellars but in the morning we had to parade as usual and march across Hyde Park to Curzon Street.

London's water supply somehow became contaminated and there was an outbreak of disease. I had scarlet fever and was taken to Fulham Isolation hospital. After a month, I was returned to my Unit. A corporal came to fetch me and, as it was my 18th birthday, she had been instructed to buy me a present. However, she said that she didn't have time so I never did get it!!

I was sent to a convalescent home – Morton Manor in Oxfordshire – to recuperate but bombs or no bombs, I was anxious to get back to my Unit and my friends.

I would love to contact other ex-ATS members who worked or lived in Q.A. or worked in Leconfield House or "M" Company, Hanover Square, where I was finally demobbed.

THE YOUNG WOMEN WHO WERE NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED

Sybil Phillips, 31 Quantock Road, Weston-Super-Mare,
Nr Somerset BS23 4DD

I must make this short, as I hope it will be published in the Magazine. Most of the girls I shall refer to joined the ATS but I knew one who was able to go into the Air Force.

When I lived in Washington DC, I was given a leaflet from the British Embassy – that was in early 1942. This informed me that I could be taken to England to join the forces to help the men in many ways.

To my knowledge, 49 others from various parts of the USA (British subjects of course), came to help. For the sake of **all** the others I think my story should be told, especially as no-one seems to know about us. I began trying to find out some details about this several years ago. I started with the British Legion and then the ATS Magazine – never heard of us. I nearly gave up after the ATS but decided to keep trying. This year I have written to the museums, the British Embassy in Washington, shipping lines and others. No-one had any trace of us.

The girls who had gone to America were all secretaries. They had had a marvellous time. My parents made friends with some of them and so did many others. I met one of them, who had settled out in the States, when I got home to Washington in 1946.

Twenty-five of us sailed from New York in a very thick mist (like London) at about 6 am in October 1942. It took us 15 days at sea. Everything to us was a mystery. We saw ships in the distance which we found out were a convoy. The ships were in lines of three, all carrying different large articles, which were covered and battened securely. We were told to remain dressed day and night and keep on our life jackets. We never asked questions. We saw two or three ships sink and one night the ships all had to scatter and we turned back. Depth charges were dropped for hours and we knew nothing until daybreak. We were carrying about a hundred sailors who were being taken home to be redeployed as their ships had been sunk. We played cards with them and made friends. One girl who happened to be in my group later married one of the sailors.

When daybreak came some of the sailors told us we had left the convoy, had headed back towards the States and had covered at least 15 miles. However, the ships finally joined up and the convoy sailed on.

Eventually, we reached Liverpool. We were sad to see bombed and sunken ships. The sailors were taken off our ship first and then we all left.

We were told to take our small cases and follow an officer who had apparently been wounded. We were soon on a troop train to London. It was thick fog when we reached London and we had to follow our very kind officer in a crocodile type of walk. We did not know where we were going until we reached the Labour Office. Then we were each given ten shillings for 2 weeks' leave to meet our relations.

We were told that we were all needed in the ATS. I wanted to join the Navy as I was named after a ship my father had served in for many years at the time of the Boer War. No luck!

We stayed overnight in the Veterinary College, Bunsen burners and all! No bombs that night! In the morning we were taken to join up, be kitted out and take the oath. Then we left for our leave.

After our leave we took the train for Guildford and then to Queens Camp – No. 1 Training Camp – by lorry. All 25 of us were in the same platoon and we started exams. I had forgotten my pounds, shillings and pence and failed – well, I would have but we were excused these questions! We finally finished our 3 weeks' training and were sent all over the country to different jobs.

I have done my best to find out about all this and why no mention has ever been made in any office or museum. The answer seemed to have been that it was because we had come over by **convoy** and, of course, that was secret!

Finally, when I had given up trying to get information, a very friendly young lady, who was in one of the places I had written to, phoned me to confirm that it **was** because we had travelled in convoy!! Maybe some of you saw the television programme about the convoys recently.

Perhaps others may be glad to know.

MEMORIES OF THE ATS AND WRAC

Miss M Charlesworth, 8 Woodside Close, Maltby,
Rotherham, S Yorks S66 7NJ

I am going to sit down and write a "potted history" of my service in the ATS and WRAC from 1943 – 1955, in the possibility that someone may remember me.

I enlisted in January 1943 and did my basic training at Glen Parva Barracks, Leicester. From there I went to Putney in London to do my Signals training as a switchboard operator. After 6 weeks training I was posted to a little village called Alderbury near Salisbury. I never really settled to my work and my CO had me re-mustered to Clerk GD as my civilian work had been a shorthand typist. I was much happier after this, working in the Orderly Room.



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By now it must have been early 1944 and I was posted into Salisbury itself, staying there until either September or October. I remember it was a very happy time. Incidentally I reached my 21st birthday on 1 July 1943.

About this time, I received a new posting to No. 1 Continental Group. We sailed from New Haven to Dieppe. From there we made several stops before arriving in Brussels. We were billeted in Ave Louise and I worked in an Army Office in Rue Leopold. It was a very happy and exciting time, after all, the war was still on. I remember spending a lovely Christmas Day with a Belgian family. I can't quite remember dates now, but in the New Year I became ill with pneumonia and spent a few weeks in hospital before being repatriated to the UK for convalescence. I let it be known that I wanted to go back to my Unit if possible. I did manage this, but by that time the war was over and my Unit was in Germany (Bad Oeyenhausen). I stayed there until 1947 on extended service. I was then asked if I would like to re-enlist for a Special Unit. This I did and to cut a long story short I ended up working for the Western Union Defence Organisation, later NATO. It was all very interesting. We worked in Chester Square and Horse Guards in London and were billeted in Sloane Street. Oh by the way, by this time I had been made a sergeant and on my promotion was posted to work at the Ministry of Defence as Supervisor of an inter-service typing pool.

At the end of my term of engagement in 1951, I enlisted on a Type 'T' ACI 199/49 for 4 years to work as an Army Recruiter at the London Recruiting Depot, Great Scotland Yard, SW1. I was there until June 1955 when I had to leave on compassionate grounds to be able to look after my father after my mother died.

The only people I really remember were at the Recruiting Office. They were Sgt Dalziel, Sgt Lyle, Sgt Johnson and, of course, our officer Capt Audrey Wing.

QUEEN ELIZABETH CAMP, GUILDFORD

Elizabeth de Bourbel MBE (onetime Senior-Commander ATS/Major WRAC), 14 Radbourne Lane, Mackworth, Derby DE22 4LU

The onetime ATS and WRAC Depot at Guildford in Surrey is described by two features in the March 2003 issue of LIONESS. An earlier record of the place in its days as No. 7 ATS Training Centre during WWII may be of interest.

Known as Queen's Camp, it owed its name not to Royal patronage but to the Regimental Depot alongside which it was laid out – Stoughton Barracks which housed the Depot of Queen's Regiment, known as Kirk's Lambs. As NCOs (temporary lance corporal and above), women serving in the ATS camp were privileged to wear, above the left-hand pocket of their uniform, the regimental insignia of a lamb bearing a cross.

Queen's Camp was spaciouly laid out adjacent to Stoughton Barracks. Its extensive parade ground was the scene of regular drill (by a stentorian RSM – ("Get up off them knees!" if you flagged); though for me drill was not a penance – it evoked the rhythm and skill of dancing. My squad featured in a film (the title of which I forget). We marched (repeatedly) across the parade ground while the cameras whirled at leg-level, panning upwards to depict not our hot faces but the ATS-capped visage of a film star of the period (could her name have been Googie Withers?).

We became stars in our own right as numerous "nobs" came to inspect or just to look at us. During Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt's visit, we sat on the floor of the Great Hall (a gymnasium building used for gatherings) and she began her address felicitously by saying that looking down from the stage on our upturned faces was like gazing out over a carpet of flowers.

Queen's Camp was spaciouly laid out with grass stretches between barrack blocks. How many we were to a block I forget, although for many of my six months there I performed the duties of sanitary orderly, a job which had its advantages. It enabled one to have a good wash, exchange overall for uniform and hurry along to the "Sally Ann" (the canteen run by the Salvation Army) in time to buy coffee and, if available, a bun before the women being drilled were dismissed and came hurrying in.

A fresh intake of "rookies" arrived each week. We formed four companies: I was in 'A' Company and wore a blue flash on the right-shoulder tab. One of my friends, Claudie Cambier, a French girl, was in D Company who wore yellow flashes. Claudie was a lance corporal PT, serving under another lithe, energetic figure, a handsome Danish Sergeant known as Kiki. Those six months at Queen's Camp figure among the happiest of my wartime memories. It was a cheerful place despite the gloom of war. Although there were occasional drop-outs among the recruits for psychological reasons, in general spirits remained buoyant. Corps memory lives on, commemorated by a handsome window in Guildford's beautiful cathedral.

Ed: The film was called "The Gentle Sex" see below

MORE MEMORIES OF QUEEN'S CAMP

Mrs Lucia Whitehead, née Lawson W/219676
(WO2 & subaltern)

Hallin, 18 Burnham Avenue, Beaconsfield,
Bucks HP9 2JA

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Reading Issue 1/2003 and seeing photographs of Basic Training Centres brought back memories of No 7 ATS Training Centre Queen's Camp, Guildford which I joined as a raw recruit in September 1942 but stayed on as a lance corporal in charge of new intakes. I recollect that this was solely due to the fact that I was, strangely, very fond of drill and seemed to be interminably acting as Right Marker for every new platoon.

During my service there, the War Office decided that the country needed to know how much they owed the ATS and so made a film entitled "The Gentle Sex". This was originally entitled "Men Must Fight and Women Must Weep" but, mercifully, someone in the War Office had the sense to think up something slightly better. My one clear memory of it was that the stars refused to march so all of us were obliged to do interminable drill sequences on the barrack square so that in the final result they could superimpose the stars upper halves on our legs. Sometime ago, with extreme difficulty, I managed to obtain a video and have spent hours trying to identify my legs! I firmly believe that my two replacement knee joints were entirely due to stamping around the Barrack Square but doubt it would be accepted for a disability pension.

The film was made by Two Cities Productions, directed and spoken by Leslie Howard and starring, among many others, Lilli Palmer, Rosamund John, Joyce Howard, John Laurie and Jimmy Hanley with the Advisor being Senior Commander Pratt. I am reluctantly bound to admit that viewing it now makes me cringe, but perhaps it was very correct 60 years ago!

My later postings were to South East Command HQ, 12th Corps District Signals, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and British Control Commission. The two latter postings were Paris 1944 and Berlin 1945 – think I must have been a bit lucky.

TS TRAINING CENTRE RIPLEY

Frances Nunnally, 7139 Cherokee Road, Richmond,
Virginia, 23225 USA

I always keep a sharp eye out for a familiar face or name, when reading my Lioness. So, I fairly jumped when, for the very first time, I came across a mention (and pictures) of Ripley, Lancaster, an ATS Training Centre in World War II.

I arrived at Ripley in November 1941, along with a large assorted number of other young women. It is all so very long ago – but I do remember a Corporal Thorpe who was in charge of our barrack room. This was a vast chamber equipped with double bunks. Corporal Thorpe dwelled in a curtained-off cubicle in front of the room. She was a lady near middle age and, no doubt, was overwhelmed by our very lively group. Many of us girls were "foreigners", refugees from Hitler's Nazi Germany. To the best of her ability, Corporal Thorpe and other NCOs welded us into a disciplined military platoon.

Christmas came, and I was assigned to Guard Duty on Christmas Eve. It was a terrible night, rain poured down as if the very heavens had opened up. Miserable and cold, I huddled in my small Guard Hut, straining my eyes to penetrate the rain and the fog. A senior officer drove up to the gate, stopped, and spoke to me. He lingered, asking kindly about my family and home. I later learned that he was Ripley's Commanding Officer.

January arrived and I was posted to Bury St Edmunds, a small market town in East Anglia. There I remained until demob in early 1946.

I so very much appreciate receiving the Lioness. Its stories and memories carry us ancient ladies back to the glory of our youth. Forgotten are icy cold barrack rooms, reveille at dawn, endless hours of cookhouse and mess hall duties. What we do remember are the wonderful friends we made, and what we regret is having lost touch as the years rolled by.

SNAP!!

Mrs Eileen Hall née Heron W/119935
354 Loose Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9TT

Like Mrs Betty Mitchell of 6th Gloucester, I too was billeted in a Theological Building, although not for very long.

Together with three other experienced drivers, I had been seconded to a FANY Transport Coy. We were their first ATS drivers and, for two months, I drove Security Documents with 31st Cheltenham MT Coy, to London each day. However, with the lessening of aerial activity over London in 1942, our Company had to be moved to Capital from Cheltenham and our Company was then transferred to Bristol to join 202 OCTU RASC – their first female drivers!! On one occasion, when a girl arrived to drive an officer round the scattered night guards, he said “I can’t take a girl around the guards!” “Well Sir, either I drive you or you walk” no more said!

The HQ was Clifton College. We girls were billeted in 3 large Theological Buildings at the back of Clifton Downs and within sound of the seals and peacocks etc at Bristol Zoo. The buildings were called “Cranmer”, “Latimer” and “Ridley”. Very appropriate!! However, we weren’t in Bristol very long, as in late July 1942 the Americans took over Southern Command and 202 OCTU was transferred to Southend-on-Sea, Essex (an evacuated area). I drove the leading vehicle of the Advance Party convoy with the MT Officer, a Captain Middleditch, who had to organise Vehicle Depots, Workshops etc. The main convoy arrived 10 days later, complete with the truckload of bicycles that had been, and remained, so essential to us girls.

My colleague from Folkestone, with whom I had joined up after being Ambulance Drivers with the ARP for 2 years from 1st September 1939, became the Commandant’s driver with a Humber Staff Car while I drove Cadets or the MT Captain or Adjudicator Officers on “Schemes”.

By November I was one of only 6 girls who would go out on “Two-day Schemes”, which involved spending the night sleeping on the hard boards in the back of a truck in one’s sleeping bag and queuing up at the “cook house vehicle” in a cold wet wood, with a pint mug and knife fork and spoon. On one occasion, two of us were sleeping in the back of a 10hp ‘Tilly’ when the butt end of a couple of rifles were stuck in and two Cadets shouted “You’re Dead”. They then pulled back the canvas flap and said “Oh! my God, they’re girls!”. We were, of course, the Adjudicators’ drivers.

We drove in convoy, without lights, to the woodland destinations such as Ramsden Woods, or Rettenden, and by Christmas I was getting eyestrain.

The OCTU was re-organising so I asked to move and opted to go to No. 1 MTTC (Mechanical Transport Training Centre) Camberley. A school friend from Folkestone was already there and I could go on a course to become a Driving Instructor. I later also learnt to ride a motorbike to escort student “convoys”. Incidentally, over the week of D-Day when there was a continuous stream of Army vehicles and transporters going down the Portsmouth Road, some of our Officers, CSMs and Sergeants were out all night on motorbikes. Not keeping student convoys going this time, but occasionally stopping the convoys to allow civilian vehicles to get across crossroads – in fact acting as policemen!

I stayed at Camberley for the rest of the War, first teaching driving and then teaching the “16 Tasks”. I

moved permanently into the Maintenance Yard and eventually, soon after VE Day, when our MT Sergeant was demobbed (she was a FANY and had been in before the commencement of war) I became the MT Sergeant in charge of the maintenance of 60 vehicles – “Tillys”, 15 cwt, 2 tonners and the 3 ton Breakdown Truck, but that’s a different story.

RETURN TO BAD NENNDORF

Mrs D A Swan, née Jackie Eaton (Army No. W/246832)
53 Priory Gardens, Burnham on Sea, Somerset TA8 1QW

I enlisted in January 1943 at Kingston On Thames, Surrey. My wish was to join the land army, but they wanted a birth certificate. As I was only 15 years and 7 months, that was impossible. I then tried the ATS, stating I was born in 1925 instead of 1927, and was accepted with open arms. I then had to go home and explain to Mum and Dad that I would be leaving home! They, of course, were none too happy but Dad said ‘You have made your bed, you must lie on it. In no way will I get you out if you hate it’.

I was sent to Stoughton Barracks in Guildford for basic training. Then I stayed on to train as a cook. I remained at Guildford until I was posted to Beaconsfield in December 1943.

When I arrived at Beaconsfield we had Italian prisoners of war, after Italy capitulated. Afterwards we had German Generals. They used to wander around in the compound in their uniforms with their iron crosses on. As we passed we had to salute them!

The next move was to Bad Nenndorf in Germany. By now I was a lance corporal and cooked in the Officers’ Mess. My service ended in September 1946.

Last Christmas my son and daughter-in-law gave me a two-day trip back to Bad Nenndorf. They had heard me talking about my time there after I had exchanged postcards and snaps with a dear friend, Rita Somerville, who was in the Officers’ Mess with me as a waitress. I was so excited I decided to ring Rita and tell her all about it, but sadly she had died suddenly only the week before.

My son and I set out on April 16th to Bad Nenndorf, armed with all my old post cards and snaps. Having settled into a hotel we decided to go for a walk around the town and very quickly found the park I had walked in 58 years ago. We were so excited snapping photographs. We then went a bit further and found the house where I was billeted, No. 8, Hindenburgstrasse.

As it was getting late we decided we would return next morning and see if we had enough nerve to knock on the door.

On the following day, my birthday, we stood at the gate and a little dog came out, followed by his owner, who asked if she could help us. It emerged that she was French, but could speak a little English. The house is now a guesthouse and she looked after ‘madame’ who is now 93 years old. On seeing the photograph of me sitting on the wall outside the house she grabbed it and said ‘I must show madame!’.

When she returned she said that 'madame' had worked out that I must be 78 years old. It is possible that madame was the original owner of the house, but we did not establish this. Of course, I had lied about my age when I joined the army, it was my 76th birthday. When she discovered this we invited her for coffee and then taken upstairs to see my old room, number 3. It had the same bannister, the same door and radiator.

Later in the day we also found the Winckler Bad (baths) and the Sonnengarten (park) which were also clearly recognisable from the old photographs. The following day we travelled to Bad Oeynhausen to try to find the Kurhaus. I had been to a dance there and still have the ticket. We found it, looking very similar, although now called the Kaiserpalais, still clearly in use as a dance hall.

It was a great experience and a very happy holiday. We found everything we set out to look for, beyond our wildest dreams!

I would be interested to hear from Sergeant Joan Bonham or any one that was billeted at No. 8 Hindenburgstrasse. I also have a photograph of an ATS girl from the billet at No. 10.

Mrs Joyce E Taylor, née Wadd
3 Crealock Grove, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 9QZ

After being in the ATS for only a year (working as an Office Orderly with HQ 70 AA Bde), I was awarded a certificate of appreciation for the good service I had rendered and my devotion to duty. The ATS Junior Commander received one too – I felt so proud.

HQ 70 AA Bde was in Croxteth Hall just outside Liverpool and we eventually changed to HQ 71 AA Bde and moved down south to Saltwood near Hythe in Kent.

We arrived during the Normandy Landings and saw lots of action in the English Channel. From our bedroom windows, in a house requisitioned by the Government, we saw the fire from the German guns in France trying to hit our ships.

Not long after the Normandy Landings, the V1s started coming over – our batteries brought down over 250 of them before they reached London and elsewhere. One landed at the back of the house we worked in, luckily there were no casualties. Although we just worked in an office we felt fully involved with Operation Overlord.

Soon after the V1s and V2s had stopped coming over, I volunteered for overseas and was soon on my way. Before finally leaving England I was in London but, being on standby, we were not allowed to join in the VE day celebrations in Trafalgar Square, which was rather disappointing.

After a short stay in Egypt I finally landed in Kenya with other girls where we formed No. 2 ATS Company (Clerical). VJ day happened while I was there but no celebrations again. However I enjoyed the year I spent there.

ATS BROOCH FOR SALE

Some time ago, Brigadier John Aggleton bought an ATS brooch for his wife.

The brooch is made of silver and paste and cost £275

Sadly, Mrs Aggleton has passed away and Brigadier Aggleton would like to sell the brooch in aid of the WRAC Association

If you would like to make an offer for the brooch, please contact the General Secretary.

COPY DEADLINE

Articles for the inclusion in the next edition of the *Lioness* must be received at Association HQ by

25 November 2003

WRAC DINNER 2003

10-11-12 October 2003

**The Moat House Hotel,
Stoke on Trent**

If you are a member and would like to attend, or, if you would like more information about membership please contact:

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

If you are not a member and would like to join please use the Application Form in the centre pull-out section of this magazine.

Reminiscences of the WRAC

Mrs June Barber née Pane, W/378768
9 Webb's Court, Kesgrave, Suffolk IP5 2GU

PDF Compressor Free Version

I was in the WRAC in Egypt 1954 – 1955. I was a driver at Ladysmith Camp and just before Christmas 1954, I was sent up to Moascar Camp, Ismalla. My corporal, who was called Robins although we used to call her Robbie, said that I was only going there until a new driver arrived from the UK. I didn't like being there, so one day, when four of the girls were going to Ladysmith to play hockey, I asked if I could go too. When the two army lads came, one the driver, the other an armed escort, they had a 15-cwt truck that had just come out of the workshops. It had no canopy and no doors. Well that afternoon, I just couldn't keep still. I asked Robbie again if I could come back but she said not until the other girl comes out.

That night, going back along the canal road, I was sitting on the box which went over the wheel, when the corporal said I could get off there and sit on the floor as it would be cold. I fell asleep and the next thing I knew I was being thrown along the truck. I landed in the passenger seat with my legs hanging out. If the truck had doors, I think my legs would have been chopped off. All I could hear was the horn. The driver was laying over the wheel and I thought he was dead, but he was still alive.

When I looked towards the road I could see trucks lined up. I was put into a RAF lorry with another two of the girls, one was screaming for her mum. We were taken to a RAF camp where we were told that one of the girls had gone back to Fayid hospital. We then went to a hospital in Ismalla. The girl who had been calling for her mum was older than us, she had been in the ATS and was very badly injured. I had lots of cuts and bruises, but the corporal had died as had the private who had been sent to Fayid.

The day of their funeral, I was in the guardroom when the mail came in and there was a lot for both of them as it was Christmas time. It was very sad. Two of the drivers from Fayid, a Frankie Campbell and Mavis (can't remember her surname), came up to the funeral. That night we went back to Fayid with an RAF band.

I was wondering if there is anyone who knows what happened to the two girls who were injured? I write to a lady in Ipswich who goes out to Egypt every year. She puts a rose on each of the two graves and has sent me photos. I have been looking for old friends from the Army and have found a few, some of whom were in Egypt, but I'm still looking for more and have put requests in the "Yours" magazine, Teletext, Radio and Newspapers. I found the girl who was on signals on the night of the accident; she was also a friend of mine before joining the WRAC. I would like to hear from anyone who was at D/C Salisbury, Hobb Barracks, Lingfield, Surrey, and Ladysmith Camp, FAYID MELF. 1952 – 1955. Please contact June BARBER née PANE on 01473 624751.

**REMINISCENCES OF THE LATE
MISS D A (Dabs) BROOK MBE**
Extracted from "The Cambridge Branch Newsletters"

RATIONS STORES

I received a letter from Lady Kemball today regarding the reunion to be held at Colchester. This set me reflecting on when we first met when she was an Officer Cadet and I was a Staff Sergeant working in the Ration Stores at Guildford. I then began to think about the Ration Stores and to my surprise I realised that they had played quite a significant part in my Army career.

My first introduction to a Ration Store was at Liphook (the School of Instruction) when I became surplus to establishment in WONCO Wing. Whilst awaiting a posting I was put to work in the Ration Store. This involved collecting supplies from the Depot in Aldershot, taking on stock and re-issuing according to the menus to the Messes and Cookhouse. That was in 1951.

Then, whilst at Guildford in 1960, I was working in the Quartermaster's Store when, because there has been a spate of thefts from the Ration Store, the civilian employees were suspended and I was put to work there. I stayed there until I was posted to Jamaica in 1961.

In Jamaica I administered 50 locally enlisted WRAC. No Ration Stores, so I thought. Messing member for the Garrison Mess was a doddle, but then Hurricane Hattie blew up and low and behold there I was once again accounting for and issuing rations.

My next encounter with Ration Stores was in 1963 when I was posted to the Cameron Highlands, Malaya, where I was responsible for ordering and seeing that the correct rations were issued to the Change of Air Station Mess and Cookhouse, the bungalows, Slim School and Brinchang Training Camp. This also entailed compiling the menus and dealing with local contractors. One of the perks was having to go to Penang on a regular basis with the accounts and stay at the Australian Club for two nights.

I was posted back to the Highlands in 1969 in preparation for the closure of the Station. This time an ACC SSgt was responsible for the Ration Store. I only had to worry about running the Change of Air Station, which entailed keeping an eye on our contracted hotel, the six bungalows and keeping the accounts.

JUST ANOTHER DAY

***Extract from the Cambridge Branch Newsletter,
Feb 2001**

Whilst stationed in Tanah Rata, Malaya, I was the Supervisor, Change of Air Station, non-combatant soldier. I was ordered by the Garrison Commander to check the armoury as the GSM had been suspended from duty. Being an obedient WO, I proceeded to check the weapons and ammo. All weapons and serial numbers were correct.

On checking the rounds of ammo though, to my horror I found the whole lot were months past their use by date. This incident occurred during the Indonesian Confrontation.

It was arranged for me to take the motor truck to the British Regiment in Ipoh, accompanied by a sailor and airman (both carried rifles without ammunition in).

To get to Ipoh we had to travel by road through jungle on either side. The road must have had over 300 hairpin bends and was about 20 miles to the Tapah Road, then 67 miles to Ipoh. On arrival I reported to the QM. The look on his face had to be seen to be believed. I won't repeat what he said to me but the Garrison Commander's ears must have been burning.

I exchanged the dud ammo for good and we proceeded back to Tannah Rata without (I'm glad to say) encountering Indonesians.

NEVER BE COWED

Miss B M Brewster (ex WO2 W/327555)
56 Willow Lane, Featherstone, W Yorks WF7 6BG

One of my favourite occupations was hill walking and rambling. I still ramble a little!

For many years, when seeing a well bred, quiet cow with gorgeously limpid eyes gently chewing her cud, I had wondered why objectionable women (particularly old ones) had been dubbed "old cows".

When stationed in York in the sixties I found out why. For "Recreational Training", I used to take the younger members out rambling, teaching them practical map and compass reading.

One beautiful sunlit day, we were in the Yorkshire Dales when we came to a public pathway across a field with cattle in it. I checked there wasn't a bull there; though I knew it was safe as long as the bull had cows to content him. The girls might have felt unsafe though.

When we had got nicely into the field, an "old cow" suddenly appeared and attacked us from every angle! The girls ran. I followed them, facing the cow and flapping my map hard in her face which deflected her a little, but she attacked from a different angle each time. She protecting her young cows; this old cow protecting hers. We were run off the path amongst bushes and scrub, and had to refind our route.

It was later that I remembered an article in the newspaper saying there had been "rustling" at night in the area. Obviously the farmer knew what he was doing and not taking any chances. He knew the worth of an "old cow".

CORONATION DAY IN SINGAPORE – JUNE 1953

Mrs Heather O'Hagan (ex Lieutenant H M B White WRAC)
Butlers Farmhouse, Horseshoes Lane, Langley,
Maidstone, Kent ME17 3JY

My alarm went at 5 am on 2nd June 1953. I put on my freshly pressed uniform and polished shoes and awaited

the truck which was to pick me up at Kinloss Mess for the Coronation Day Parade. The truck arrived on time and inside were two dozen members of 4 Independent Company WRAC, Tanglin Barracks. How we were chosen to represent the WRAC I cannot remember. Perhaps we were volunteers!

The Assembly point for all troops taking part was at Nee Soon Garrison about six miles outside the City. On arrival there we joined all the others taking part. There must have been hundreds of personnel from all three Services, all polished up to the nines.

At departure time we got back into the trucks and drove into the City. The time was now about seven o'clock. The Parade itself was at 8 am – held at this early hour to avoid having to stand to attention in the heat of the day.

Gradually the formations sorted themselves out and we found ourselves nearly at the end – Tail end Cinderellas! The parade was held on the Padang. This was a large grassy area about the size of two football pitches very pleasantly situated within sight of the sea, St Andrews Cathedral, and the Singapore Cricket Club.

We formed three ranks and stood easy till brought to attention by the playing of the National Anthem and the arrival of the Governor, resplendent in his spotless white uniform and plumed hat. Quite soon he was inspecting the contingents themselves. The inspection seemed to take an interminable length of time but it was over at last and the Governor took his place on the dais.

The Band struck up and we were off for the March Past. It was very difficult to keep in step. We were so far behind that the Band could hardly be heard and marching on grass is not easy, as you cannot hear the step. Nevertheless, I called the "Eyes Right" at the Saluting Base, and no one had fainted or fallen out, so we felt quite pleased with our efforts and proud to have been part of such an historic occasion.

As far as I remember we were soon dismissed and made our way back to our trucks. Then back to barracks for a more than welcome lie down under the fan.

In the evening a party of us went down into the city to watch the Carnival procession. The crowds were enormous and we had to hold hands to stop becoming separated. The floats were wonderfully colourful and noisy with dancing dragons galore, and banners proclaiming "God Save Queen Elizabeth". There was a general air of excitement and enjoyment from the multi-racial crowd. At no time did we feel that this Carnival was put on just for the benefit of the British. We then came across the Chaplain General in the Far East, Padre Yale. He was sitting down on a patch of grass and drinking a Green Spot (an orange drink in a bottle!). He asked if we would all like to come up to his quarter in Tanglin to hear the Queen's speech as he had a radio. We were delighted to accept. We had quite a long wait to hear her, as the broadcast didn't come through till 2 am. I cannot remember a word she said but the reception was good. It was a moving moment to hear her speaking from London and we all felt a bit nostalgic I'm sure. Soon after, the party broke up and back to Kinloss Mess for what remained of the night. What an incredible 24 hours but I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

SEGREGATION OF THE SEXES!
Miss I M Gordon, 2 Grange Avenue, Monifieth,
Dundee DD5 4LA



Col Gerlach-Nielsen (centre) with staff and visiting British officers

In 1965 my CO, Lt Col The Lady Martha Bruce, dispatched me to Denmark as part of a detachment of the WRAC of the 51st (Highland) Division TA. The group included CSM Lily Bell and was led by Major Hazel Russell WRAC, the CO's Training Major. It was Hazel Russell, incidentally, who taught me an invaluable lesson. "Always remember, Isobel," she said, "the rule books and regulations only tell you what you can't do – they don't tell you what you CAN do!"

We travelled from Perth to London by overnight sleeper, then made our way to Harwich to embark on the ferry for Esbjerg. It was a relatively calm crossing, although I felt uneasy when I put in my front collar stud. When I visited the juniors in an eight-berth cabin, however, I was met by some very pallid, not to say green, young ladies. They struggled on nobly, and by the time we berthed they were ready to meet our two liaison officers from the Danish Lottekorps, the Danish equivalent of the WRAC (TA). We were whisked up the coast to Jutland to the Lottekorps' summer camp, and it was there we were made aware of a very strict rule – none of the women was allowed to speak to a male soldier, on pain of being sent home instantly! The liaison officers pulled my leg constantly, always finding a reason for me to take messages to a tall, blonde, male officer who, from my height of 5' 2", seemed to be about 6' 6" tall. Not that we could talk to each other, my only words of Danish being, "Toosan tak," (a thousand thanks) while his English was just as poor.

We soon fell into the ways of the Lottekorps. At mealtimes, which were taken with all ranks together, if there was anything unusual on the menu, the girls would watch while I tried to discover how to eat it and then passed on the information to them. One night, we went out on an undercover (!) operation. As an officer, I was given a torch to hang round my neck. Boy, did my party come to regret that! Not only did I kick a tin which had been placed as a booby-trap, I got such a shock my hand slammed down on top of my torch to illuminate us to any watching enemy. Let's just say I wasn't cut out for covert operations.

One evening, the Danish Second-in-Command and her officers invited the Scots to visit them in their quarters. They were most hospitable, offering coffee, cakes, biscuits etc. The exception was their PRO, a professional journalist who could have been invented by Hollywood. As I was PRO for our party, this lady took me under her wing. Waving a cigarette in one hand and offering me a strong G & T with the other, she growled, "You see these fools, Lutenant Gordon? When they come to camp they bring extra coffee. Me? I just bring another bottle of gin!"

Hazel and I were very proud of our little gang. Keeping their eyes on CSM Bell, they didn't put a foot wrong, and charmed the Danish officers next day by having beautiful flowers delivered to them as a thank you. Very soon, our busy but enjoyable week came to an end after a special dinner on the last night. Busy? Suffice it to say that after I reached home, I discovered I'd lost half a stone in that memorable week!

**THE HAUNTING MEMORIES OF QUEEN
ELIZABETH TRAINING CAMP**

Mrs Joan Tolley, née Mosley, W/354268
24 Berle Avenue, Heanor, Derbyshire DE75 7PS

I had to pick up my pen and write to you after reading the sad news that The Queen Elizabeth Training Camp exists no more – or does it? Read my story and wonder!

Fifty years ago I was a Regimental Policewoman stationed at the Camp. I shall never forget Sgt Walton (very strict – but very fair) and also my wonderful comrades who shared the guardroom and duties with me – Vera Edwards, Pam Leaves, Gladys Ewan, Irene Mc. Funny how the names come back to you after all these years.

I remember being admitted to the Sick-Bay which was behind the "sacred square". One night I lay in bed talking and laughing with the other girls (about 5 of us altogether). It was nearly midnight when we heard it. Everyone stopped talking and listened – faintly but clearly the sound of marching feet and the ghostly voices of long forgotten NCO's shouting the commands of drill. It was so distinct. I remember we all jumped out of our cosy warm beds and rushed to the windows.

The square was bathed in moonlight – but all was empty. No marching feet – no columns of young girls or NCO's – only the sound. We stood with open mouths as gradually the silence descended once more.

Was it our imaginations? Were we dreaming? I think not. Fifty years on and I still remember.

Maybe the new occupiers of The Queen Elizabeth site will also hear in the dead of night, the sounds of marching feet and the faint echoes of voices.

Only time will tell.

P.S. This story is true, we were not dreaming. I wonder if those other girls who were with me still remember and wonder?

Where Are You Now?

CATHY CROTHERS

Ivor Hunt, 43 Dalton Road, Redworth,
Warwickshire CV12 8SE

For quite some time now, I have been trying to trace a former colleague/friend from the past, firstly by advertising in newspapers in Belfast, Northern Ireland and in the Irish newspaper here in England, all without a single response. I have also tried various other sites such as the Salvation Army and the magazine 'Choice'.

The details are as follows:

'Cathy' Crothers, could have been Catherine or Katherine, I think the former. She was stationed at the Verne Citadel, Portland, Dorset around 1945 to 1947, attached to No 9 Training Battalion Royal Engineers and employed in the HQ Orderly Room on clerical duties. She was later posted to Yeovil. We communicated for some time, prior to my posting away to Lingfield and then to various other Stations in the UK and I lost touch.

I am now in my 80s and Cathy (if still alive) would be at least in her mid 70s and since I am now a widower, I would, perhaps selfishly, hope to renew acquaintance, or at least compare how we have both fared over these past years.

Any help in achieving this would be appreciated.

JEAN COWAN - Continued

Mrs M Waggott, 15 Parkside, Greenways Estate,
Spennymoor, Co Durham DL16 6SA

In Lioness No. 2 2002, page 18, there was a letter from W I Miller living in New Zealand enquiring about his late wife's service in the ATS at Chilwell (Pte Jean P Cowan W/191057). I have been in contact with Mr Miller and he has now sent me photographs and more detail to work on in his research.



He has had one other response to his request, as well as mine.

I find that I can supply Mr Miller with detail of the work his late wife was doing at Chilwell, because I served there in the ATS 1940 to 1947. My own memorabilia contains a full history of Chilwell Ordnance Depot 1915 to 1982, along with an illustrated booklet covering all departments during 1939 to 1945, both military and civilian.



Printing Department where Jean worked

I hope that we may get a response from seeing these photographs. Any reply could be sent direct to New Zealand (see below), otherwise I would be willing to forward it on to Mr Miller.

JEAN COWAN. THANK YOU

Mr W I Miller, 26 Wilton Crescent, Bishopdale,
Christchurch 8005, New Zealand

You may remember that I wrote to you on 30 August 2002, endeavouring to contact anyone who remembered my late wife, the former W/191057 Pte Jean P Cowan, ATS, who was stationed at RAOC Depot, Chilwell, in the period July 1942 to December 1945.

I have had three replies. The first from a former ATS, who was at the depot, but in the wrong period. The second from a former ATS who did not know my Jean, but was a wealth of information. It was she who explained that at the peak there were about 5000 members of the ATS serving at Chilwell, when it would be difficult to know even a small percentage of the total.

The third reply was from Jean's 'best friend' of ages 6 to 17? when they volunteered for the ATS together. We are corresponding, and already I have to edit some of the work I have done.

The enquiry has been a success, for which I thank you and your publication.

NORMINGTON BARRACKS

Mrs Nora Dixon née Henderson
6 Marsden Place, Beeston, Leeds LS11 7NP

I was W/96610 Sgt Nora Henderson and served with E

Company, Normington Barracks, Derby until my demob in 1945.

Before my demob, all Sergeants and Warrant Officers at the barracks had a final photograph taken on the parade ground. I never had mine, and I have tried in vain over the years to get one. Perhaps one of your readers can help.

Secondly, if anyone remembers me or served with E Company between 1942 and 1945 and would like to write, I would love to hear from them and go back over the years to reminisce old times.

Mrs Gladys I Buswell
69723 PR 1, Centralia Ontario NOM 1KO Canada

I enlisted in August 1940 as W/75182 Pte Gladys Warner at Wolverhampton. After training at the ATS Camp in Wrexham Wales, I went on permanent staff at the Royal Welsh Fusiliers Barracks.



I was posted to the Officers' Mess Staff, Experimental Est; Shoeburyness, Essex in 1942. I would appreciate hearing from anyone in this photograph of Sylvia, Betty Jessie and myself.

350 BTY RA
Joyce Nunn

As a new reader of Lioness (February 2003) I was interested to read about the reference to 350 Battery at Wimbledon.

I served at this Battery from 1942 to 1945. My maiden name was Joyce Clift also known as Teene. I was a sergeant on a Height Finder. I would love to hear from anyone who served with me.

Any reply to: Mrs S Stock, 6 Orchard Cottages, Chute Forest, Andover SP11 9DE

DO YOU RECOGNISE ANYONE?

Miss Dorothy Booth W353190, 40 Lansdowne Street,
Worcester, Worcs WR1 1QF



Draft DJONO Brighton, 1949 or 1950.

Joan Batson, Sylvia Thompson, Pat Jones, possibly Sgt Harris?

Does anyone recognise any others?

CHERTSEY 1966 - 1967

Miss Marie Roberts, 109 Scorton Avenue, Layton,
Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7HD



This group photograph was taken when I was in training in 1966.

I am trying to trace twins Patricia and Margaret Glen from Glasgow, as well as Cpl Alan Rigg RCT stationed FVRDE, Chertsey Surrey 1966 - 1967 then Crookham Camp. He was a driver to a Colonel or Brigadier.

I would also like to hear from anyone who was stationed at FVRDE, Chertsey, Surrey between 1966 and 1967. I was working in the stores. I was Pte Marie Roberts and my Army Number W/428116.

JANET RUTHERFORD SIMPSON
Pamela Hamilton, 15 Ashbridge Road, Leytonstone,
London E11 1NH

PDF Compressor Free Version



Janet Rutherford Simpson, d-o-b 31 July 1924, joined the ATS in April 1944 as a Private and became a Sergeant during her time in the ATS, covering the Highlands and Islands.

She attended Dalkeith Training Centre near Edinburgh.

She was also a Permanent Staff Instructor (PSI) at WONCO School, Newark-on-Trent which is where this photograph was taken. This relates to 'A' Company, 1st Platoon, course held in October 1946.

She married in 1954, becoming Mrs Janet Hamilton. She now lives in sheltered housing at Flat 12, Queen Mother House, Balnacraig Road, Inverness IV3 5LN

She is trying to locate her service number and time served but has been unable to find this information via the Ministry of Defence offices. She is also keen to know if any other people in this photograph are still living and perhaps might be able to furnish her with other information from the time spent together.

If anyone can help please communicate directly with her, with a copy to me (her daughter), if you can be of any assistance.

BRENDA SAUNDERS, ATS

Joan Awbery, (Norfolk & Suffolk Branch), 25 Meadow Rise Road, Norwich

Mr Stan Goldman, holidaying in Hunstanton (June/July) from his home in New Mexico, is anxious to discover information concerning his late wife's service in the ATS. All her records were lost, so he has little or no background. Does anyone remember Brenda D Saunders from Hunstanton? Any detail, however small, would be gratefully received by Mr Goldman.

"All information will be passed on to Mr Goldman" Joan Awbery.

Ms Kathleen Gardner Bergl, 2781 I.U. Willets Road,
Roslyn Heights, New York 11577 USA

I am asking for help to trace any Ex-ATS members who may have served with 21 Army Group Signals Dept in 1946 at Bad Oeynhausen. My name Kathleene Gardner 303733. I was a Teleprinter and Wireless Operator. I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who remembers me.

GWEN FARREN (NÉE PRITCHARD)

Mrs Miriam Bosworth (née Farren)
Paget House, Beckingham Green, Tolleshunt Major,
Essex CM9 8LL

Gwen Farren (née Pritchard) – her daughter is seeking information regarding Gwen's service in the ATS, known to be in Bristol around 1941 where she married RAF Sgt E Farren (died 1943) and later possibly in London. Believed then to have been at the Oxford Union. At one time a player in the Gloucester Ladies Hockey team.

Please contact miriamb@supanet.com or telephone 01621 869307

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for next year are due for payment on 01 October 2003

Members of Headquarter Branch should send their subscription together with their membership card and SAE to:

WRAC Association
AGC Centre
Worthy Down
Winchester
SO21 2RG

WRAC NATIONAL REGISTER

Are you interested in trying to find old friends?

Did you serve/enlist between 1949 and 1992?

Why not join the WRAC National Register?

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

Branch News

ABERDEEN BRANCH

PDF Compressor Free Version

Gosh it seems so long ago since Christmas but we had such a lovely day out I feel I'd like to share it with you. Our "Station Hotel" set up our table all crackers, hats, Christmas decorations and it was the first Monday in December. We had the dining room and lounge just for us. The meal was tops, and when we could move we went across to the lounge where Emily gave us a mini concert on the grand piano and sang. It was a fitting end to a terrific day. Thanks all.

Only 2 of us managed the AGM and Reunion at Birmingham, but it was worth the miles to be there, to meet up once again with wartime "sisters". The Ack Ack Plot was something and to be next to the "Gunners" was the correct place, we were together all through the war after all. Vee Robinson, her message on the back of the Granite Memorial Stone was very moving, so as long as that's there we Ack Ack girls will be remembered. It was a shame the WRAC site was so far behind, but in a couple of years it will be a site worth visiting again, once the shrubs are grown.

The "Tartan Kilts" motion was beaten 14 - 7 but I'll still wear mine as will a lot more girls who asked for the address of the maker, and also the lady who makes the tartan skirts. It's not just Scottish girls who wear the kilt with pride, it's because it's our tartan ATS - enough said.

Saturday night was magic, the hall was transformed into a "carnival", but the highlight for us was Sunday with the Parade and Service, that just tied it all up for us. Thanks Birmingham Ladies and Staff. But it didn't end there, I got a lovely surprise, a keepsake trinket box I'd won on a ticket I'd bought in Aberdeen, 0047, so I'll not forget that number.

We had our day out for lunch to Royal Deeside, and it was lovely despite the mixed weather, rain, sun and hailstones! As age is catching up with some of us, and due to hospital appointments, our numbers were smaller this year, but hopefully we will soon be back to full strength as our monthly meetings are near the 18 mark.

Already plans are afoot for our Scottish AGM at Dumfries. I hope we have better luck than they did for ours. They had to turn back for floods and so missed Aberdeen AGM.

Nothing exciting this year for Aberdeen, but will plod on.. and the fact that we turn out for our meetings is good as we're still "homeless" and meet in a café sort of style, so can't really invite speakers etc, but, as I say, we'll keep going.

Good luck and God bless.

ALDERSHOT BRANCH FAREWELL

The Aldershot Branch of the WRAC Association marked its closure with a final party. Those able to attend are

pictured below with their guests. The photograph was taken by Brigadier Noel Moss, who kindly invited all those present to attend the local activities organised by the Royal Signals Association.



Aldershot Branch gather for their final meeting.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

2002 ended with our Christmas Party. Thirty four members and friends enjoyed an excellent meal and entertainment.

We meet the first Wednesday of each month when an average of 25 members attend. We are pleased to welcome two new members and hope they enjoy meeting new friends.

Our events have been varied, including "Bob's Old Bottles", an interesting talk on old bottles found in the most unlikely places, and a poetry reading by Flo Banner and Mary Gunning - sound dull? Never, they were most entertaining and so well chosen that they were asked for more.

April - Grand Reunion held in our area at University of Birmingham. We were kept busy helping behind the scenes, but as this event was organised by HQ I feel sure a very detailed report will be published elsewhere in the Lioness. Our Standard Bearer was on duty on the Sunday Church Parade.

On the previous Friday 10 of our members were interviewed for TVs "Midlands Today", they gave a very good account of their war time experiences that brought a smile to all those who watched the programme.

We have had our Birthday Party, our apologies to members and visitors from Coventry and Wolverhampton for the mishaps, including the equipment being fused. We hope to do better next time.

We are now looking forward to our Summer events.

BLACKPOOL BRANCH

We continue to meet on the third Friday of the month at the RBL Cleveleys at 1 pm. Attendance varies but we manage to keep going.

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In March, June, September and December we meet at a local restaurant for lunch just around the corner from the RBL. This has proved very popular with up to 20 members attending.

Three of our members attended the Grand Reunion in Birmingham and are looking forward to the next one. Mrs Jean Eastham, one of the Berlin Airlift girls, named the Teddy correctly! He is now friend in waiting to her expected grandchild.

BOURNEMOUTH BRANCH

It always amazes me how quickly the months fly past and it is time to write our branch report for the Lioness again. Casting my mind back before Christmas, yes we did have a great time meeting up with members of Southampton Branch for Christmas Lunch at the Manor Restaurant at Sway in the New Forest. What has become an Annual event, meeting with Bournemouth Branch of the WAAFs, was also a merry time. This was followed by our Branch Christmas Dinner at the Cadogan Hotel, another happy occasion.

Our January meeting had to be cancelled due to the refurbishment of the venue. However, it was good to see so many turn out in February when Mrs Hilary Warner again entertained us with more reminiscences of her time with the BBC. In March we held a Hobbies and Collection meeting where members displayed various talents, egg-decoration, dressmaking, tapestry and decoupage; collections included coins, tea towels, bookmarks etc. It was a hectic time as we combined this with the bring and buy sale proposed from January but it added fifty pounds to the funds. April saw two Personnel Managers and an Area Manager from Tesco's give an interesting insight into the company that has grown from a small market stall to the enormous supermarket chain that it is today.

Eleven members attended the Grand Reunion, pleasant but exhausting I think sums that up, particularly the journey home thanks to diversions due to rail engineering works!!

At our May meeting Mrs Maureen Rose held us spellbound as she regaled us with the story of her life and how she became courtier to the Queen, so interesting and amusing we could have listened to her for much longer! June will be a very busy month as we hold our Annual Garden Party. Eighteen will attend the Veterans Remembrance Festival in Weymouth, and then we have an outing to view the Fovant Badges cut into the hillside between Salisbury and Shaftesbury, before having lunch in Salisbury and then a shopping trip to Wilton. This will be published nearer the end of the year, we wish all at HQ and members everywhere a peaceful and Happy Christmas and 2004!

Our very best wishes to Brigadier Nield on her retirement as Vice-President of the Association and our

warmest congratulations to Lieutenant Colonel Westlake as she takes over from Brigadier Nield.

BRADFORD BRANCH

Greetings to all members at home and abroad.

It is with sadness I report the loss of three members, and all in the same month – February. M M Kenny (Peggy), Margaret Ashworth and Ruth Harrison.

Peggy was Secretary, a tireless worker, a great organiser and a friend to all. Peggy's death was a shock to us all, having been diagnosed with cancer only three weeks before. We can only be pleased she didn't suffer a lingering illness. I visited only a week before and she was as cheerful as ever and keen for news of our members. Margaret was a life member. Although her health prevented her attending meetings latterly, she had been with us a long time. Ruth also had been ill for some months.

It has been a most upsetting time for the Branch. Nora Houldsworth, our Treasurer had also been ill for some months, then had a fall and fractured a hip. She is still in hospital but is now making progress. We hope it won't be too long before she is mobile. In the meantime I am acting as treasurer and just hope that I don't cook the books.

Ada Hudson is Minute Secretary and has now stepped into the breach as Secretary. Ada is very efficient and we have every confidence in her.

We have a new member, Mrs P M Blanche of Nottingham, who joins us through another member from the same area Mrs M F Holmes. She was in the ATS and we bid her welcome.

Of the other members who are ill but have not been named, we wish for them a good recovery and hope to see them back at our meetings very soon.

This has been an unhappy few months but now we must look to the future and try to overcome it. We are making plans and looking forward to the Northern Area Reunion to be held at York in September.

BRISTOL BRANCH

It has been a busy six months for the branch; we had a bring and buy sale in December and monies raised from this went towards offsetting our Christmas Lunch in February. Yes I know it seems odd having a Christmas Lunch in February, but it is something to look forward to after a grey January. Our theme this year was once again the Coronation, our place names had the gold coronation coach on them, and the table had green and gold decorations. We had the usual crackers on the table and everyone brought a gift. We thank Colonel Val Trout for making the journey to join us as our special guest. We did have two surprise guests that we did not know about, and who went by the names of 'Gert and Daisy'. They were so popular they were invited to join us for our AGM in March.

Some of us attended the Grand Reunion in April. After the initial shock of basics at University, we found everything was fine, the food was good, accommodation was clean, and all the staff friendly, what more could you ask for? One of our members, Mrs Doreen Thornhill, made plaques with the ATS and ATS-Bride. She bought a set from her which are displayed at our meetings, also members have bought individual ones from her. A set was donated by the Branch to Headquarters who have decided to keep them for use at various meetings etc. We had them displayed on our table during the Dinner on the Saturday. We all enjoyed the trip to the Arboretum, but would like to go back later when the trees and shrubs are at their best. Thank you to all those involved in the enormous task of organising the weekend. We wouldn't have missed it.

In April we went to the National Army Museum in Chelsea, afterwards a visit to Chelsea Hospital, then lunch at the Chelsea Flyer in the Kings Road (really reasonably priced) before getting the bus back to Hyde Park to await our coach. A most enjoyable day, and one which we are certainly going to repeat.

Here we are at the start of the Summer, we are celebrating coronation year at our June meeting, hopefully with a speaker, but we will have cake and put a few decorations up. Also in June is the Veterans week at Weymouth, Bristol will join with Weymouth Branch for the march.

In July we are organising a Fund Raising event, hope the weather is kind to us. We are also going on a river trip, which everyone is looking forward to.

It seems in no time at all we are almost into September, when we shall be collecting Annual Subs. Where does the time go?

You may or may not know, the National Express fares are now all half price if you are over 60 years. You do not need to buy a card. It hasn't been advertised much, so you may have missed it.

All good wishes from Bristol Branch for Christmas and the coming New Year.

BURY BRANCH

It is some time since we sent in a report, but we continue to meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 2 pm at the White Lion Hotel, a number of us travelling considerable distances.

Throughout the year we have had several outings –afternoon tea at the Midland Hotel, a trip to the Lowry Centre and a visit to see the costumes for the opening and closing of the Commonwealth Games, all in Manchester. We have also visited the Lancashire Fusiliers Museum here in Bury.

Two of our group have been interviewed by the Greater Manchester Radio about their service experiences during the War.

In February we welcomed Wendy Steven to our meetings. She served in the WRAC and is now a Captain in the TA. She is also Vice-Chairman of the North West Group WRAC Association.

Sadly, we have to report the death of our colleague Ena Harding (née Watts). She had been unwell for some time and was looking forward to joining us again, but she became seriously ill and died in March.

In April seven of our group attended the Grand Reunion in Birmingham and would like to thank everyone connected with the superb organisation, especially for the excellent transport arrangements.

In May we joined our friends in Rochdale to celebrate their 20th Birthday and we thank them for a very enjoyable afternoon. Some of our group will be attending the Manchester Military Tattoo in June and plans have been made for a boat trip on the Manchester Ship Canal in July.



Mary Howarth receiving her Commendation from Col. Gorski.

A special mention must be made of our member Mary Howarth (ex ATS No. W12331). On Gallipoli and St Georges Day, at the parade of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers in Bury she was presented with a Commendation from the Colonel of the Regiment which reads –

THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF FUSILIERS Lancashire Area Area Colonel's Commendation

MARY HOWARTH over a period of 20 years has given loyal and sustained voluntary support to the activities of the Regiment particularly in matters relating to the Regimental Association, the Regimental Club and the

Regimental Association News Sheet. This Commendation recognises her valuable contribution and records our thanks.

Brian Gorski Area Colonel Gallipoli and
St George's Day
2003

Although our Branch is small we enjoy the friendship and fellowship of our meetings and are indebted to our Secretary, Mary, and our Treasurer, Lily, who work so hard on our behalf.

CAMBRIDGE BRANCH

We do not have much to report this time. The six members who attended the Grand Reunion at Birmingham had a very enjoyable time, meeting new and old friends. The Secretary forgot to hand her room key in so had to post it back the following morning.

I am pleased to report that two of our members, Mrs Doris Dockerill and Mrs Joan Tanton, are recovering well after their recent spells in hospital.

CANTERBURY BRANCH

Our first meeting of 2003 was held on the first Wednesday in February at our usual venue, the ancient Dominican Priory in the centre of the beautiful city of Canterbury. Despite freezing temperatures outside, our meeting was lively. Four ladies had attended the St Barbara's Day celebration in Ramsgate in December at the invitation of the Royal Artillery (St Barbara is the patron saint of the Gunners). Then our President, Jenny Wells, tested our "little grey cells" with a quiz.



l-r Madeleine Croll, Doreen Dennis, Mavis Middleton and Kay Perfect (rear) St Barbara's Day Celebration

In March, after the official business was completed, we had an entertaining speaker who gave us a talk on the life and times of Princess Louise, one of Queen Victoria's daughters.

Our meeting in April was a busy one. Nearly 40 of us gathered together for a fish and chip lunch, followed by a demonstration of spring floral arrangements which were

later raffled. We then had our Easter bonnet competition, it was hard to choose which was the best but Mercy Jordan won with an inspired creation of daffodils and Easter chicks. Finally we wished Doreen Dennis, our Vice-Chairman, a happy 80th birthday and, along with a slice of birthday cake, toasted her good health with a glass of wine.

In May, some of the members who had attended the Grand Reunion regaled us with various anecdotes of their visit to Birmingham. The general consensus was that it was a very happy occasion and a good time had been had by all.

June saw us discussing our future events for 2004. Various suggestions have been put forward so we hope to be able to put together an entertaining programme for next year.

Finally, we would like to invite younger members of the Association who live in East Kent and served in the WRAC to come to our meetings, we can guarantee a very warm welcome. Our best wishes to all the other branches.

CHELMSFORD

We continue to meet at the RAFA Club in Hall Street from 1.30 pm every third Tuesday except August and December. An average of 25-30 members come along and we enjoy our time together especially having a chat over a cup of tea.

Last December we gathered at the Glades Restaurant to celebrate the Christmas Season once more. A very large raffle followed a particularly good meal and we are grateful to Joan Makenzie and Joyce Wright for organising this for us.

Early in January a few of us went to Corton Holiday Centre, near Yarmouth and our first meeting of the New Year produced an interesting speaker - Mrs Mary Drake who is the Secretary for the Friends of BLESMA - (British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association - Chelmsford).

Mary explained how knitted squares can be sewn up into blankets and these are either sold or given to a disabled ex-serviceman needing one and our branch was happy to help with this project. Several have knitted dozens of squares and two members, Lilian Brown and Daphne Thomas, have each completed a blanket.

In February we were entertained by Mr Hines who brought his keyboard along, sang a few songs and told some amusing stories. He has appeared on the TV programme "Countdown" and has promised to come back and speak to us again and show us a video of the programme.

In March we presented a Branch plaque to the President of the RAFA Club Squadron Leader (Retd) Ralph Tyrell in appreciation of the use of the Club for our meetings. Mr Tyrell then told us about some of his experiences during the 2nd World War.

We are delighted to report that both Irene Raffell and Joyce Wright have been awarded Certificates of Appreciation at the AGM in Birmingham. (What a happy

weekend, with a visit to the Arboretum at Litchfield to see the Association plot).



Irene Raffell receives Certificate of Appreciation, AGM, 2003.

Also in April we held a "Knit In" and a prize for the longest piece of knitting was won by Ginny Rayner a fairly new member who travels all the way from Grays to be with us – well done Ginny.

At our May meeting there will be a craft demonstration and talk by the Hon. Secretary on Rubber Stamping. Its amazing what some branch members put up with!

Shortly after this there is what will be the last holiday to Warner's. Report next time. Our thanks go to our tea makers Eileen and Peggy and to those who help with many other jobs which keep us ticking over. We welcome new members and if anyone is interested in joining us and is not already a member of a local Branch please contact the Hon. Secretary on Tel: 01245 251088.

CLEVELAND BRANCH

Hello once again from the cold, windy and wet North East. I am pleased to say that our spirits are not dampened by the weather, as we still have excellent attendances at our meetings. In fact we have had two new members join us, and as a result of adverts in our local papers and on TV, we have had more enquiries – all very encouraging.

In September, we had our AGM, and as we had no volunteers (!!!) the committee is unchanged for another year.

At this point, we send best wishes to our 'sick parade' and hope to see them very soon. Our secretary is getting away well after her illness – not fast enough for her though. But keep at it Gwen, we want to see you in top form again soon. Our Chairlady is in Cyprus at the moment on holiday. Don't bring me any old relics back Margaret if you don't mind!

We had our Christmas Lunch at the Youth and Community Centre where we have our monthly meetings, and it was good. One of our members (Pat Joslyn) volunteered her brother-in-law to entertain us. So a good sing-a-long was had by all.

As usual, our Standard Bearer has had a busy year out

and about representing the Association. She's a good 'un. Some of us took off for Stoke-on-Trent for our Annual Dinner Club Weekend. As usual, it was great but it passed by so quickly. We have all made so many new friends through the club- can't wait for October! January was the month of our "unwanted gifts" auction. The TV show 'Flog It' has nothing on us – money and goods changed hands very quickly.

February brought us a lady from the Samaritans. What an eye-opener to hear just how many people from our area call on their services, both young and not so young. Calls were sad, and some very amusing, but all of them in the strictest confidence.

At our next meeting, we had a very tall, good looking policeman, advising us on Crime Prevention. It's true what they say – as we get older, the 'Coppers' look younger! One piece of advice he gave us is really worth sharing. Open bathroom windows are the most popular for thieves, so ladies keep them shut whenever possible.

Only two members managed to get to Birmingham this year for the Reunion. A report from one member is elsewhere in the journal.

As the cartoon says "that's all for now folks". Have a lovely summer and keep recruiting.

CREWE BRANCH

In December we went for our annual Panto outing to Crewe Theatre with friends and relations, this is always a happy event for us. Then we had the Christmas break and did not have a meeting again until February when we held our New Year annual lunch at the Crewe Arms Hotel on February 16th.

We did not start off well this year due to illnesses however, we managed to hold our Spring Dance at the Crossville Club on April 3rd.

Fund raising is not easy these days as there are so few of us to do it. Although we have 30 members in the branch, we do not get more than 6 members at the meetings. However, we soldier on and do our best. We are grateful to those members who, despite being unable to attend meetings, send us donations from time to time. It does



Betty Patton, Jo Anscombe and Mabel Lightfoot at the Arboretum.

help to keep us afloat and, at the moment, the branch is ticking over nicely but we do have to be mindful of the situation.

Also in April, 7 members attended the Grand Reunion at Birmingham University. We were looked after very well, the accommodation was very good and so was the food. Obviously a lot of hard work had been put into organising the weekend, so a big thank you to the workers. The entertainment was great and we all enjoyed the weekend very much.



It was a pleasure to visit the Arboretum Memorial. This time the weather was kind and sites are beginning to shape up more interestingly now.

Edith went to the Anzac Memorial Service at Cannock Chase on April 27th and then on to Alrewas to visit the Arboretum Memorial.

Mrs Doreen Craddock, died recently. Mrs Doris Noden and Mrs Alice Millington died last year, all had been unable to attend meetings.

We have recently had an extra blow to our fund raising efforts, we usually do a Table Top stall at Nantwich Civic Hall in May but due to new regulations we are not allowed to sell cakes etc on the premises, so we have lost that source of income.

Betty is hoping to attend the Ack Ack Reunion at York in July. Unfortunately there is no Area Reunion this year only a Secretary and Chairman meeting in September at Birmingham.

The rest of this year we are playing things by ear and doing things as and when we can. We are all hoping for a good summer. One thing we always look forward to is getting our Lioness, it is a super magazine.

DACORUM BRANCH

Greetings from Dacorum to all the members of the WRAC Association. We do hope that like us you are still able to survive even if the membership is falling.

November: It seems such a long time ago, we had our usual fund raising auction, our Chairman Jean Westrope was auctioneer as usual, as always a success.

December: A sad month, three of our members have died, one of our founder members who was also press secretary, Cathie Woodford, Kay Woods who was secretary until a stroke disabled her, and Ina Harte who was a very supportive member. After reminiscing about their support when the branch started, we had a few minutes silence as a mark of respect. They are sadly missed.

Our Christmas lunch was once again at the Jarvis Hotel, as usual a very enjoyable start to the season.

February: We started our 2003 meetings in February because so often January is very cold, and with so many members near or over eighty years old travel can be a problem. Our Chairman then told us that she would be resigning in May. Also, as the members able to attend were so few, we were having to subsidise the rent and we would have to consider closing the branch. After some discussion it was decided that yes, May would be the date the branch would formally close.

After tea and biscuits we played a game identifying words that sounded the same but had a different meaning, ie sail and sale. Our members managed to fill both side of A4 paper, about three columns each side of the three sheets.

March: The brain challenging game of bingo today, even though the Times newspaper printed that statement, a lot of us are rather sceptical about it, we also had photo recognition, how we have changed.

April: Our penultimate meeting but we realised now that closing our small group was going to be sad for all of us. It was suggested that, as our numbers have increased and Summer is not so much a problem for travel, we keep going a little longer. Our Vice-Chairman, Camilla, agreed to be Chairman so we will keep going a while longer.

We do hope other groups are managing to keep going, we would like to see the statue to the women of World War II sited before we close. Is there any news of progress? We donated £700.00, will it be returned to our branch if the statue is not going to go ahead?

Thank you for the very supportive personnel at Worthy Down, we also hope everyone has a good summer.

EASTBOURNE BRANCH

Two members attended the AGM in Birmingham and enjoyed it very much, thank you, all who organised everything. We found that the maps in the Arboretum listed No. 31 as WRAC only.

Major Robertson returned our Memorial donation which we sent to him before it became a Charity and the writing paper still had the three bronze figures on it. He states that he hopes the Memorial will be unveiled in 2004, and invites us to attend!

We have just visited the Newhaven Fort which was very interesting, and also "Fire Power", the Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich.

Our new members are widespread, we hope to see them at our meetings whenever they can attend. All are sent a "Welcome to the Branch" letter with all details.

Best wishes to all Branches.

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Members of Eastbourne Branch at Newhaven Fort

FIFE AND TAYSIDE

On 11th April, eleven ladies from the branch set off for Birmingham aboard their private coach, picking up twelve members of the Glasgow Branch and four from the Dumfries Branch en-route. It was a long haul, made longer by the fact that there were two accidents on the southbound M6 and that we hit Birmingham at the Friday evening rush hour. But we made it! Included in the company was WO2 Debbie Wilde, serving in Edinburgh. We enjoyed her company very much and she seemed to like us, as she asked me how she could become a member of the WRAC Association.

The weekend proved to be very busy, but it was good to meet members from other parts of Britain. Six ladies from the Glasgow Branch opted to make the homeward journey by train, although the journey by coach was much quicker and smoother on the Sunday.

The Branch AGM was held a fortnight later at the Royal George Hotel in Perth. Twenty-Seven members attended, with the business meeting followed by an excellent lunch, a raffle and a sales table. The Branch membership figures are healthy, and there is a good turnout at monthly lunches in the Royal British Legion Club in Perth.

GLASGOW BRANCH

Glasgow Branch send our congratulations to the organisers for a very successful reunion. We enjoyed our visit to the Arboretum, in particular the Chapel. Saturday night saw us talking, singing and laughing our heads off, and it was rounded off with the March Past and the uplifting service in the Great Hall on the Sunday. We send our thanks to you and the wonderful band.

We laid our poppy wreath at the Glasgow Cenotaph in November. Someone we all miss on Remembrance Sunday is the late Major M Sharp (Retd). She never marched with us, she just mingled with the spectators and as we marched past her, she would give us a little private salute.

Sixty of us partied at the Grosvenor Hotel for our Christmas Lunch, a good time was had by all.

We were joined by the WRNS and WAAF for our February meeting, our speaker was Staff Sergeant Tom McKay MBE, who is in charge of the gun which is fired every day, at one o'clock precisely, from the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle. He has the history of the gun down to a fine art.

In March our speaker was Mrs La'Paw from the Forth and Clyde Canal Trust. This canal was derelict for fifty years, but with the dedication and hard work of trust members, it is being brought back to life.

We had our thinking caps on in April for a quiz about Glasgow in the past. Our "Brain of Scotland" that day was our Treasurer, May McGavin.

We are almost at the end of our session but have planned a musical afternoon in May followed by a tea party in June.

We wish everyone a sun-filled summer.

GREATER LONDON BRANCH

We received a note from Mrs Ennis, mother of Miss Barbara Ennis, a younger life member of our branch, which read 'Barbara en route to who knows where today, 8 March 2003. Received her call-up papers 2 weeks ago, therefore cannot attend your branch meeting 26 April'. Barbara joined 41 (PLK) Sig Sqn TA about 18 months ago, having served previously with TA and regular units of the WRAC and with R Signals in the UK and overseas, as a Lance Corporal.

Our Secretary received her first letter from Barbara written on 15 March from Kuwait when 7 Armd Bde was waiting for the order to move into Iraq and in the distance she could see flames from several Iraqi oil wells. Barbara said the food was fairly good, water plentiful, mail slow and newspapers like 'gold dust'. The sandstorms 'got a bit much' but she was getting a free sun tan. As a member of 207 Sig Sqn she expected to be in the first group to move forward.

Branch members responded with letters and jiffy bags and some selected newspapers. Her next report in April said 'conditions at the airfield and in the field were more basic than expected, but now we are in the Presidential Palace in Basrah and conditions are still very basic, but dramatically improved. Weather still very hot, things have calmed down here now, no artillery keeping the birds away, only the odd street battle we hear down town'. Barbara describing the opulence in the palace wrote 'its easy to see where this country's money went to'. Water for drinking and washing is rationed, but the engineers are working hard to provide clean water. For all other purposes, water has to be taken from the river. 'We now have mosquito nets and with few windows in the palace we don't get bitten to bits whilst sleeping. We have BFBS to listen to and watch now - which is very welcome'. A later letter said 'we now have satellite TV up and running so the lads get to watch 'footy' of a night time'.

In May a trip to Kuwait in an armed convoy was arranged and they were able to visit the shops which were good, but the American PX was disappointing. As this was the first time they had been able to leave the grounds of the palace for obvious security reasons they didn't know what they might encounter. The trip was very interesting for people as they travelled through some areas. Barbara expects to RHE to UK by August and hopes to attend our next branch meeting to which she will bring along some photos to show us. She thanks members for their support which has been very comforting.

HARROGATE BRANCH

We are thoroughly enjoying our new Meeting Place (our last room became too small, due to increased membership!), and have had a successful year, with good fellowship, interesting speakers, and lots of laughs.

Two of our members celebrated their 90th Birthdays. They are still going strong, in spite of major surgery. Dorothy Wilcockson was at camp when War broke out, and served in the Cairo area for most of the duration. As well as the WRAC Association, Kempie is very involved with both the Royal British Legion and the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, so makes a very good showing on November 11th. Sadly, none of us can march on the Remembrance Day Parade, but we do "fall in" at the Cenotaph and attend the Church Service afterwards. Most of our branch are at the War Memorial at 11.00 hrs on the 11th November, regardless of the weather.



Harrogate Branch at the 90th birthday party of Kempie and Dorothy Wilcockson.

Our meetings are most varied, with speakers ranging from Yorkshire Water *via* Astrology, Foot Care by Scholle's, brass rubbing, local affairs, a musical interlude, and the work of the National Lifeboat Association, to a lovely hour of poetry and prose given by an ex-ATS lady who is now a member!

Two of our members attended the Grand Reunion in Birmingham, where they spent a wonderful weekend. In the summer, the branch had two excellent outings, one to Skipton and the other to the Yorkshire Dales. Of course, we all enjoyed the North-East Reunion at Middlesbrough.

HASTINGS BRANCH

Sadly four of our members have died this year – Pam Waite, Iris Hughes, Gladys Colvin and Brenda Moor. Brenda had spent the last years of her life in the Royal Star and Garter Home for Ex-Service personnel.

On a happier note, we have all been very busy people. Win Wakelin was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for service with the Red Cross, then our Secretary, Dorothy Dixon, completed 10? years with SSAFA/Forces Help and due to age and health, retired with many celebrations. Elizabeth Holmes was appointed Vice Chairman of the Local RAA, and on 10th May Betty Marshall went to Woolwich to receive a Certificate of Commendation for her work with the same RAA Branch.

We have been happy to welcome four ex-WAAF as affiliated members and hope they will enjoy serving with us.

Two members were entertained at the Blue Bell Railway by the "Not Forgotten Association". With many other ex-service personnel they enjoyed a lovely Fish & Chip Lunch then the train ride with a cream tea supplied on the return journey.

We celebrated the 23rd Birthday of our branch in April with a cream tea at a very nice café looking out over the sea. The proprietors had made us a birthday cake decorated with our Corps colours. We are now preparing for our yearly Strawberry Tea which will take place in June in the garden of one of our members – always a very popular event.

On September 14th, 2003, we will be holding the S E Area Church Service at 3.00 pm in St Matthews Parish Church, Silverhill, St Leonards-on-Sea. This Service will mark the 65th Anniversary of the formation of the ATS and any ex-servicewomen in the area will be most welcome.

Greetings to all.

HEREFORD BRANCH

First, the notification of the death of three of our members was greatly exaggerated and all three are taking the news with great humour and fortitude. Apologies to all three, Dorothy Booth, Vi Brown and Kath Buckle. I am blaming arthritis in the finger when updating the computer records.



Some members of Hereford Branch in party mode

Hereford had a very successful time at the last Grand Reunion, three of our members were presented with Certificate of Appreciation. They were our President, Mrs Ena Price, and what must be an Association first mother and daughter, Mary and Joyce Nicholls. Mary served in the ATS and J. PDF Compressor Free Version. The first of these is included within this edition. Our branch is very proud of all three and sends our best wishes to them.

I would also like to thank all those who arranged the Grand Reunion. It was the first one I have attended and I came home exhausted but happy with the determination to mark this in my social calendar for the future. One of the outstanding moments was when I saw our Standard waving in unison with all the others on the parade. Our Standard Bearer, Jackie, did us proud.

Hereford has picked up the gauntlet to hold the Wales and West Regional Reunion in September 2004 and our members are already thinking of ways to raise funds. As there will not be a Wales and West Area Reunion this year, we have arranged to take our members to a venue in Bromyard which is holding a 40s event. Blackout curtains and a floor show with the 'The Andrew Sisters', etc. As you can guess, there were plenty of takers for places. So much so that all the husbands were jealous and even offered to do the driving on the off chance that they could join us. Being kind hearted we gave in; after all, with them driving, we ladies could enjoy a celebration drink or three.

Our daily/evening rota of meetings is still proving to be popular. The last meeting held in Hereford, at 'The Imperial', was our Annual General Meeting and it was agreed that all members of the committee were to continue in post until next year when a re-selection process will take place. So Hereford ladies, if you are interested in being more active in the Branch then start thinking about putting your name forward for election.

HULL BRANCH

Five of our members were able to attend the Reunion because Grimsby had asked us to share their transport, and we had a very pleasant extended weekend with them. The Reunion was as always enjoyable because of meeting friends wherever it is, but I think this year's was very much aimed at the younger element of members.

I know there will be more WRAC than ATS now, but please do not forget the older members. I enclose a photograph of



one of our senior members who has attended most Reunions taken at the dinner Mrs May Kirby showing us how to be glamorous at 93. Her companions are Mrs A Sutherland (centre) and Mrs D Tiplady.

In March our Branch had a pleasant surprise when we were joined by a visitor from Spain, Mrs Hetty Lanues, who was over here on holiday. She had trained in Rochdale and later served at Whitby and Sleights with the Signals. We hope to see her again before she goes back.

ILFORD BRANCH

Four members from Ilford Branch joined friends from Norfolk at a service in Yarmouth on Sunday 11th May to commemorate a group of ATS girls who tragically lost their lives in an air raid in Yarmouth on the 11th May, 1943.

Kay Chadwick one of our members who has been involved in this annual event for some years, arranged transport for our members on a lovely bright day.

Kay was stationed in Yarmouth when this sad event happened in 1943.

ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH

On the 29th September 2002 the Standard of the Isle of Wight branch of the WRAC Association was laid up in the Chapel of St Nicholas in Castro Within the Walls of Carisbrooke Castle, Newport, Isle of Wight. This chapel is known as the Soldiers' Chapel and is the site of the official War Memorial on the Isle of Wight, the names of the fallen being engraved on the walls of the vestibule.

The Standard was being laid up because our long serving Standard Bearer, Mrs Jean Trowbridge, was no longer able to carry it. Unfortunately, there were no other members who felt physically strong enough to continue with the task.



Members gather for the laying-up of the branch standard.

The service was conducted by Father Mike Exell, the parish priest of Carisbrooke, assisted by the branch chaplain Reverend Ken Cheeseman. The Standard was presented by Mrs Pat Green, Past Chairman and Assistant Standard Bearer. The WRAC collect was read by Mrs Kay Heptinstall, Branch Treasurer. The Act of

Remembrance was read by Mrs Fiona White representing the WRAC, most members of the Branch being ex-ATS.

The Chapel has very limited space and, in addition to all the able bodied Branch members, there were Standard Bearers from **PDF Compressor Free Version** organisations, together with friends.



Pat Green presenting the standard to Fr Mike Exell.

After the very moving service, the congregation retired to the local British Legion Hall for delicious refreshments prepared by the ladies of the branch. It was a very sad day but most memorable and proud for us all.

LEEDS BRANCH

Another year, bonus time for many of us, helped in no small way by the friendliness of our Association.

Getting to our first meeting in February was made extremely difficult by sheet ice on the pavements. The members who made it deserved medals. Eight members enjoyed a visit to the Theatre in Leeds to see 'Calamity Jane'.

In March Emily, our Secretary, dropped a bombshell by saying that, due to continuing health problems, she felt unable to carry on. Emily has been a first class secretary and will be difficult to replace. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that Betty France be appointed our new secretary.

Two members joined 36 other ex-AA and S/L ladies at Alvaston Hall for a most enjoyable holiday. As usual, the weather did us proud. A day tour of N Wales scenery was most memorable. Six members thoroughly enjoyed the Grand Reunion at Birmingham University, voted one of the best. Thanks are due to all who worked so hard to ensure its success.

Eleven members will attend a Military Tattoo in Manchester at the end of June and, hopefully, a full complement will enjoy the N Area Lunch in York in September.

Thanks to some 'never say die' attitude of Major Robertson and his staff, we shall, as usual, be able to see our Mixed Hy AA friends in York at the end of July.

LEICESTER AND NOTTINGHAM BRANCH

Following on from our last report - 13 members attended the first ATS Dinner Club weekend at Seaton. Good company, food and wonderful weather.

Six ladies spent an enjoyable day at the Birmingham Area Reunion and in November six of our members again attended the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall and the Remembrance Service in Whitehall. Upon leaving Whitehall we have often been stopped over the years by people asking what our green uniforms represent, and we have had many photos taken. We hope when the films are printed the photographers remember who we are!!

Our programme for 2003, organised by Barbara Castell, saw us in January at the Theatre for 'The Music Man' and in February raising funds with a Bring and Buy, always popular. A gentleman from the Salvation Army gave us a talk in March and branch member Barbara Hewitt gave us an interesting talk with supporting slides in April on the National Trust Coastline. We applied to the Lottery for a grant to take our members to Birmingham for the National Reunion Weekend. Sadly we were turned down, the reason given that the dinner was too expensive!! However six members did attend and had an enjoyable weekend.

This now brings us up to date. Our AGM has been moved to September 9th to bring us in line with getting our Returns in. May I ask our members to note the date, especially annual members who can't get to meetings. If any member has any proposal etc to put forward, they need to be with our Secretary in August. Our thanks go to our members for keeping our branch alive, and to the help and donations given, it is all greatly appreciated.

Our best wishes to you all.

LONDON BRANCH

We had a harrowing time in November getting our tickets for the Cenotaph Parade. We had very few members at our July meeting due to a tube strike. We do not meet in August and names were required before our September meeting - getting a list together was difficult, tickets were late and had to be posted - after a lot of nail biting we were well represented. Still disappointed the ATS was not mentioned.

We had a Bring and Buy at our November meeting and in December we celebrated Christmas with mince pies, a glass of wine and nattering to our hearts' content.

January we had our get-together catching up on news and getting to know new members. We still have them - bless them. It is always the same story, did not know the Association existed.

In February Mr Joun Doran demonstrated the art of Tai Chi. We had to join in, not only did we have a good laugh at our antics, we actually felt good the next day. There must be something in it.

In March we had a very interesting talk from Mr Ivan

Bevan on Tudor London and in April Mrs Pete Suttle gave us an unusual talk on a holiday she had many years ago entitled the Last Headhunters Tribe. They no longer practised their skills.

And then we had a short but full of interest. Took some organising and the visit to the National Arboretum was great, we all enjoyed it. I would like to think I can see it again in all its glory in fifteen or twenty years time, it will be beautiful.

MEDWAY BRANCH

Sadly, we started the year by losing three members of the branch; they were C Pascoe-Price, J Hamblin and J Lavender.

In March we held a Combined Lunch with the WRNS Association and WRAF Association. In all 64 members enjoyed a three-course lunch.

April was the Grand Reunion in Birmingham, eight members attended the hectic weekend. It was very enjoyable and thanks must go to those who made all the arrangements. Queenie Headington received her Certificate of Appreciation.

May was all systems go for the branch celebrating 21 years in the Medway towns. A service was held at the Garrison Church with the Mayor and Mayoress attending. David Preston took the place of the Army Padre who was unavailable on the day. Flowers for the church and hall were kindly arranged by members of the WRNS Association. "Sweet lass from Richmond Hill" was played on entering the church and "Green Sleeves" when leaving. After the service we held a Sherry Reception and Buffet Lunch. Plenty of raffle prizes were donated by branch members. Eighty-four invitations were sent and on the day only four people were unable to attend.

June will be a quiet month for the branch, but in July there will be a Raspberry Tea at our Secretary's home to help raise branch funds.

In August we hope to have a speaker, but in the past they have let us down.

Helen Dodd will be hosting a Coffee Morning in September at her home. Our branch Annual General



Meeting will also be held in September and we would like as many members as possible to attend.

In November, Remembrance Services will be held in the Medway Towns.

Our Christmas Lunch will be held on 9 December, any members who would like to attend, please contact the Secretary.

We now meet at the Garrison Church Hall, Mansion Row, Chatham on the second Tuesday of the month at 13.30 hours.

We would like to wish all our members good health and see you soon.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH

Our meetings are held every third Thursday in the month in the Companions Club, Newcastle. Twenty two of our members attended the Grand Reunion at Birmingham and enjoyed our stay at the University. We are now looking forward to the North East Reunion at York

Sunderland Branch were invited to our meeting where we enjoyed a pie and peas lunch.

Some of our members attend the Cenotaph Parade and others go to their local parades.

A most loyal member, Margaret Henderson, has recently passed away after a long illness she endured with courage, we will miss her very much.

Good health and every success to all members.

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BRANCH

A year has passed since our last Branch News – during that time we have been busy with various activities, and have enjoyed interesting speakers at our meetings. We battled on with a Jumble Sale in November to raise funds but have decided not to pursue the same exhausting course this year. We held our usual Christmas tea-party and had very good attendances at our two Christmas luncheons, one in Gt Yarmouth to meet those who live in that area and one in Norwich at which Lady Kemball was our guest. Two members attended the Grand Reunion. Arrangements were made to hold the 60th anniversary service at Gt Yarmouth in memory of the twenty-six ATS girls who lost their lives there in 1943. Mrs Doris Lammas took up with the authorities at Duxford Air Museum the fact that no mention is made there of the work of any of the Women's Services during the war. They promised to rectify this, so if anyone goes to Duxford, please look out and report! Miss Audrey Told is to be congratulated on her award for Community Services in Cromer, presented by the Mayor and Cromer Town Council in May. We are hoping that our Treasurer, Mrs Audrey Juby will soon be restored to health and able to join us for meetings again.

A great feature of the newly built Norwich Library – the Forum – is the American Memorial room, dedicated to the heroic work of the American Air Force in East Anglia. There has been no such memorial to British and Commonwealth men and women who served, many losing their lives in this conflict. A plaque for the part of the Norwich Combined ex-Services Association a plaque is at last being installed and dedicated on 6th June, to which we will be sending a representative party.

Each year since the unveiling by Lady Soames in 1994 of the memorial plaque at Gt Yarmouth to the twenty-six ATS girls who lost their lives by enemy bombing in 1943, the Norfolk and Suffolk Branch have held informal services and placed flowers on May 11th, the date of the incident. This year, being the 60th anniversary, the Vicar of Gt Yarmouth, Canon Michael Woods led a special service of remembrance.

Those present included the Mayor and Mayoress who laid a wreath on behalf of the Townspeople of Gt Yarmouth. The WRAC Standard was paraded and many ex-servicemen with their Standards attended. The Vicar spoke of the bravery of these young girls and of the long tradition of dedication to duty that is a feature of women in the army today.

Fifteen members of the Norfolk and Suffolk Branch attended; friends came from the Ilford Branch as they do every year; a large contingent of local WRENS Branches supported us and many townspeople swelled the congregation. Sadly, although contact had been made with the relatives, brothers and sisters, cousins and friends of the girls who came to the unveiling ceremony in 1994, most, through failing health or difficulties of travel were unable to be present. They sent flowers and messages, thankful that their loved ones were still remembered.

Although we have sadly lost three members during the past year, we have gained four new ones. A Newsletter is sent out twice a year to keep our widely scattered members in touch.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH

We have had a fairly quiet period for the last six months, but have still enjoyed ourselves with various activities.

In November several of us were able to go to the Festival of Remembrance at the Plymouth Pavilions. Pauline Evans was there, carrying our Standard, escorted by our Chairman, Doris McCoy, and Treasurer, Mary Davis. They were a joy to behold and made us, in the audience, feel very proud.

Early in December we had our Christmas Lunch. Twenty-five of us were able to be there, it was a great meal at the Masonic Hall in St Budeaux. We booked this year's meal with them but, unfortunately, the venue is not available now, so we will have our Christmas Lunch at the Masonic Hall in Stoke, on Friday 5th December. Don't forget, if you are in Plymouth around that time let us know and come and join us.

We don't meet in January, so we decided to have lunch together in the city centre. Twenty of us said we would go but only ten managed it, the others being poorly or deterred by the cold weather. Now we remember why we don't have a meeting in January!

Twelve of our members were able to attend Marge Owen's funeral; Marge died on January 28th. Pauline carried the Standard and many of us went in uniform to give Marge a good send off. She had been ill for several months and was very keen for us to have some of her possessions to go towards our fund raising efforts. In November she kindly donated two brass statuettes, one of an ATS girl the other of a WRAC lass, several bottles of alcohol and a lot of her nic nacs etc. Thank you, Marge, it was a great boost for our funds.

In February Win Hugill came back to our meetings. Win used to come many years ago with her mother who had also been in the ATS. Welcome Win, it is good to have you back again.

On March 1st, we went to St Mary's Church Hall in Plympton to raise funds at a Table Top Sale. Thank you to all the ladies who worked so hard and raised so much money by the sale of bric-a-brac, books, marmalade and plants.

Six ladies went to Birmingham for the Grand Reunion and had a wonderful, though very busy time. Thanks again to Pauline for carrying the Standard. Thanks too to Assistant Secretary Betty Mitchell for organising the hotel and travelling arrangements and my personal thanks to Betty who, for the second year running, stood in for me while I convalesce. I hear that they brought good news for Queenie Bridle, who won a voucher in the Grand Reunion Raffle.

We are always happy to welcome any members who are visiting Plymouth on holiday or business. We meet once a month at the Royal Fleet Club, Devonport, 1-30 – 4 pm on the first Monday of the month, except in January. If a Bank Holiday falls on 1st Monday, the meeting is moved to the 2nd Monday.

Early Announcement

Next year it is the turn of Plymouth Branch to host the South West Reunion, it will be held at the Tamar River Sailing club, Saltash Passage, Plymouth on Friday 4th June 2004. We hope that many of you will be able to come. More details in the next issue.

Contact Phone Numbers are:

Ruth Jennings Secretary	01752 363118
Betty Mitchell, Assistant Secretary	01752 348632

RHYL BRANCH

As usual the deadline is here for our reports, the time seems to go by quicker each year. We continue to meet every 2nd Monday of the month. Our membership continues at a steady 22, which is not too bad, although we would all like more ex-WRAC members but they don't seem to be around here at Rhyl.

We had an afternoon tea at the home of one of our members in Pwllili last September. It was really good, as we met members who are on the Rhyl Branch Records, but live too far away to attend any meetings. The weather was good and we all enjoyed the day out. We are hoping to repeat the experience. **PDF Compressor Free Version** finding the cost of hiring a mini bus to enable us to travel to other branch reunions too much to go as often as we would like. However, we are looking forward to visiting Chester Branch for their 'strawberry tea' in July as we had a good time there last year - the food was excellent. We are carrying on with our 'Annual Social Afternoon' in July although other branches in the north are finding the same problems with costs as we have. We have had coffee mornings and table tops to raise money for the branch and they have been pretty successful. The ladies all work very hard, and we do meet up once a month for lunch.

We had our AGM in September and Jean and Yvonne have agreed to continue to be Secretary and Treasurer for a further twelve months at least. We have a Lance Corporal from the Army Cadets in Rhyl carrying our Standard now as it had got too much for Jean. We are all very grateful to the Cadets for their help with this as it is lovely to have the Standard on parade on Remembrance Day and other parades that we attend with the Normandy Veterans here in Rhyl.

Eight of our ladies are going to Belgium with the Normandy Veterans in September. We have our Christmas Lunch booked at Rhyl Golf Club this year. By the time that this report goes to print, we will have had our Grand Reunion in Birmingham which should be a great success. We look forward to reading about it in the next issue.

Until the next report may I say from all of us at Rhyl we hope that you all have a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy New Year. On a personal note may I say to the Rhyl Branch, thanks for being such a good bunch of ladies and I will always remember the laughs that we have had over the years, and I will definitely be seeing you at Reunions.

I hope to be able to join a branch in Lincolnshire where I am moving to. So I will be able to keep in touch through the Lioness magazine.

ROCHDALE BRANCH

The more observant of our friends will have noticed the absence of a Rochdale Newsletter in the last edition of the Lioness, but things are back on track again now. Yours truly (Josephine Shelley) had a wee break to have a knee replacement last autumn, but glad to say, I'm mobile again now.

I am happy to say that the Rochdale Branch are pleased to be back at the old venue for our meetings - the lovely Rochdale Town Hall. Attendance at meetings has been depleted during the winter months, with quite a number on sick parade, but things will hopefully improve now.

We were all keyed up for our Grand Reunion in Birmingham, and seven of us finally made it - what a lovely weekend! We enjoyed every minute. On arrival at

Mason Hall we were presented with our keys - on the 11th floor! Luckily it turned out good, as we were "up with God", some of us looking out over the campus and others overlooking the lake (complete with ducks). After settling in we went for a walk around the lake where there were stern warnings "Do Not Feed The Ducks".



*The Rochdale '7' waiting for cookhouse call.
Note poster on wall*

The highlight of the weekend was a visit to the National Arboretum on Saturday. Unfortunately our plot has not yet been developed, but those that have are very impressive, with the ACK ACK and Royal Artillery very much in evidence. The wee chapel on site was certainly worth the visit, with a wonderful atmosphere inside which for my part was very emotional.

The Dinner was a great success, but did we have to have DUCK? - ha ha! The entertainment was very good, with the band excelling. Those who could still dance were in their element, but those of us who couldn't made up for it in other ways - a really splendid evening (even if I did lose my camera).

Our Drumhead Service was very moving and the Parade and March Past went off without a hitch, ending a very, very successful Grand Reunion - thank you Birmingham.

The next special event of the year was our Branch 20th Birthday Party which we held at the Masonic Hall, Rochdale. We were joined on this occasion by our friends from Bolton, Bury, Chester, and Stockport, who all helped us to celebrate. The Lady Mayor of Rochdale, Lily Murphy, was also in attendance and she was presented with a brass ATS figurine and a bouquet of flowers. The buffet was a credit to the staff and we had the usual tombola and raffle, after which there was entertainment and dancing. The two gentlemen who provided the entertainment said they had never heard "Land Of Hope and Glory" sung like we sang it, and it was very kind of them to donate their fee to Cancer Research. A lovely afternoon was had by all.

Now, please God, can we have a good, warm summer as some of our old bones are suffering.

SALISBURY BRANCH

How time flies when you are having fun!! Can the deadline for Lioness be looming yet again?

For a branch going strong for 54 years, we do seem to pack a lot in. I feel I must start with the National Reunion and AGM held in Birmingham. Congratulations to Sue Westlake and all her team for the organisation, the comprehensive information we were issued with on arrival, and for giving **PDF Compressor Free Version** the weekend. Even the queuing for meals was made bearable by chatting to so many other members from all over the country!! Twelve members from our branch attended, one even won a voucher in the raffle – lucky Frances.

We all enjoyed the short visit to the National Memorial Arboretum (I must go again when, hopefully, there would not be seven coaches of visitors!) The carvings in the Chapel were outstanding, especially The Storyteller. (Photo on back cover – ed.)

Trekking back to the Great Hall for the AGM we learned Brigadier Nield was to retire. Our best wishes for a happy retirement Brigadier, and we welcome her successor, Sue Westlake.

So to the Dinner and the entertainment provided by the Adjutant General Corps band. More chat, more laughter, singing, dancing – very good.



Some of our Branch members at the Reunion Dinner

On Sunday morning the March Past was impressive and I thought how smart our serving ladies were in their immaculate uniforms. The Standard Bearers were also very smart. The dignity of the Service was a fitting end to the programme.



Standard Bearers



Millennium Prayer on the outside of the Church

Our branch meetings have been quite varied. In October Phyllis Richardson talked about the collection of dolls she had brought with her. Quite a unique collection as they had been handed down through her family. The oldest was her grandmother's doll, and there was a wonderful 'Pedlar's Doll' with a fascinating number of miniature items in a basket. Sadly Phyllis died in April and will be missed at our meetings.

We had an interesting insight into the running of the Royal Star and Garter Home at Richmond from the regional co-ordinator Colin Carter. We have also had a useful demonstration of how to deal with bogus callers at the door given by Richard Pearce and PC Barry Strange from the Wiltshire Crime Prevention Unit.

Claire Edwards hosted a delicious lunch, which raised funds to help towards the cost of transport to Birmingham.

Jill Trainor has organised a Quiz – testing our memories to the limit!! Winners were Millicent Joslyn and Claire Edwards, with runners up Alyson Ogden and Maureen Robertson.

Branch News continues on page 35

Reunions

ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Brian Bryson (Scottish Representative)

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The first AVA Dinner Dance for Scotland was held at The Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, on Saturday 1st March. It was well attended with members coming from Holland, England, Wales and also Scotland. The Guests of Honour were Provost and Mrs T Brookes of the City of Stirling and Brigadier Anne Field CB CBE, who travelled up from London.

The Guests of Honour were formally introduced to the assembled gathering. The standard was paraded to the tune "THE BARREN ROCKS OF ADEN". The meal was of good fare with no complaints. My daughter made the cake, full fruit iced in sand yellow with the DOW, plus ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION and DATES 1839 – 1967. It must have been good as there was none left. THE GLENCARN DUO provided the music and entertainment, with everybody enjoying themselves.

Provost T Brookes was presented with a crystal bowl that was engraved with our crest. This engraving can now be used by all members at any time if they wish. Mrs T Brookes was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

The raffle made £335.00 this was made possible by companies and other people making donations. This has now been forwarded to the "NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION".

CALLING ALL EX-RECRUITERS

Ex-SSgt Jennifer Podesta

I have been inspired by the Grand Reunion in April 2003 and by popular demand, to ask all ex ACIO Staff to a reunion. If you are an ex-Recruiter SNCO or Officer, WRAC or QARANC, SPSO, WSLO or ACO and would like to be part of a reunion for ex-Recruiting Staff, please get in touch with me.

The venue will be in the Midlands and the date around May 2004.

So if you would like to mull over old times and re-new acquaintances, please ring me and leave your details on 01234 853839.

I look forward to hearing from you.

ATS DINNER CLUB – NEWS ITEMS

Mrs Marguerite Fellows, Chairman ATS Dinner Club

Friday 19th September 2003

Sand Bay Holiday Village, Weston Super Mare

4 days/3 nights: PRICE £104.00 per person – Single Room, Twin, Double and Triple Rooms.

Special price insurance £5.00 per person (optional). For details, apply to: Dunwood Travel Ltd, Dunwood House, 209 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley DY1 1ED

Many of you enjoyed last year's holiday so as requested we repeat the same opportunity, we would be delighted if you can join us.

Luncheon in London – 7th June 2003

Regretfully due to lack of support, we have decided to cancel this occasion.

We will endeavour to arrange other events in the future which may appeal to members.

WRAC OFFICERS DINNER CLUB

The Club will meet for dinner
at the Rag in Pall Mall
on 22 Nov 03

If you would like to join the
Officers Dining Club
please contact
the **General Secretary**
who would be delighted
to hear from you

PHOTOGRAPHS IN LIONESS

Many thanks to all those who sent
photographs of the Reunion
for inclusion in this edition of *Lioness*.

We were especially pleased to receive the photo of the carving in the Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum from Lt Col Val Trout at Salisbury Branch.

The title of the Carving,
The Past is the Key to Our Future,
is particularly apt to our Association.
The Photo is shown on the Back Cover.

Thanks also to Eve Radford (Hereford Branch) and Meg Purkis who sent several photos digitally. We have included as many as space will allow.

Grand Reunion

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

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The Reunion was held in Birmingham, the primary venue being centred at Mason Hall, one of the Halls of Residence at Birmingham University. Some Association members elected to stay at The Copthorne Hotel in the centre of Birmingham and some to stay in various hotels around the city.

There were several reasons for choosing the venue:

- The Secretary of Birmingham branch volunteered!
- Birmingham is centrally situated within the UK.
- The University's Hall of Residence could accommodate up to 600 in a mixture of single and double rooms, with several on the ground floor to give ease of access to any who suffer physical disabilities.
- The dining room at Mason Hall could provide a formal dinner for up to 600.
- The cost of accommodation would not be as great as it would have been had a hotel (with the above mentioned criteria) been chosen.

The Programme comprised of 6 main events:

1. Supper and entertainment at Mason Hall on the Friday evening
2. The annual Secretaries Meeting on the Saturday morning
3. Visit to The National Memorial Arboretum to view the WRAC Association plot
4. The AGM at the Great Hall
5. The formal dinner at Mason Hall
6. The Parade and Drum-head Service at the Great Hall

The Chairman and members of the Executive Committee would like to thank all those who helped at Birmingham, especially;

Mac Maskens-McIntyre, Sue Taylor, Alison Schofield, Audrey Purton, Maureen Deeley, Irene Hall, Beryl Lane, Nancy Tipton, Doreen Peters, Diane Lawrence, Rowena Griffiths, Ishbel Thomson, Kate Toal, Leona Jones, Mal Fulton, Nan Bulman, Wendy Hooton, Karen Loftus, Lesley Goff, Elaine O'Sullivan, Jenny Jackson, June Skelton, Julie Silver, Nerys Owen, Dawn Bagnell, Wendy Summerell, Debbie Wild and Meg Purkis.

The Executive Committee is anxious to receive "feed-back" from all Association Members, especially those who attended, with a view to choosing a venue for the Reunion we hope to hold in 2006. To this end, please complete the questionnaire in the centre pull-out section and return it to Association HQ as soon as possible. Your views will help us plan the next Grand Reunion.

The Executive Committee has already received some comments from the members who attended:

1. *Not only was lunch not provided on Friday 11th April, there was nowhere in the immediate vicinity of Mason Hall from which to purchase a snack lunch.*
– All attendees were asked to register from 1400 hrs

on Friday and it was assumed that members would have had lunch before arriving at Mason Hall. That notwithstanding, any future reunion planners will bear in mind that the provision of tea, coffee and snacks on arrival will be appreciated.

2. *The queue for breakfast on Saturday morning was horrendous, even without the Branch Secretaries being told to jump the queue in order to be able to attend their meeting.*
– In order to take advantage of the close proximity of the National Memorial Arboretum to our chosen venue, the timings for Saturday morning were necessarily tight. The fact that the kitchen at Mason Hall has only one serving point was unfortunate, but an establishment able to provide 600 breakfasts, freshly cooked, will either mean queuing or cost much more than that charged by the University of Birmingham. Members should have been informed that the queue for a cooked breakfast was different to that for cereals, toast and tea/coffee. By Sunday morning, members were wiser and staggered their attendance in the dining room. For example, I started queuing on Saturday morning at 0800 hrs and finally sat down with my cooked breakfast at 0815 hrs. On Sunday I arrived in the dining room at 0815 hrs and sat down to enjoy breakfast at 0820 hrs.
3. *Some members who had paid for a packed lunch did not receive one.*
– The Executive Committee failed to realise that distribution of packed lunches should be closely supervised. Some members who had not booked packed lunches helped themselves.
4. *Some members joined in the trip to the National Memorial Arboretum and went straight to the coffee shop, having no intention of visiting the site of the WRAC Association plot.*
– The Executive Committee is disappointed that members wasted the cost of transportation and the £3.00 entrance fee paid for those members who did not wish to view the Association plot.
5. *Registration took forever!*
– All residents of Mason Hall who arrived before 1600 hrs were registered within 2 hours; an average of 2.5 minutes each.
6. *I was not sent any Raffle Tickets to sell before the event.*
– The Executive committee will be tasked to provide a solution to the problem.
7. *Our Branch was sent Raffle Tickets to sell, but as we were not planning to attend the function we sent them all back.*
– The sale of Grand Reunion Raffle Tickets is our biggest fund-raising event. It used to provide the majority of the money needed to hold the Reunion. All members of the Association will be asked to help to raise funds, especially as the active Branch members within the Host Location are no longer able to raise the required funds alone.

GRAND REUNION BIRMINGHAM

Irene MacLean née Whittaker

What a Grand Re-Union! I travelled down with Edith Seabrook from Darlington Branch and we had a whale of a time! Thank you very much for the organising. I would like to know what Lieutenant Colonel Sue Westlake has for breakfast – she was like a two-year-old on the dance floor!

We stayed at the Copthorne Hotel and were transported everywhere which is far better than driving, as Birmingham is not a good place to get lost in.

I have to say that the food at the supper on Friday, and the Dinner on Saturday was not very good, but that is only my opinion. The meeting on Saturday afternoon in the Great Hall was a lively one – I do hope it isn't the last time we see Brigadier Nield – you have done sterling work Ma'am. Let's hope you join us at the Dinner Club sometime.

The service on Sunday, again in the Great Hall was really lovely. I was very proud of the North East Chairman's part in the service (Colonel Cook), and also so very proud of the fact I was once WRAC. Here's to the next time – in the meantime, to all the dinner club "girls" – see you in October.

GRAND REUNION IMPRESSIONS

Joan Awbery



Secretaries' Reception:

Grand Reunion East Anglian Branches

Gina Shadrack, Chelmsford Branch, Avril Williams, Cambridge Branch, Lady Kemble, Chairman Eastern Area, Joan Awbery, Norfolk/Suffolk

Did anyone else feel relief that the Grand Re-Union Weekend wasn't a Week? From the moment of arrival on Friday until falling into the train for home (Sunday rail time-table, over which a veil has been drawn) was a moment wasted? Admittedly queuing was a great feature but even that chore was enlivened by the chatter, gossip, reminiscing, cries of delight at meeting pals and the occasional moaning going on around to occupy one's interest every second.

One immediately felt comradeship with one's neighbours at meals as though they were the greatest of pals from way back.

The visit to the Arboretum was enlightening; go back in ten years' time (chance would be a fine thing) and you will find it a magical place. Just now it is like a raw recruit – good in parts and meaning well. The whole concept is wonderful and the church awe-inspiring.

The march-past on Sunday was truly splendid and the Service a great inspiration.

But it was the evenings that were noteworthy. After a hearty meal when the normal routine would be to put one's feet up and snooze one's way through the evening's telly-watching. Crutches were abandoned, replacement hips shaken to their foundations, new knees ignored, aches and pains and other intimations of age thrust aside and the evenings given up to uninhibited enjoyment. Would we have imagined in our salad days that we would still be conga-ing enthusiastically and singing lustily sixty years on?

I admired everyone's courage and stamina (not least my own) but the greatest admiration and thanks must go to Dee McElligott and Beth Todd for their superb organisation and hard work. Always patient, always ready to help, to answer questions and – as far as I could tell – never wavering or flagging the whole weekend. I can't answer for what they were like at the end of it. Will they ever want to do it again?

GRAND RAFFLE PRIZE WINNERS – GRAND REUNION 2003

Prize	Name	Address	Ticket No.
1st £400	V I Wright	26 Wentworth Close, Bournemouth BH5 2DZ	1032
2nd W/E at a Moat House	P Nenik	5 Rosens Walk, Edgware HA8 8UR	5421
3rd "Spode" Pill Box	J Stewart	57 Markham Crescent, Aberdeen AB16 7NC	0047
4th Camera	J Kingdon	127 Cranbury Road, Eastleigh SO50 5HH	6223
5th £100 M&S Voucher	Mrs Wallen	Church Street, Well DL8 2QA Tel: 01677 470216	7793
6th £25 Curry's Voucher	S Johncey	11 Beauchief Close, Reading RG6 4HY	7990
7th £25 Curry's Voucher	J P Hill	25 Keaton Road, Cardiff CF5 3ND	1612
8th £25 Curry's Voucher	Q Bridle	19 Laira Park, Plymouth	5377
9th £25 Curry's Voucher	J Walter	Grantham NG31 8TX Tel: 01467 561630	
10th £25 Curry's Voucher	S Wilkins	BS21 6LB, Tel: 01275 878079	1240
11th £25 Curry's Voucher	M Crook	9 Cherry Close, Cardiff CF5 3RQ	1568
12th £10 Voucher	J&D Thompson	4 St Mary's Court, Barry Close, Weston-super-Mare	6109
13th £10 Voucher	F Green	12 St George's Crescent, Fordingbridge SP6 1ET	5758
14th £10 Voucher	P Harper	c/o E Francis, Crewe Branch (01270 258662)	2181
15th £10 Voucher	Gibbs	Tel: 0207 2231213	4815
16th £10 Voucher	A M Lindsay	62 Maxwell Park, Dalbeattie DG5 4LS	2502
17th £10 Voucher	C Humphreys	4 Vale View Terrace, Batheaston BA1 7RH Tel: 01296 771131	0386
18th £10 Voucher	Goff		5889
19th £10 Voucher	L Bennie	124 Mt Annan Drive, Glasgow G44 4RZ	3624
20th £10 Voucher	G Monk	59 Rowen Way, Ashby de la Zouche LE65 2QX	0208



1. Mary Nicholls (Chairman) and her daughter Joyce (Treasurer) Hereford Branch showing off their Certificates of Appreciation in the dining room just before dinner at the Grand Reunion.
2. Lt Col Sue Westlake and Lady Val Kembal demonstrate their Alternative Drill.
3. Some of the ladies enjoying the entertainment on the Friday night.
4. The Parade of Standards at the Great Hall, University of Birmingham
5. The magnificent window in the Great Hall
6. Brigadier A Field, Lt Col M Soames and Brigadier E Nolan waiting to watch the march past outside the Great Hall
7. Rev Sue Wing and Lt Col Sue Westlake outside the Great Hall just before the Drumhead Service.



8. Lt Col Ishbel Thomson saluting at the head of her platoon
9. RSM Thorne and Serving Officers. From left to right: Lt Col Jo Young AGC (SPS) (now retired.) WO1 (RSM) Nancy Thorne (now retired), Maj Rowena Griffiths AGC (SPS), Lt Col Ishbel Thomson AGC (SPS), Lt Col Kate Toal AGC (SPS)
10. The Music Man's accompanists play the "pia-pia-pia-no"!
11. WRAC Association members blowing their own ...trombones!
12. Babs Johnson, (who won the Guess the Name of the Bear competition, holding "Charisma") with her friends at the Reunion Dinner
13. Lt Col Kate Toal saluting at the head of her platoon
14. The Band of the AGC at the Church Parade before the Drumhead Service.

Application for Membership

PDF Compressor Free Version

To the General Secretary
The WRAC Association
AGC Centre, Worthy Down,
Winchester, Hampshire
SO21 2RG

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 October.

Date Signature

Subscriptions include "Lioness"
(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

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN IT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
C/O WRAC ASSOCIATION, WORTHY DOWN, WINCHESTER SO21 2RG

1. Did you attend the 2003 Grand Reunion? * Yes / No (If No, please ignore the first section and go to section 2)

SECTION 1

Please rate the 2003 Reunion programme
by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box:

	GRAND REUNION 2003	Poor	Accept-able	Good
a.	Choice of Venue			
b.	Cost of accommodation			
c.	Standard of accommodation			
d.	Fundraising			
e.	Supper and entertainment Friday evening			
f.	Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum			
g.	Cost of Formal Dinner on Saturday evening			
h.	Standard of Formal Dinner			
j.	Entertainment by the band of the AG Corps			
k.	Parade on Sunday morning			
l.	Drumhead Service			

SECTION 2

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following
statements by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box:

	GRAND REUNION 2006	Agree	Disagree
a.	I have every intention of attending in 2006		
b.	I would prefer a central England venue		
c.	Accommodation costs are of first importance, I prefer a University which is more affordable		
d.	I would be able to sell at least 5 books of raffle tickets to fund-raise		
e.	I would like supper and entertainment to be organised on the Friday evening		
f.	I would like an organised outing to be arranged for the Saturday morning		
g.	I would prefer a hotel/holiday camp even though it would be a bit more expensive		
h.	I would rather organise my own accommodation		
j.	I would be prepared to share a room to keep costs down		
k.	I have every intention of marching in the parade		
l.	I would rather have * beef / lamb / pork / fish / chicken / a vegetarian option for dinner		

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS DINNER CLUB

Application for Membership

Membership No: DC/

Present Surname:

(please indicate ~ Miss Ms Mrs or Rank if serving)

Christian Names:

Known as:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No:

Army Number: P/ W/ WO/

Surname when serving:

WRAC/TA Service:

From:

To:

Last Rank held/still holding:

Trade/Job: (whilst serving)

Decorations:

Please return to:

WRAC Dinner Club – Membership Secretary
Mrs E Ann Deakin
“Cobblestones” 2 Chesham Road
Stafford ST16 3JP
Tel: (01785) 259992

I wish to join the WRAC Dinner Club and enclose:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|---|
| * 1 Years Subscription | £ 4.00 | £ |
| * 3 Years Subscription | £ 7.00 | £ |
| * Life Membership | £12.00 | £ |
| * Delete as appropriate | | |

Cheque/Postal Order to be made payable to: **WRAC Dinner Club**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

A 1st class postage stamp would be appreciated. Thank you.

‘Sauviter in modo, fortiter in re’
‘Gentle in manner, resolute in deed’



THE WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION
(Incorporating Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps and Auxiliary Territorial Service Comrades Association)
REGISTERED UNDER THE CHARITIES ACT 1960 – No 206184
President: HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF KENT, GCVO

ATS & WRAC BENEVOLENT FUND DONATION

To: The General Secretary
WRAC Association, AGC Centre, Worthy Down, Winchester. SO21 2RG

I have forwarded a Banker's Standing Order to my Bank as undernoted:

Name

Address

Bank Name Sort Code

Amount Effective from/...../.....

I am a UK Taxpayer and wish the Charity to treat the donations made by this Banker's Order,
until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. (Please delete if this does not apply)

Signed Date/...../.....



BANKER'S STANDING ORDER

To: The Manager

..... (Bank Name and Address)

Please pay to **The Royal Bank of Scotland (16-34-25), 67 – 68 High Street, Winchester, Hants. SO23 9DA,**
the sum of on/...../..... (date) as a donation to the
ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund, **Account No 10006478**, and a like sum on each
succeeding year until otherwise instructed.

Name A/C No

Signed Date/...../.....



15. The Altar Cloth, on loan from the AGC Museum, with hand-embroidered WAAC, AAC, ATS and WRAC Badges
16. Serving SNCOs on parade. From left to right: WO2 Debbie Wilde AGC (SPS), WO2 Dawn Bagnell RLC, WO1 (RSM) Nancy Thorne AGC (SPS), WO1 (SMI) Helen Sleightholme APTC, WO2 Wendy Summerell RLC
17. The Notice outside the Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum. The tree is reproduced in embroidery on the Altar Cloth inside the Chapel
18. Some members of Bristol Branch enjoying their dinner at the Grand Reunion
19. Elvis Presley (aka Frank Wilkins) with Beryl Lane and Nancy Tipton of Shropshire Branch

20

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22



23



21



24



20. The Clock Tower near the Great Hall, Birmingham University.

21. The standards approach the saluting dais.

22. The Dining Room at Mason Hall.

23. The band leads the parade towards the saluting dais.

24. There must be at least 3 drums at a Drum Head Service.

Branch News continued from page 27

We have had a Bring and Buy Sale and a Faith Lunch – so it is all go, go, go! In May our secretary Val Trout has organised a trip to Wisley Gardens.

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Well, that's another deadline met. The sun is out again, so it's back to the gardening – how mundane.

Our best wishes to all the lovely ladies we met in Birmingham, hope you have all recovered.

SHIPLEY BRANCH

The time has come again for us to send a report from our Branch, but it is with great sadness that we have to report that our Chairlady, Mrs Lois Bullen passed away on the 21st January after a long and painful battle against cancer.

Lois was originally a member of Bradford Branch, but was the founder member of our Shipley Branch, where she worked hard to get new members, organised the programmes of events and arranged outings, but we shall continue to meet every second Monday of each month, as Lois would have wished, and remember her with pride for making our Branch such a happy one.

We have had our usual events over the year with guest speakers, slide shows and enjoyed our Bingo game, and Mock Auctions and look forward to our future meetings.

We would like to send our best wishes to the staff who present the Lioness Magazine which we all enjoy reading.

SHROPSHIRE BRANCH

Here we are already in May, and time for the Branch Report to be in. The months go by so quickly, they only seem to last a week!

Our Christmas Party went off very well, we invited guests from the "Court" where we meet, and our members did us proud as usual, bringing lots of food for a tasty Buffet. Afterwards we had a rousing Sing Song with Edna at the Piano, not unlike the 'Last Night of the Proms!' and it didn't even rain.

In January we had our Annual Dinner at the Buckatree Hall Hotel in Wellington.

At our April meeting, Mr Pithers gave a talk and brought slides of Birds and Nature Conservation to show us, which was very interesting.

Some of us went to the Grand Reunion at Birmingham, we had a great time, enjoying the food and entertainment, also meeting old friends. The AGC Band were excellent, the Dinner very good. But there was one moment over the weekend, when we thought we were going round the bend so to speak, as we travelled over the same road twice. The coach driver was actually lost en-route from the Great Hall to Mason Hall, a loud cheer went up as we reached our destination.

Our Branch was surprised and delighted to have an anonymous benefactor, who has given us a generous donation to our funds. We were quite overwhelmed and very appreciative of this gift, it will be very useful to us, being a small Branch.

On April 23rd, we gave our Vice President, Chris Grigg, a Farewell Party, as she was leaving us to go and live in Uttoxeter and we presented her with a beautiful figurine. Chris was a founder member of our Branch in 1980 and will be greatly missed. Best wishes from us all Chris.



Chris Grigg's farewell party

In May, Ray Howard, Chair of Shropshire Branch REME, came to our meeting and invited us to visit them, so arrangement are being made for this event.

We continue to support the Royal British Legion at their Church Parades and Poppy Selling etc.

For the remaining months of the year, we will be having our friendly meetings on the first Wednesday of the month, 2 – 4 pm, at our usual venue. It would be nice to have a coach load of young WRAC girls to join us, but perhaps that is wishful thinking!

Some of our members have not been too well lately, we wish you better health in the future.

Many thanks to the members who can regularly attend our meetings every month, it is your dedication that keeps us going as a Branch, and much appreciated, keep the flag flying girls!

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH

Starting off with December 2002 which was quite a busy month with our own Christmas Party on the 4th, which included a buffet, supplied by members, plus a musical quiz. On the 9th three of us went to the always enjoyable Isle of Wight Christmas Lunch. On the 10th four members thoroughly enjoyed a boat trip arranged by the "Not Forgotten" charity, and then on the 20th we had a Christmas Lunch out at the garden centre as arranged by member Pauline Stone.

Our speakers have been an ex-Mayoress of Southampton on her years as an internee under the Japanese. Then a lady spoke on Reminiscences showing various items, the first being a nicely decorated "gazunder"!

We were invited to a Coffee Morning by the WRENs Association held at the Mayor's Parlour, Southampton, and also to their 55th Anniversary boat trip from Southampton to Portsmouth and back.

Also attended the **PDF Compressor Free Version** Guard Procession in Bournemouth by three members, one covering the Secretaries' meeting and one parading our Standard at the church service.

Coming right up-to-date, we thoroughly enjoyed our Annual Dinner, plus entertainment, at a new venue, the Royal British Legion, Blackfield, in the New Forest, as arranged by member Margaret Barham at short notice. Certainly a venue we look forward to using again.

STAFFORD BRANCH

It is with great sadness that I must report that our Secretary/Treasurer, Daphne Jervis TD, has hung up her briefcase due to continuing health problems. Daphne was a founder member of the Stafford Branch and has served on the committee, in various roles, for 38 years.

Due to Daphne's retirement our AGM was held in February and the following officers were elected: Chairman - Joan Higgins, and Treasurer - Marjorie Powell. Our previous Chairman, Ann Deakin is now the Branch Secretary - because she's got a computer!

In an attempt to encourage member participation, and to add variety to our meetings, members voted to alternate our monthly meetings between Trinity Church and an outside venue.

16 April	38th Anniversary Lunch at the Seven Stars, Sandon
21 May	Display of Lioness dating from 1948 plus hot toasted teacakes at Trinity Church
18 June	Afternoon Tea at the Soup Kitchen, Stafford
16 July	Beetle Drive at Trinity Church
20 August	Visit to Bridgemere Garden Centre
17 September	Chairman, Joan Higgins - 'My Career as a Tupperware Lady'
15 October	Afternoon Tea at the Soup Kitchen, Stafford
19 November	"Twixmas" Party at Trinity Church
3 December	Christmas Lunch at Earl's Restaurant, Stafford College

If you are visiting Stafford, or the surrounding area, on the third Wednesday of the month then please join us. You will be most welcome.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH

We have had a mixture of both sad and happy times over the last six months.

Our Christmas party went very well. Marina, our caterer, once again did us proud with our Christmas buffet and Brian also entertained us well - having already visited us in June, he brought his wife along this time as a chaperone! All in all, a good time was had by all.



"Annie Get Your Gun?" No, Norah (our Social Secretary) gets her man!

We are looking forward to visiting Newcastle Branch on 15th May. They always make us feel very welcome and we enjoy catching up on all news and seeing our friends again. I do hope we won't win all their raffle prizes!

In June we have an outing to the Kensington Hall Hotel, near Crook, Co. Durham. We will have lunch, some entertainment, a little more entertainment then tea before we go home. We have never been to this hotel on a Branch outing, but one or two of our members have been there individually and have given good reports.

We lost one of our former members, Dorothy Donbavand. She had left the Association due to her husband's illness but then died herself. As a mark of courtesy, five of us attended her funeral. It was while I was on the point of leaving to go to her funeral that I received a telephone call to tell me that Daisy Weaver had died very suddenly from a heart attack. Daisy was one of our original members and despite having had a lot of recent sadness - she lost her son and then her beloved husband died in October - she still made the effort to attend meetings. Eight of us formed a Guard of Honour for her and we were all moved to tears. She had been looking forward to our trip in June, together with her daughter Joanne. In spite of her grief, Joanne has said she would still like to come with us. She has a lot of her mother's brave spirit and I hope she will feel supported by us all. We will miss Daisy very much indeed.

ULSTER BRANCH

The Thru'penny Bit, the octagonal conference centre of the King's Hall, Balmoral, (no, not that Scottish location!) was the usual venue of our annual luncheon in February. Thirty members came from all arts and parts but there was disappointment that the Dublin Duo, Stella Hill and Geraldine Garland, still haven't been able to take the Northern Trail.

Will all members please stock up with vitamins, change your menus to Healthy Eating, galvanise your families to exercise and Yoga so that there'll be a wall-bursting attendance at our next big event. Diaries out! Mark "AGM. SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2003" in great big letters. And CDE!! **PDF Compressor Free Version** British Legion Hall, Histon Road, Bangor, Co. Down (NOT N. Wales!)

Sad news from the husband of one of our long-standing members, Isobel Webb. She had served in the ATS from 1940 until 1946 and had resigned due to illness as recently as October 2002. Isobel died in February 2003; her membership had lasted from 1965.

Seven is always considered a magic number – and seven of our members consider they had a magic time at the Grand Reunion in Birmingham! They're always a lively lot on summer outings but they were happily amazed at the reception of "the Irish lot" as they met up with old friends and made dozens of new ones. Warm thanks to the Birmingham organisers from Florence Logan, Maureen Murphy, Bell Murphy, Marie Jenkins, Chrissie Tolcher (who hadn't all that far to go), Vi Jones, our President and Peggy Couser BEM.

Summer outing, 24 May. What Summer? In the days before that date it was more like Autumn – windy, showery and the TV forecasts all about rain, rain, rain. Never mind the weather, Paddy the coach driver will spin the tales of the fascinating North Coast road, its scenery always dramatic and we can dream of our local celebrities past and present. Larne: birthplace of film star Valerie Hobson; Ballymena: where Liam Neeson grew up without setting eyes on Schindler; lunch Coleraine and dinner in Broughshane –if James Nesbitt were roaming round his family roots we certainly wouldn't take Cold Feet!

And we didn't need the warmth of reflected glory because the sun broke out as we boarded the coach in the morning and it followed us the whole day, illuminating just what a beautiful piece of the world we live in. No traffic jams, acres of space, fresh air. And we heard it had been 'bucketing in Belfast'. "How d'you do it, Hon. Sec. Trudy?"

Well, I did attend an Alpha course last year!

WILMSLOW BRANCH

We continue to have our meetings at the Wilmslow British Legion and are happy to welcome new members and visitors. We are not a very large branch but are quite enthusiastic under the leadership of our very good secretary.

Eight of us attended the Grand Reunion at Birmingham and had a marvellous time. We are full of admiration for the smooth running of the whole affair and send our congratulations to the organisers.

The meals were excellent and the dining room on the Saturday night looked absolutely wonderful. Thank you to all concerned, not forgetting the kitchen staff and those who waited on the tables. It was a really great weekend.

We have quite a busy year to come, the first outing is a

holiday at the Lord Kitchener Memorial Holiday Centre, we have heard very good reports of the hotel and are looking forward to a splendid week's holiday and if the weather is kind to us we shall enjoy it all the more. While there we are planning to meet with some of the members of Norwich Branch, the secretary was at Birmingham so we have already met her, and some of our members were in Ack Ack too and have met in York so we are not strangers. We would have liked a longer stay at the Arboretum and are thinking about a further visit sometime in the future.

We have had invitations from Chester to their Strawberry Tea in June and are looking forward to that as we so enjoyed our last visit and, of course, the strawberries. Also in June we are making arrangements to visit the Tattoo in Manchester which should be another enjoyable event. Our July meeting will be our Birthday lunch at our usual hotel, we always enjoy our visits there and later in the month Rhyl are having a Social Afternoon, which about six of us will be attending. Its all 'Go' at Wilmslow.

A further item on our agenda is a visit to London for the Remembrance Parade, some to march and some whose marching days are now over to attend the service in Westminster abbey. Last year those of us who went to the Abbey were asked by some Americans if we were wearing our husband's medals. "Indeed not", we said, "These are our own, we were in the ATS" so then we had to tell them about all the jobs we had to do, they were very impressed.

Yet to be decided upon is a four night stay in the Isle of Wight in September, but we will have plenty of time to talk about that while on holiday in Lowestoft.

So we have a busy time ahead and enjoy being together for these outings as 'Comradeship' is important to us all.

Our secretary Lilian is a volunteer worker for Age Concern and keeps us informed about all aspects that might apply to us. She was chosen with four other Volunteers from different parts of the country to attend a Reception at No. 11 Downing Street to meet The Right Honourable Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer. There were about 120 people there, the rest being MPs, Bankers, Businessmen etc, she felt quite honoured to be in such exalted company as the Chancellor spoke about Age Concern Britain. There was also a finger buffet with wine so there was an opportunity to talk to some of the other people who were there. The hotel she stayed in overnight was very nice and altogether she enjoyed the whole experience very much.

We send our best wishes to you all and hope you enjoy your meetings and outings as much as we do.

WIMBLEDON BRANCH

Our first meeting of 2003 was held in February when a member of the branch, Mrs Joan Hope, gave an interesting illustrated talk on Iran. Joan had lived in the country for a short time in 1978. She showed many varied pictures and photographs and objets d'art.

In March a well known Wimbledon Historian, Mr Richard Milward, gave us a fascinating talk on The Great Exhibition of 1851 held in Hyde Park and illustrated with slides, old photographs and maps. It was the brain child of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort. Twenty three members and friends attended.

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Our "Bring & Buy" in April was only attended by fourteen members, never-the-less, through generous donations from absent friends, we raised the excellent total of £90.55.

A very interesting talk on "China & the Terra Cotta Soldiers" was given in May by Mrs G Grainge. Twenty three members and friends thoroughly enjoyed the presentation with many beautiful coloured slides of Beijing & Tian'anmen Square, Chongqing home of the giant pandas, the Three Gorges soon to be flooded by the worlds biggest dam being built on the Yangtze River, the Great Wall of China, the vibrant city of Shanghai including a silk factory, Guilin willow plate country and Xi'an the home of the Terra Cotta Army.

One of our members, Miss C Mayer, has recently become a permanent resident of the Star and Garter Home, Richmond-upon-Thames, Surrey, where she tells us she is well cared for, the food is excellent, plenty of activity in the home and lots of outings.

WINCANTON BRANCH

Our branch has had a full and varied year. Having been unable to complete our report for 2002 we would like to tell you about our hosting of the South West Area Reunion in September. This was a great success with members from Exeter, Southampton and Taunton taking part. Our lunch was arranged in round tables of eight with everyone mixing together. It was a happy occasion with members exchanging their war experiences and renewing acquaintances from earlier area meetings. Afterwards we had an interesting talk by the Air Ambulance Service. They provide such a sterling service in our part of the country particularly. A collection was made towards this very worthy cause.

Our Christmas lunch was again very successful, held at our local hostelry - the Dolphin. Husbands and partners were invited and this proved very successful.

We have had a number of interesting speakers at our meetings, some from amongst our own members who have proved very popular. They reminisced about their own experiences on gun sights, signal sections etc. Another member spoke about her work with the Social Services.

Our recent coffee morning was a great success. We raised over £200 with members making dozens of sponges, scones and jams. Altogether a great effort.

Our membership is still buoyant and go ahead. We have recently recruited some younger members which is very encouraging, and hope we will be able to recruit more members in 2003.

WINCHESTER BRANCH



Winchester Branch enjoying the Grand Reunion Dinner.

We kicked off 2003 with our Christmas meal held in January and attended by nine of our members. Held at a local Chinese restaurant, the food and company were superb. The next meeting was a video evening and a few of us got together to watch GI Jane, which at least kept us somewhat in a military theme. It was also attended by a number of serving women soldiers so the age grouping was very diverse. This was followed by the Grand Reunion. Again several of our members attended and all had a good time, those who went enjoyed the Arboretum very much and I heard that the Church Parade was a great success. It is certainly a weekend to be recommended but I will definitely get in training for next time. Andrea Denham, our secretary and one of the founding members of the branch, has left us on the posting of her husband and we got together for a Sunday lunch to bid her farewell and wish her all the best for the future. In June we are holding a games night, followed in August by our AGM.

Our branch website is proving to be popular and can be found at www.geocities.com/vttbots1/index.html. Our treasurer Herme Emary is also providing the expertise in setting up the Association web site.

Greetings to all branches.



**Lionesses
Do It
With Pride!**

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor **PDF Compressor Free Version**

I would like to record my thanks to Lt Col Westlake, yourself and all the background workers who contributed to making the Grand Reunion the success that it was. These events don't just happen – the 'behind the scenes' hard work, which we mere attendees don't notice, but do appreciate I may add, is enormous. Not to mention the preparation and build up. It is no mean feat ensuring that 600 women move from A – Z without a hitch, and are fed and watered.

I heard only one complaint front of house – that was 'queuing'. It's inevitable with such vast numbers and let's face it, we've all done it before! For octogenarians it can be difficult. Perhaps some form of staggering could be introduced at intervals, which could reduce masses at one time. Only a suggestion. Overall, a very well organised event.

Thank you so much. With best wishes for a thriving future.

Ms Jackie Whitehead (Ret'd Major 1956 – 1985)
14 Church Lane, Eagle, Lincoln, Lincs LN6 9DJ

Dear Editor

Scanning through No. 1 Lioness 2003, page 9, I encountered a pleasant surprise; namely Mrs Doris Williams' article and photographs of the ATS Training Centre in Lancaster/Ripley, which brought back a deluge of memories.

My sister Flora and I jointly did our military training in Ripley. Flora and I were born in Austria and were working residents in Bury, Lancashire. In February 1941 we both volunteered and enlisted for the ATS at the nearest Recruitment Centre in Bolton. By doing so we became members of the 6th Allied Volunteer Platoon ATS.

After two postings; Birmingham and North Wales, our Platoon was integrated with other ATS units. Luckily my sister Flora and I were never separated. We served in Western Command, Southern Command and finally No. 1 Continental Group ATS in HQ Branch Oyenhause BAOR.

I served 5 years and 8 months in the Army. My sister, being married, was demobbed earlier. Finally, thank you Mrs Williams for bringing back many happy memories for me. Remember, we were all smart, efficient and lovely ATS girls being proud to serve in HM King George VI forces.

Laura Biegler

LIONESS NO. 1 2003, PAGE 7, "IT'S A DOG'S LIFE IN THE WRAC"

Dear Editor

Further to "It's a dog's life in the WRAC" in the last issue, I would like to say that before Leo was in the WRAC he was in the ATS as I remember the day he 'enrolled'. I was, at that time, stationed at the ATS Officer's School & OCTU at Windsor. Our CO, Lady Bowyer-Smythe, and all of the off-duty officers used to go out for an evening every few weeks. They usually went to the cinema but once, there was a circus playing nearby and they decided to go there. One of the circus acts was a dog act and one of the dogs seemed to have difficulty following the routine. After the show the officers went to talk to some of the trainers including the dog act trainer. He said he would have to get rid of the dog that could not follow the routine. Our Messing Officer bought the dog and it was, of course, Leo. He was a lovely dog much loved by all of us.

I really enjoy the "Lioness" and all housework stops until I have read it cover to cover. I never see mention of any of the girls from the School nor from Hamburg District. Where are you Renee Darlington, Joe Cox, Anne Ashworth, Jan Carpenter and all of the rest of us girls? I would love to hear from you.

Mrs A H Ross née Jack
Bloco B2 Appt 3B, Rota do Sol, Alagoa-Altura,
Algarve, Portugal 8950-414

AGM THANKS

Dear Editor

Thank you and your other organisers of the AGM at Birmingham for the hours of work you all must have spent to make our few days such delightful ones.

It was wonderful to meet ATS/WRAC friends and also to meet others one did not know before meeting them at Birmingham. The great feeling of comradeship never diminishes with the years.

I know that when the young people at Masons Hall saw how we could enjoy ourselves and our energy, it certainly opened their eyes!

Thank you all once again.

Mrs Constance Evans
21 Windsor Avenue, North Hillingdon, Middx UB10
9AT

Dear Editor

I would like to thank both you and Beth as the "visible" dynamic duo for the organisation that went into the Grand Reunion.

I have only ever attended a Grand Reunion once, that was when it was held in Harrogate. I was senior Warrant Officer in North East District and was "volunteered" to help out for the weekend. My only memory of the weekend is that I spent most of Saturday flogging sticks of WRAC rock to anyone who came within my range.

Being a member of Winchester Branch and working near the HQ has given me an insight into the organisation, before, during and after, required to run a successful Reunion. Speaking for myself, I had a great time. You were both still smiling (just) when Maggie and I arrived, keys ready, rooms ready. It was great not to have to do anything and from our point of view it all went very well.

I suppose the only downside was the behaviour of certain members of the Association with regard to helping themselves to food that they had not paid for, and joining the freebie trip that they had not booked. The lady I sat next to on the coach said that she thought that if she booked a pack lunch it would automatically put her down for the trip!!

So once again many thanks for what from my point of view was a great weekend.

Miss Herme Emary
21 Froxfield Close, Harestock, Winchester, Hants
SO22 6JW

Dear Editor

I would like to thank everyone who organised the Grand Reunion for such a wonderful occasion - the amount of time and very hard work was appreciated by all who attended. How lucky we ATS ladies are to meet with old friends and also to mix with the "younger set".

The march and service were *most* impressive and the AGM very interesting. The accommodation at the University very good, food excellent and the dinner and evening really super.

Mrs L Wilson
38 Whittle Close, Rugby, CV22 6JR

"TRAINING CENTRE, LANCASTER"

Dear Editor

In reply to the letter from Mrs Doris Williams I beg to differ regarding the statement that "Mrs Hedges was the very first ATS RSM".

My own RSM (I was a Sergeant at this Training Centre) - RSM Elsie May Scarborough of No. 2 ATS - TC was the first ATS RSM.

I am sure this fact could be verified.

Mrs E M Plummer, Ex-Sgt Crossley ATS
44 Windmill Court, William Booth Road, King's
Lynn PE30 4XP

WILL YOU SEE ANY OF THESE EIGHT BALLOONS

Dear Editor

On the 84th Anniversary of The Association at Birmingham on 11 - 13 April 2003, something happened only a very few will know about. At 1015 hrs, eight brightly coloured balloons were set free, they had been trying to get out all weekend. I gathered them together, and, from Mason Hall, the few who were still there watched them fly off towards the great unknown. Before they went they all had an inscription on them. ATS WRAC GRAND REUNION 2003.

Despite a few setbacks we enjoyed the great get together, the icing on the cake was the March and Service in the Great Hall. I can't wait for the next one. You are only here on this earth once so, come on girls let's get on with it.

The more reunions we attend, the more faces we recognise in the Lioness wall of fame. I think that's lovely.

Many many thanks to all who made the 84th possible. NOT A JOB I WOULD VOLUNTEER FOR.

Mrs Iris Howe, née Chamberlain LCpl 389460
133 Corn Close, South Normanton, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 2JE

MY PERSONAL TALE OF THE AGM

Dear Editor

I trust you had a very enjoyable weekend and that the journey home went well.

We had a horrendous journey back, after what can only be described as a most "undignified scrum" for taxis leaving Mason Hall. Instead of the Virgin Train being direct Birmingham - Bournemouth we were told we'd have to change at Reading and Basingstoke. Once we'd travelled for a while we were then told we'd have to alight at Oxford - from there we were put aboard coaches for Southampton and from there a train to Bournemouth. All in all it was pretty exhausting!!

I personally enjoyed most of the weekend but was very disappointed in the behaviour of some of our "comrades". The manner in which some almost fought over food, particularly the packed lunches and then for the taxis was more like animals in a jungle!

Obviously when one organises such an event it's always possible to think back and say "we could have done it better this way or that", but how one copes with that sort of behaviour from a percentage of 80 year olds I don't know!

I didn't book for supper Friday night or either of the packed lunches so I wasn't affected. Maybe if the college had put on a buffet meal Friday on say 4 tables at all corners of the hall that would have cut out the queues. Also, had someone of their staff (or one of us as a volunteer) collected tickets and issued the packed lunches it might have stopped some greedy people helping themselves?

Despite that, I hope all from Worthy Down felt it was worthwhile and may I offer thanks from the Bournemouth Squad!

Daphne Brookes
37 Harewood Gardens, Bournemouth, Dorset
BH7 7RH

Dear Editor

I just couldn't get home quick enough to write and thank you all for such a fabulous Reunion. You obviously worked so very very hard to make it so wonderful. The transport to and from the gathering was spot on, thanks to Ann Maskens-Mac directing traffic so well!

The serving girls in uniform on Sunday were very smart. Just let them know that we used to be slim like them (HA! HA!)

Once again, I send you all a massive pat on the back, and thanks to you Beth for sorting my tickets out for me.

See you in Stoke?

Mrs Irene Maclean
5 Welldale Crescent, Fairfield, Stockton-on-Tees,
Cleveland TS19 7HU

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM, ALREWAS

Dear Editor

I had the good fortune to meet many of your lady members when they visited last Saturday 12th April. It happened that I was on the site of the Sumatra Railway Memorial, which I initiated and which was unveiled on VJ Day, 15th August 2001. I was with my son and daughter preparing slabbed areas to receive a pair of benches; the benches were received today.

The purpose of this letter is to say thank you to members who expressed an interest in the memorial and indeed the story of the Railway. I enclose a few bits and pieces about the Sumatra Railway (begun in May 1944 and finished in August 1945). Again perhaps you would be kind enough to pass them on.

If there is a possibility that some members may return at a later date, I should make a point of being there to greet them. I live about 20 miles from the Arboretum and am frequently there.

Jack Plant RAF 1940-46 (Mentioned in Despatches):
FEPOW March 1942 - August 1945
114 Hilton Lane, Great Wyrley, Walsall WS6 6DT

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Dear Editor

I am writing to say what a most enjoyable weekend we had in Birmingham; I am sure it was enjoyed by all who attended. The venue and location were ideal, particularly in view of the overall cost and the food and service were very good. **PDF Compressor Free Version** The way the dining area was decorated with balloons etc for the Saturday night grand dinner.

I, along with many others I am sure, would like to thank you and Mrs Beth Todd, Secretary of the Winchester branch, for all your extremely hard work, both before, during and after the weekend. I know you both worked late into both evenings we were away – I felt for you because I have 'been there myself' and know just what problems are encountered.

One matter I feel did mar the weekend, however, for the majority of us who had pre-paid and been issued with tickets for meals, packed lunches and coach trips. It created a sour feeling that some of the ladies (thankfully a minority) took meals, particularly packed lunches and the buffet lunch on the Sunday before we departed to come home; they did not have tickets to produce nor had they pre-paid. Those who had been issued with tickets had paid for the items in advance in all good faith and at some stage it appeared that those who had pre-paid would perhaps end up going without just because of people pushing in and taking things they had not paid for. A similar situation nearly happened on the coach trips. A note about this I feel should be made in "The Lioness" as it caused needless upset.

Thank you once again.

SSgt M A Gardiner AGC (SPS)
HQ RA, HQ 3 (UK) Div, Picton Barracks, Bulford, SP4 9NY

ANOTHER MISPRINT

Dear Editor

With reference to Mrs A R Alexander's letter in the 1/2003 edition of Lioness, I recently came across another, even worse translation of the initials ATS.

A friend lent me her copy of *Chequers The Prime Minister's Country House and its History* by Norma Major. This is a beautifully produced and illustrated book, well written and, as I thought, meticulously researched.

However, when writing briefly of the servicewomen who had worked in Chequers during WWII and giving the WRNS and the WAAF their correct titles in full, Norma Major called the ATS the Army Training School. How could she make such a howler and what was her editor at Little, Brown – the publishers – doing to let it through? This wiping out of the thousands of women who served their country here and overseas from 1939 to 1945 and beyond so saddened and enraged me that I was unable to finish reading the book, all belief in its integrity lost.

Writing to Little, Brown I have no doubt would be useless, as Mrs Alexander found with Cassell & Co. But if this letter follows hers in Lioness it will perhaps underline our need to keep the ATS alive in the memories of our contemporaries and to add to the knowledge of those who come after us.

Mrs May Andrews, née Brotherton
"Tyrrells", Rumburgh, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0JY

JUST ANOTHER ARTICLE, WHAT MEMORIES IT BROUGHT BACK

Dear Editor

How surprised and pleased I was when I read in the 'Lioness' an exert taken from the QMAAC and ATS Comrades Association Gazette March – April 1945, regarding Mixed AA Batteries in Belgium. This referred to 139 Regiment, 483, 484 and 485 Batteries. I was in 484 Battery at Kampenhout near Brussels.

At the AGM in Birmingham, while waiting for the coach for the Church Parade, I was delighted to meet two members from Doncaster Branch who were in 483 Battery in Belgium. We discussed the conditions we had and how cold we were, it was an awful winter and even the ink in the bottles was frozen.

The printed article brought back lots of memories to me especially of my "hut pals" who are no longer with us. They were wonderful friends and we were just like a family.

Thank you for putting this in the Lioness.

Evelyn O'Neill (Newcastle Branch)
33 Bede Burn View, Jarrow, Tyne & Wear
NE32 5PQ

TARTAN?

Dear Editor

I voted against the adoption of the WRAC tartan at the AGM on April 12th, viz, to put forward to the Council the adoption of a WRAC tartan. My reason for so doing was a financial one. **NO – NOT** the £500 registration fee, plus the further £300 after 5 years.

My financial reason is more personal. Having attended many Cenotaph parades I believe that any ex-Servicewoman who can put one foot in front of the other should march. I am equally sure that any ex-WREN or ex-WAAF who does not have the full uniform cannot march. This uniform must incur considerable expense, which many cannot afford.

Apart from the green beret and blazer our uniform is not too expensive, so anyone who can march can afford to partake on Remembrance Sunday.

Anyway, ladies, who is going to see, or be interested in our dress below the waist? The green beret identifies us. Another point, apart from the Chelsea Pensioners, the male contingents do not wear identical clothes below the waist. Their berets and blazers identify them.

I don't think I shall be at the 2003 parade, but I hope our contingent will be a good one.

Mrs Betty Mitchell (Asst Secretary Plymouth Branch)
50 Revell Park Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4EL

Dear Editor

Having looked over the names of the WRAC Musicians' names at the back of our latest *Lioness*, I saw the name of Cpl Anne Pellatt along with



other members of the staff band whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the Plymouth Reunion in 1982. We had such a memorable weekend, and at our last Reunion in Birmingham I met some of the WRAC girls who knew her as well as the Sgt Major who took our Parade at the Blackpool Reunion. I also met many other old friends, who I have got to know through the years.

I would like to say a big thank you to all concerned in making these great occasions possible.

Mrs Jean Webster
35 Hulme Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3PB

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Dear Editor

Readers may recall my letter in *"Lioness"* No. 1, 2003 regarding a certain ignorance – even on the part of organisations who should know better – about the meaning of the letters 'ATS'. The mind boggles, learning the diversity of guessed and suggested answers advanced to me recently by a cross section of people questioned.

However, all this started me off due to the discovery of the corruption of our service's name in a book purporting to be a true history of our monarchy. There is obviously still an interest by those old comrades of so long ago, as my post bag has revealed.

My further attempt to get the publishers of *'The House of Windsor'* to acknowledge and rectify the error having fallen on deaf (and may I say, arrogant) ears, I took the liberty of contacting the Press Office at Buckingham Palace. When a letter promptly arrived at our house with the Royal crest and the Palace's name and markings on the envelope, I knew that I had not been summoned to receive a medal, but I did not know the Palace does not intervene in any matter, even though it may concern a documentary historical error about itself.

The letter was good enough, however, to say that Her Majesty, then Princess Elizabeth, did train at Camberley Mechanical Transport Centre (possibly this is how the word 'transport' crept into the defective caption mentioned in my previous letter), there learning to drive and being taught car maintenance. All her honorary ranks were also itemised up to her accession in 1952.

Although the Press Office will obviously not take any action to correct the error, the Queen sent me a message that she does indeed have happy memories of those days and thanked me for taking the time and trouble to write.

We old lags of course do still care, but is there anyone else out there....?

Mrs Alice R Alexander, née Siesel
23 Brodie Road, Chingford, London E4 7HF

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.

Dear Editor

We would like to say a very big THANK YOU to everyone who was involved in the organisation of the Grand 150th Anniversary of the WRAC. We thank her committee, to the Area Chairman and her colleagues, to members of the Birmingham Branch, to the 'girls' who organised the loading of the Arboretum coaches and not forgetting Meg Purkis who spent many hours taking and printing photographs. She was working whilst we slept! You all worked so very hard. Which one of you has a direct line to heaven to organise such beautiful weather? You spent many hours on tired feet making sure we had our keys and could find our rooms. We could relax and enjoy the weekend but still you beavered away putting the icing on the cake for us. Friday and Saturday night we raised the roof and danced until OUR feet ached. Reluctantly, everyone left Birmingham University with a smile on their face, looking forward to the next one and sighing because they had to wait another three years before they could do it all again. Three cheers to you all. Hip Hip Hoo-oo-rary Hip Hip Hoo-oo-rary Hip Hip Hoo-oo-rary.

Many, many thanks from Joan Higgins, Marjorie Powell, Betty Wilshaw and Ann Deakin – Stafford Branch.

Dear Editor

This is a personal note of thanks to yourself and all members of the Committee for organising such a wonderful weekend in Birmingham.

I am a fairly new member of the WRAC Association (and it did not take Greater London Branch very long to ask me to be their Social Secretary) and therefore it was my first occasion to meet, in an informal setting, members of the Association. I thought the whole weekend went very smoothly and this shows how well organised the Committee is and how much planning must have been involved.

Madge Evans and Jean Taylor have already put my name down to attend the WRAC Dinner Club in Stoke in October (in fact they did this last year as they were checking out of the Moat Hotel, Stoke) and I look forward to seeing you there.

Once again, many thanks for a most enjoyable weekend in Birmingham.

Virginia Hopson
9 Newton Walk, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 0BX

Dear Editor

In the Lioness 2001, Issue No. 2 Mrs Christine Powell told of a Pte Thomas, an orphan, who died in September 1958 aged 18 whilst serving in the WRAC at CAD Kinton and who was buried in All Saints Church, Burton Dassett, Warwick. As I live not too far away, I contacted Mrs Powell and we met at All Saints Church. We placed flowers and poppy crosses on Pte Thomas's grave and I arranged for the local press to take a photograph of the grave and a report in the local press, hoping some member of the family would contact us. Unfortunately we heard nothing.

However, through the local branch of The British Legion I received the following notice, in brief:

"The MOD has within its remit the administration of the graves and headstones of service personnel who have died in service outwith the two World Wars. In an effort to compile a nation wide register as soon as possible, the MOD are seeking help in eliminating some historical anomalous gaps in their records. Therefore should you know of any servicemen or women buried in our local cemeteries, or if you consider graves are not being attended, this should be reported so that action can be taken to correct these shortfalls. MOD is anxious to fully discharge its responsibilities towards maintenance of all graves and headstones. The contact is:-

Ministry of Defence, Personal Service 4 (Army), (Casualty/Compassionate), Building 43, Trenchard Lines, UPAVON, Wiltshire SN9 6BE.

Having sent all the information to MOD regarding Pte Thomas, they visited All Saints Churchyard and also found the graves of 2 other servicemen of whom they had no record. I have now been informed that CAD Kinton have been detailed to address this problem.

As members of our Association are so widespread over the country and beyond, I thought this information may be of some interest and help.

Mrs Phyll Harvey (née Bird)
23 Rainbow Fields, Shipston-on-Stour, Warks CV36 4BU

RE-UNION

Dear Editor

I would just like to thank the hard-working people who provided such a wonderful weekend at our conference at Birmingham University the weekend of 11th to 13th of April. I am sure that I speak for many of us when I say that it was enjoyed by all who attended. The weather too, was on its best behaviour.

It was set in the most beautiful countryside, and though several of us did not take advantage of the trip to the National Arboretum, we did go into the city and visited the Cathedral. The stained glass windows over the altar were very dramatic, and the organ (unfortunately for us) was in the process of being tuned.

But to get back to the real reason for this letter. The hard work of the organisers was much appreciated, it was great to meet up with friends old and new, to meet up with many people who share the same memories. The food was good, entertainment, especially the Adjutant General's Corps Band was great, and oh! the Church Parade was the best ever. Please can we have the Warrant Officers who organised us into such a good parade do the same for us on the November Remembrance Day Parade?!!

I would like to finish by saying how nice it is to see the ATS figurine sculptured by Royal Doulton. We may even get recognised now for who we ATS are.

Mrs Barbara Danter (member of Notts/Leic's Branch)
30 Blake Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5JL

THE FORMER RAOC BARRACKS, HILSEA, PORTSMOUTH

I have been researching the history of the Barracks at Hilsea which were used by the RAOC from 1921 until the Barracks closed in 1962. The site is now a housing estate although some elements of the Barracks still remain such as the former Sergeants' Mess building and the perimeter wall.

I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who served at Hilsea and in particular, anyone who used the nearby Hilsea Lido.

Mrs P J Smith
7, Grove Road South
Southsea
Hants PO5 3QR
Tel: 02392 - 873259



An ATS Company marches out of the Main Gates of Hilsea Barracks, about 1949



The RAOC Barracks at Hilsea, Portsmouth in 1962

Wedding

DIAMOND WEDDING: REEF - CROLL

Present Address: 8 Woodvale Avenue, Chestfield, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3NJ

PDF Compressor Free Version

On the 26 June 1943, W/128587 Cpl Madeleine Reef ATS was married to LAC Raymond Croll RAF at St. Mary's Church, Norwood, Green, Southall, Middlesex.



Wedding 26 June 1943



and Present Day

Glory Days

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 50's, 60's and 70's probably shouldn't have survived. Our baby cots were covered with brightly coloured lead-based paint, which was promptly chewed and licked.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, or latches on doors or cupboards and it was fine to play with pans.

We rode our bikes, we wore no helmets, just flip flops and fluorescent "spokey-dokes" on our wheels.

As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags.

Riding in the front passenger seat was a treat.

We drank water from the garden hose not from a bottle - tasted the same!

We ate dripping sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy pop with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing.

We shared one drink with four friends, from one bottle or can and no one actually died from this.

We spent hours building go-carts out of scraps, rode then at top speed down the hill, only to find out we had forgotten about brakes.

We would leave home early in the morning with a pack of sandwiches and stay out until dark. No one was able to reach us all day and no one minded.

We had no Playstations, X-Boxes or video games. No 99 channels on TV, no videotape movies, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet chat rooms. We had friends, we went outside and found them. We played elastics, hop scotch and street rounders, and sometimes that ball really hurt.

We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth. There were no lawsuits - they had been accidents. We learnt not to do the same thing again. We had fights, punched each other hard, received bruises - we learned to get over it.

We rode our bikes in gangs of 7 and wore our coats by the hood only. We intimidated nobody, we did not ensure that elderly people were frightened to go out after dark.

Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was laughable. They actually sided with the law. Imagine that!

Anon

❁ I'd Pick More Daisies ❁

If I had my life to live over again, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax. I would get fit and stay fit longer. I would be sillier than I have been this time around. I know of a very few things I would take seriously. I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers and watch more sunsets. I would do more walking and looking. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones. You see, I am one of those people who lives prophylactically and sensibly and saner hour by hour, day by day. Oh, I've had my moments; and if I just had the chance, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another instead of living so many years ahead each day. I have been one of those people who never go anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat, aspirin and a parachute. If I had it to do over again, I would go places, to more theme parks and fewer museums.

If I had my life to live over again, I would start bare-footed earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the autumn. I would play truant more, take more "duvet-days". I wouldn't make such good grades (except by accident). I would ride on more merry-go-rounds. I'd pick more daisies.

Anon

Poems

FOR NICA

PDF Compressor Free Version

Since first we met in '43, at Wingate Barracks, Oswestry,
'Twas there, though many years have passed
We forged a friendship made to last.
We saw each other's wedding day,
We each had children, saw them play.
We spent some holidays with you,
Our children played, and we did too!



Veronica Hollis
'Nica'

We've kept in touch throughout the years,
We've shared our laughter, and our tears.
Though now I live quite far away
My thoughts stay with you, come what may.

When last we met, I'm sure we knew
It could be for the last time too.
Why do such friendships have to end?
Farewell, my dear beloved friend.

Rosa Riley (ex Pte F R Davis W 230576)
September 2002

TAIL PIECE

IF you have the inner strength to.....

Start the day without coffee or pep pills
Be cheerful and ignore aches and pains
Resist complaining about your troubles
Understand when loved ones are too busy to give you
time
Overlook the times when loved ones take it out on you
Take criticism and blame without resentment
Face the world without lies and deceit
Conquer tension without medication
Relax without alcohol.....

Then you are probably the family dog!

*This appeared in a recent issue of "Mercury" the newsletter
of the Royal Signals Association, Aldershot*

THE GUNS OF PEACE

The guns are silent now
And the war is done.
Come then our rescuers, come
With your flags and ribbons,

The pretty playthings nations give
To the side that won.

The war is over now;
I should rejoice,
For I am young – was young,
Until these years advanced
With all their fanfares to the victory
Forgetting me.

Now I must march again,
Join the new battle
And brave the guns of peace.
Ah, Soldier, there is no surrender there,
No hasty truce at hand to still that strife,
No stretcher-bearers gathering our dead hopes,
No prayers to offer for our little deaths in life.

The earth is quiet now,
And the sun and sky
Beckon unchanging to the sunless,
Must we emerge? Aye, soldier, aye,
There at the gate strands freedom,
Here stand I.

Anon. Changi

This poem, written by a POW in Changi gaol on 15th
August 1945 when he knew that he was at last a 'free'
man, was read by Air Commodore Clarke at the
unveiling of the Sumatra Railway Memorial in the
National Memorial Arboretum.

THE CELEBRATION 2000 MILLENNIUM PRAYER

Dear lord our heavenly Father,
At the dawn of a new millennium,
In a world of darkness
Give us your light,
In lands of war and prejudice
Grant us peace,
In a world of despair give us hope,
In a world of sadness and tears,
Show us your joy,
In a world of hatred show us your love,
In a world of arrogance
Give us humility,
In a world of disbelief give us faith.
Give us courage to face the challenges
Of feeding the hungry, clothing
The naked, housing the homeless
And healing the sick.
Give us the power to make
A difference in your world,
And to protect your creation.
Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord,

Amen

Anna Compton (aged 13)

Articles of Interest

A 'NOT-FORGOTTEN' HOLIDAY

by Olive Brown and Joan Awbery

PDF Compressor Free Version

In June this year both of us, as Chairman and Secretary respectively of the Norfolk and Suffolk Branch, received an invitation from the 'Not-Forgotten Association' to spend an all-expenses-paid holiday with them in London.

To our mutual shame, neither of us had heard of this Association and, speaking to several members and friends, it was obvious that, although vaguely aware, very few people were certain about its aims.

There is, of course, no doubt that many of you do already know of this most charitable of organisations, either through being the recipient of their generosity with invitations to their holidays or days out throughout the country, or through being helped in material ways. We are ourselves now much better informed and have the greatest respect for the Association.

They are, among their many aims, dedicated to giving financial and physical help to disabled and other deserving ex-members of the armed forces; they provide television sets for the frail and housebound, arrange group holidays and subsidised holidays where carers can be included; day outings, river trips, excursions to museums, exhibitions and other places of interest. They arrange in-house entertainment for those confined to residential or nursing homes. In their handbook they give the names of over 100 hospitals, homes and associations who benefit from their generosity. Applications for assistance are generally made through SAAFA Forces Help, The Royal British Legion or the Welfare Service of the War Pensioners' Agency. A history of the Association, in the form of a story called 'Anyone for Tea?' shows how they evolved and what they do now. Copies are available from the Association's Office for a small donation to cover administrative costs. The address is The 'Not-Forgotten' Association, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH. Telephone 020 7730 2400 / 3660.

On arrival at the Victory Services, where we were to be based for our five-day holiday, we were immediately made welcome, and were guests at that evening's gala dinner given by members of the NFA Committee and Staff and where we met our companions – twenty five former members of many branches of the three armed services, two WRNS, and one former WAAF. We five counted it a great privilege to be outnumbered! Our guide for the holiday was Mrs Rosie Thompson, the Events Organiser, whom we quickly learned to look on as being the fount of all wisdom and no one could have done the job of guide and mentor better. She was assisted by Rosalind, a former member of the WRAF who regularly helps on these occasions.

Our five days were filled to the brim with events that we could never have arranged ourselves. A visit to the Household Cavalry where the – very youthful – soldiers, grooms, blacksmiths, harness-makers and Royal Veterinary Corps members, were so patient in explaining

every little detail about their charges of whom they are justifiably proud, and details of ceremonial occasions in which they are involved. In the afternoon to Bushy Park for the Queen's Golden Jubilee Picnic. The contents of our picnic-bags could hardly have been more royal. Next morning we woke to a deep feeling of apprehension; the morning's trip on the London Eye was viewed with grave misgiving by us both. Not daring to show our cowardice, and egged on by the taunts and example of our staunch male companions we dared not do otherwise then put on an appearance of bravado – and thoroughly enjoyed it! Afterwards a visit to the Guards' Museum where we had yet another splendid lunch. Following that, and with no sign of our energies failing, the afternoon was spent at Wimbledon, some in the Centre Court, some in Court No.1. After this excitement a few of us, (no names, no pack drill), went early to bed and missed the 10.30 pm planned visit to the Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower.

Our last day was certainly one to remember; up early (again) and off by coach to Southampton where we were joined by many more ex-service members, including a party of WRNS from Southampton and Portsmouth who took us under their wing and kindly pointed out the sights we might otherwise have missed as we passed along Southampton Water into the Solent and entered Portsmouth Harbour. Here we were taken on a tour of ships waiting to be inspected by the Queen, including Ark Royal whose crew, already lined up on deck, gave us a cheer as we passed. We were the only civilian boat allowed in the Harbour and when the Queen arrived, her ship was directed alongside ours and we all cheered lustily and greetings were exchanged. Indeed an honour.

We were exceedingly grateful to the 'Not-Forgotten Association' for their hospitality and certainly to Rosie for all the complicated arrangements which went like clockwork. No hitches; no one left behind on any of the outings (which is a feat in itself), all having enjoyed every minute and reluctant to leave – the hallmark of a good holiday.

There is a website which will give full information about the Association

<http://www.nfassociation.freemove.co.uk>

It goes without saying that donations are always welcome for the continuance of their good work.

MEETING AMERICAN VETERANS

Miss Virginia Hopson, 9 Newton Walk, Edgware,
Middlesex HA8 0BX

In November 2002, Mrs Madge Evans, Chairman of Luton Branch, Mrs Jean Taylor of London Branch and Miss Virginia Hopson of Greater London Branch went to Florida where Madge had arranged a get together with 3 American Veterans.

This came about when Madge was looking in a Florida

booklet and saw an article about forthcoming diary dates – one being the Osceola Veterans Parade. Madge telephoned Mike Judge, who is a Vietnam Veteran to ask if we could meet him when we reached Florida.

In the meanwhile, I started collecting memorabilia to take with us. Madge made a beautiful WRAC pennant and Jean and Virginia packed souvenirs of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Madge's sister, Mrs Edna Bailey, who is also a member of Luton branch, found a very old book about Florida. This book belonged to Edna's husband's late uncle who had been a merchant seaman. This travel book may have been written in 1889 and Madge took it along as well to give to Mike. It can now be found gracing the shelves of the Kissimmee Central Library.



Meeting up with Mike, Dave and Bill

When we arrived in Orlando, Florida Madge made final arrangements to meet up and this we did at the Kissimmee American Legion Club. We also met Dave and Bill who are Korean Veterans. Madge was in Singapore when the Korean war was in progress and we had a wonderful evening comparing notes on what England was like then when Mike, Dave and Bill were stationed here and their experiences when they were stationed abroad. We also exchanged metal badges as well as e-mail addresses and promised to remain in contact.



Virginia swimming with a dolphin

We rounded off our holiday in Florida with Virginia swimming with dolphins and scuba diving with sharks. We also took advantage of the many Shopping Malls to get in some retail therapy, just in time for Christmas presents.

CONVERTED

Avril Williams – Secretary Cambridge Branch



Avril pictured during her serving days

Today I leafed through my back issues of Lioness and recalled the following:

- **Issue 1 – 1969 The Duchess of Kent visited BAOR**

The year I joined the WRAC. Then, when reading the Lioness, I used to think that a lot of wasted space was given over to articles about the Ladies of the Association, reminiscing about old times, like my mother who was in the ATS, and the TA – the weekend soldiers. Why not more about us, the serving women, who donated a day's pay to support the Association.

- **Issue 2 – 1978 Major Sue Wing (now Reverend Sue Wing) was posted to Hong Kong**

This was the year I left the WRAC. Information was given with my discharge documents about joining the Association, and the TA; **no way**, I did not want to be like those sad old ladies of the Association and my career in the WRAC was over.

- **Issue 1 – 1980 Brigadier Anne Field CB Hon ADC, Director WRAC appointed The Order of the Bath in the new year's honours list**

This was the year the Cambridge Branch of the Association was formed and I was one of the founder members. I had joined the TA on my discharge from the regulars and served for another six years. This became handy as the Branch used the Drill Hall for their monthly meetings. I was now on my way to being one of the Ladies of the Association.

- **Issue 2 – 1992 Farewell to the WRAC, it poured with rain during the beating of the retreat, then**

it was time for the fireworks, slightly damp, but impressive, and the sight of our Corps badge ablaze left many with a lump in their throat. Now when reading the *Lioness*, not many of the girls I knew are still serving. But I meet a few at the AGMs/Reunions and meet others in the Branch reports.

● **Issue 1 – 2003** An article was printed about the Cambridge Branch

I have been the Branch Secretary for many years. I try and attend all the AGMs and Reunions and I am also a member of the WRAC Dinner Club, which has given me a lot of support and comfort during my recent bereavement.



Avril today

Now I am the one that reminisces whilst reading through my old copies of the *Lioness*. I am one of the Ladies of the Association.

**MEMORIES OF MY TRIP TO THE CANADIAN
ATS 7TH REUNION**

Mrs Margaret (Peggy) Binns, née Bell
22 Denbeigh Place, Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 8DE

I enjoyed so much reading about the Canadian ATS 14th Reunion in London, Ontario in the No 1 issue of the *Lioness* 2003. It brought back to me such happy memories of the time I attended their 7th reunion in 1995, accompanied by my husband. We were visiting my ATS friend Barbara Smith and her husband Nelson who live in London Ontario, to join them in their 50th Wedding Anniversary celebrations, as I was at their wedding in 1945, here in England.

At the same time, it was the London Ontario ATS Reunion, so my husband and I went as Barbara's special guests and had a memorable time. I had the pleasure of meeting Wyn Raven, who, with Betty Anderson and Barbara, were then the organisers and a first class job they made of it. I was able to see at first hand the amount of work involved in arranging for members from various widespread parts of Canada and USA to meet up and also fitting in all the other things that make a reunion a success.

As I read through Wyn's report of the Weekend Reunion, my mind followed it through and recalled it just exactly as Wyn described it, a fun weekend from beginning to end.

The craft stalls, as Wyn said, showed off the talents of the many members who were very generous with their gifts. The meal, the drinks and the entertainment, not forgetting the staff, who showed it was a joy and a pleasure to serve those Ex-ATS girls were wonderful.

The Inspection Parade, a truly entertaining send-up that proved these "girls" retained their humour, in spite of the advancing years and braced themselves to attention for the inspection, then marched off, all in perfect step, showing they hadn't forgotten what they learned on the Barrack Square, painful as it may have been.

I wrote to Colonel Cook, mentioning that I was attending this reunion and to add to the visit, she sent me a 'Citation' from the Northern area, which included my own club, the Newcastle Branch, which, with great pleasure, I presented during the celebrations. Need I say, it was well received.

My friend Barbara was clever with a sewing needle and for one reunion made 40, 6-inch ATS dolls, naming them Bab's Army, which she sold for the funds. I much admired them when I saw the picture of them and I asked her if she could bring one for me when she came over for the Guildford Reunion.

She did better. She brought me a 14 inch perfectly dressed ATS doll, who has gone with me to every reunion I have attended since and been much admired. Sadly, Barbara died almost two years ago, but I have a lovely reminder of her in my model ATS doll. Betty Anderson has also since died.



*ATS doll, made by the
late Barbara Smith*

So can I say, thanks to Wyn Raven for recalling that special reunion for me and long may she keep well enough to organise many more reunions.



"Bab's Army"

1922 - 2002

Mrs I Quarrie, ex-W/46413 WO2 HAND 1
5 Thatchers Croft, Copmanthorpe, York YO23 3YD

Yes - I've made it! On 22nd May this year I reached my 80th birthday. **PDF Compressor! Free Version** I still can't believe that so much happened.

On the actual day I received 34 cards, several telephone calls including one from Canada and an invitation out to lunch from my husband Jack. I hadn't received a card from my daughter Joyce or any flowers which was most unusual and I suddenly got a gut feeling that she would walk in bringing a personal greeting. However, by the time we left to go to lunch there was no sign but I still had this notion that something was afoot.

I wasn't wrong because trying to hide behind one or two of the pillars in the hotel were Joyce and two grand-daughters, Jo and Kate, and also my oldest son Ian and his wife Sally. We all had lunch together and then came back home for a couple of hours before they had to leave to catch the train back to London. By this time our living room looked like a florist's shop - a couple of wine carafes were brought into use as vases. It was quite a day.

A few months before my birthday, Joyce had asked me whether or not there was anything special I would like to do by way of celebration. I told her that apart from a family get together to include my three brothers I would like to go back to St Helens where I was born and brought up. By that I meant just a visit to have a look round and visit one or two places of particular interest which, hopefully, would still be standing.

Strange as it may seem, during the past few years a new hotel has been built in the town and Joyce got in touch with the management and after some kind of negotiations booked rooms for us all in early June. This was the first available date nearest to my birthday due to the Jubilee celebrations and the Bank Holiday.

We all arrived at varying times from all points of the compass on the Saturday afternoon and, after changing into our best bibs and tuckers, we all sat down to a lovely meal. The hotel management gave us a separate suite and also printed a special menu with my name inside. Toasts were drunk and, at the conclusion of the meal, a huge birthday cake was carried in by Ian and Joyce. Lots of pictures were taken and after the cutting ceremony the rest of the evening was spent reminiscing and generally enjoying ourselves.

Sunday morning was a complete surprise. After breakfast my brother, David, and Joyce had arranged a tour of St Helens for me and although it poured with rain the whole time it didn't dampen our spirits one bit - it was quite wonderful.

I had a photograph taken outside the house where I was born and stood outside one of the schools I attended - couldn't get in being Sunday - and we also visited the school my two brothers attended. They stood outside what had been the headmasters study and uttered a few choice words and made one or two not very gentlemanly gestures. We had lunch in a local pub and then stopped to

have a picture taken outside the St Helens Rugby League Club making sure we got the name of the club in the background. We then went on to visit the house where my younger brother, Arthur, was born and yet another photograph was taken.

By this time we were feeling somewhat jaded, apart from being soaked, so back we went to the hotel for a very welcome shower and a change of clothes followed by a drop of "stuff" to stimulate internal warmth! A truly magic weekend for me, the memories of which will last for the rest of my life.

Lots and lots of thanks to everyone who helped in whatever way to make it possible.

GUIDED TOUR OF THE ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL OF MUSIC, KNELLER HALL, TWICKENHAM ON 28 MAY 2003

Jane Smith, (former W/425499 Sgt Stark P J,
WRAC Staff Band, 1965-1969).

A group of 30 of us, ex-WRAC Band members, relatives and friends went on a guided tour of Kneller Hall. The tour was led by Major Roger Swift, the Curator of the Kneller Hall Museum and included an introductory talk on the history of Kneller Hall, a tour of the School buildings, the Chapel and Museum.

We all found the history of the School fascinating and learnt a lot. Also brought home to us, was the extent of the achievements of the four female Directors of Music of the WRAC Staff band, which, to my mind, have been very underrated in the past. They were Captain Jean



*Ex-WRAC Band members watching a rehearsal
at Kneller Hall.*

MacDowall (1955 – 1962); Captain Zara Bowness-Smith (1968 – 1971); Major Lynette Hopkin (1974 – 1984) and lastly, Major Ena Forster (1984 – 1992). We noticed the last three in the photographs on display as part of the groups posing at the completion of their Bandmaster's Course before the WRAC was disbanded. They were not accepted as full members of the complete Director of Music's Course until 1979 and so Major Forster was not only the first woman to attend on this basis, she also returned in 1989 to pass the specialist Kneller Hall exams. As it turned out, she remains the only member of the WRAC ever to do so as the Corps was disbanded three years later.

In addition, the names of all four Directors of Music are displayed on the honours boards as having received the prize for conducting. Alongside, there was also the board listing the recipients of the Mary Naomi Wallace Memorial Medal from the Worshipful Company of Musicians. For many years, this could be seen on a wall in the Assembly Hall at the former Queen Elizabeth Barracks but was moved to Kneller Hall when the Barracks closed.

Three of the Medal recipients were actually present on the tour, Ann Corker (née Woodworth) 1968; Ann Pellatt, 1978 and myself, 1967. Major Hopkin, of course, is the only woman to have the distinction of appearing both on a Kneller Hall prize board and the Mary Naomi Wallace Memorial Medal Board.

On such a lovely May morning the highlight of the tour really had to be the visit to the open-air bandstand to watch the bands rehearsing for the public concert that evening. This brought back a lot of memories as some of us had played on the bandstand in years past. The Commandant of Kneller Hall, Colonel Tony Potter OBE, was also present and took time to have a brief word with our group.

We were all very grateful to Major Swift for laying on such an enjoyable visit and for looking after us all so well. Married to an ex-WRAC Band member himself, he is a great supporter of the Band plus a mine of information on all aspects of military music. His time and effort were much appreciated.

Lastly, WRAC Association members who are fans of military music might be interested to know about the International Military Music Society. This exists to support and encourage the appreciation of military music, and membership costs £16.00 per year. This includes three copies of the Society's magazine, "Band International", plus four copies of the UK Branch newsletter. The Society holds a quarterly meeting at Kneller Hall with a guest speaker from the world of Military music and provides an opportunity to buy the latest military music CDs, videos (at a discount price), books and other publications.

For example, the Society's latest publication, an excellent book published in 2002 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Society is entitled, "Sound the Trumpets, Beat the Drums: Military Music Through the 20th Century", and is published by Parapress Ltd at £17.95. The WRAC Staff Band rates three mentions and two photographs! Additionally, there is the chance to visit bands of the three Services, attend the Sovereign's Parade rehearsal at

Sandhurst, the Major General's Review of Trooping the Colour and the Founder's Day rehearsal at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Further information is available from the Honorary Secretary, Mr Stuart Stredwick, 58 Hatherop Road, Hampton, Middx TW12 2RF. Telephone and fax: 020-8979-2701.

Marie Roberts, 109 Scorton Avenue, Layton,
Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7HD



This is a template of the Association Badge, that I did at College on a Stained Glass Course. The template was taken from the badge and photocopied until this stage was reached.

Also please let people know, in St John's Church, Blackpool there is a WRAC church kneeler which I made and was on display at Norbreck in April 1997. The Vicar has now left the church. If anyone is visiting Blackpool and would like to see the church kneeler please contact me on 01253 395170 and I would gladly show them.



The former Vicar of St John's, Blackpool with Marie Roberts and the WRAC Church kneeler which she made.

Harriet Wilson W/77526
4206 E Wonder Lake Drive, Wonder Lake,
Illinois 60097-8332 USA

I really look forward to each issue of the Lioness and I am always looking for the 459 HAA Regiment, but no luck so far after all these years.

I am looking forward to going to London Ontario for our annual ATS Reunion, which will be our fifteenth. We have just over one hundred that attend but our ranks are shrinking.

My late husband served in the Canadian Army. We were both invited to join the American Legion and we were presented with our respective flags. I have been an historian for the past 12 years. Enclosed is a photograph of my daughter and myself at a Memorial Day Parade and we are always recognised.



Harriet Wilson and her daughter at the American Legion Memorial Parade.

Mrs L. Hollis (Hon Sec Leicester and Nottingham Branch)
3 Parklands Avenue, Groby, Leics LE6 0BL

Mrs Marjorie Brutnell of Leicester Branch was presented with the MBE by the Queen in November last year, for her years of unstinting work with the Royal British Legion, Melton Mowbray Branch. Marjorie has been a case officer for the Legion and is also a President of the Women's Section.

Although not in good health she is always cheerful.



Mrs Marjorie Brutnell with her medal.

**455 & 476 HAA MXD BTY - JULY 1941 -
MAY 1946**

Daisy Cation W/64298
197 Wellesley Road, Buckhaven, Fife KY8 1DU



Daisy Cation, Belgium 1945 (code 49)

After much thought and a bit of help from one of my old army pals, Eileen Belsey, we would like to pay tribute to my army pal, Molly Mapp. At the tender age of 17 years I joined the ATS. After initial training I was sent to Oswestry where the first Mixed HAA Regiment was formed, 129 Regiment. My battery was the 455 and my first posting was to Donnisbristle Point in Fife, a most beautiful site, and it was here that I met Molly Map.

Molly Mapp was a tall happy-go-lucky girl and unknown to us at the time she was only 15 years old. Being tall no one queried her age. We soon discovered that she

conveniently could never remember her date of birth. We were Spotters and Telephonists; our shifts were spent between the two jobs which worked really well. We then became good friends which lasted many years.

PDF Compressor Free Version



Molly Mapp June 1945 (code 48)

Our war years went on with many changes and experiences. Moving down the East Coast to Doodle Bug Alley, across to Belgium then onto Germany.

After the war, Milly Lodge and Eileen Belsey met up with Molly a few times. She was now married with two boys, but then they lost touch as the years went by. We all wondered what had happened to Molly Mapp. I think it was in 1997 or 1998 that I was surprised and delighted to see Molly's name in The Lioness in the Battery linking section. I contacted Milly and Eileen with the news and then wrote to Molly. After that our phones were red hot. She now lived in Bristol, so I decided to go to Pontins Camp in Weston-Super-Mare for four days, and as I got off the train at Bristol I was enveloped in a great big hug before I could see who it was. There was Molly grinning from ear to ear. How she recognised me I'll never know.

We had a lovely four days, there was so much to say and so little time. Molly used to come to our chalet, sit on the end of my bed and talk and talk, bringing me up to date with her life.

After returning to our respective homes we kept in touch. Molly was keen to have a reunion and she arranged it all. It was held at Molly's daughter Dawn's house in Leigh-on-Sea in March 1999, which was strangely enough where Milly lived and she invited me to stay with her. The next day we went to Dawn's house where she had decorated the trees in the garden with balloons and had cooked a

meal and baked a cake with the Ack Ack Logo in red icing. There were 19 of us that turned up and we had a lovely time. Molly was happy as Larry. Two reporters from the local press also came along. It passed so quickly, although we have all kept in touch.



The cake Dawn made for our Reunion



Molly on the left, Daisy on the right March 1999

One day Molly phoned me to tell me she had taken a stroke and she had difficulty speaking. She improved and often forgot a word then she would say "Oh Sh..." and then we would laugh and I used to say to her that it was funny but that was one word she never forgot. In February 2002 I had a frantic call from Molly telling me she had cancer and was due to have an operation soon. When she was in hospital Eileen and I took it in turns to phone Molly so she had a telephone call everyday. Her operation was to be on the Wednesday so I telephoned the day before and she wanted me to telephone her on the Thursday. However I thought that she would still be drowsy so we agreed that I would phone her on Friday. I was very surprised how bright she sounded and she thought that the operation had gone well.

The operation however had not been so successful after all and she told me that her time was limited and would I do her a big favour when the time came and arrange for a Union Jack to be put on her coffin. I didn't know how I was going to arrange this from Scotland, but I promised. I telephoned Worthy Down for advice and they came back to me to say that the undertaker would have a flag. I also

thought that it would be nice if I could get an ATS cap to put on the flag and again Worthy Down said that they couldn't help but to contact my association secretary who may help. I phoned Sheila in Edinburgh who advised me to phone the Bristol secretary who was Jackie Naysmith. When I explained the situation, Jackie knew Molly and had visited her in hospital. Jackie invited me to stay with her if I wanted to come and visit Molly in hospital. I thought it would be nice if I could visit Molly on the 22nd May as it was her birthday, but I was advised to make it sooner.

I flew to Bristol on the 9th May and Jackie (bless her) met me and we visited Molly the next day. Poor soul have moved to a nursing home that day and was very unhappy. I teased her about crying when she saw me but she was so pleased to see me and I was glad that I had made the effort. Jackie took our photo and we got it framed and put it where she could see it. I said I was keeping my eye on her. We visited every day for the few days that I was there. She was quite calm on the day I left and had accepted that it was the last time we would see each other. She blew a kiss and smiled, we looked at one another for a long time before I walked away. I left that night and Jackie returned me to the airport. I could not thank her enough for her kindness.

As there was no direct link to Molly I had to rely on whoever was on duty at the nursing home, one nurse whom I got friendly with was very good. On Molly's 76th birthday some of her family went to visit. On the 4th June, 13 days after her birthday at 9.15 am, Dee, the nurse telephone me to say that Molly had passed away at 9 am. On the day of Molly's funeral it poured with rain, I declared that even the angels wept for our friend. Jackie attended the funeral and got flowers in the ATS colours from Eileen, Milly and myself. A year has now passed by but we will always remember Molly.

PRIZE WINNING LIONESSES

Mrs A M K Schofield, Gray Gables, Middle Avenue,
Farnham, Surrey GU9 8JL



The winning combination of Jane Freebairn, Lynne Marsh, Alison Schofield and Sue Westlake are pictured here with their prizes.

For several years now the Royal Signals Association Aldershot have organised an annual "Quiz Night" for members of units and regimental associations from an ever-widening area, which this year encompassed West London, Reading and Southampton. Members of the WRAC Association, who had adopted the title "Lionesses" have been entering the competition for the last four years and now, in 2003, have gained second place out of an entry of 32 teams.

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.

WRAC NATIONAL REGISTER

Are you interested in trying to find old friends?

Did you serve/enlist between 1949 and 1992?

Why not join the WRAC National Register?

Contact:

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

COPY DEADLINE

Articles for the inclusion in the next edition of the *Lioness* must be received by

25 November 2003

JAY CONTINUES HER LETTERS...

After two or three months in the comfortable home-from-home billet, Jay came to face with the harsher prospects of army life, sharing her days and nights with crowds.

Routine office work as a kind of dogsbody to a demanding and fearsome Brigade Major took its toll on her shorthand and typing during the days, and nights were spent in a communal billet with snorers – again. However, friendships were quickly formed and the sharing of army life and experiences made up for shortcomings of the material kind.

Letter-writing to parents ceased, she was so near to home. Her days off were spent cycling home with her washing and the unexpired portion of the day's rations. One or two unkind notes survive, not suitable for reproduction, about the Brigade Major's demands on her time and shorthand limitations, but relief came with the award of a second stripe. This did mean, however, that more was expected of her and she had to take responsibility for a house-full of, fortunately fairly submissive, Privates whose usual vocal protestations only occasionally erupted into downright revolt.

Also, a transfer to the Army Kinema Service was a pleasant change; from here mobile cinemas were routed to outlying gun-sites, searchlight positions and other solitary outposts throughout Norfolk and parts of Suffolk, especially on the coastline, where perhaps the only diversion from dreary and lonely routine was the fortnightly visit of the mobile cinema. The fact that most of the films were of the training or morale-boosting variety did not detract from the pleasure; but this was enhanced by the showing of the latest all-dancing, all-singing feature from Hollywood. More often than not, if the 'tilly' hadn't broken down en route, the projector would pack up at a vital point in the film, to catcalls and foot stamping from the audience. Any diversion was acceptable!

Correspondence with the parents was resumed when Jay was sent on a WO and NCO's training course in Durham in the winter of 1943.

20 November 1943

Well, now we are settling down, getting to know each other and the weather being a bit better we are all, I think, enjoying ourselves. Certainly the days are not too long, we finish by 4.30 and then are free, but there's not much in the way of social life. Mostly my evenings are spent cleaning buttons, shoes and the usual bull. Often I'm in bed reading by 8.30.

The lectures are going well, although we are watched over all the time by eagle-eyed officers. We have to make a speech at the end of the course on a given subject. My subject, to my delight is CATS. Can't think what that has to do with the war effort but nonetheless I think I am as qualified as the next one! I DO miss Freddie, each time I see a local cat I am reminded of him. I do hope he is receiving excellent care in my absence?

Had a gas alarm yesterday for half an hour during which we had to wear gas masks, and then before the All-Clear, the fire alarm went off. Dashing in all directions at once. Tonight my partner and I are on fire watch duty so that means we are confined to barracks and will have to get up if the siren goes. We don't often get any air raid warnings up here in the frozen north, although I think Newcastle is a target and that is only 15 miles away.

Warrant Officers' and Non-Commissioned Officers' Course 28

No 9 Platoon, Neville's Cross, Durham

November 1943

Frightful address. So's the place. Half the intake, some four or five hundred, are in The House, the rest in Huts. Naturally, I'm among the 'rest'. Shared a taxi to Cambridge station with a RAF officer and he paid my fare. Good show! At Ely, where I had to change, I met two other girls from Cambridge so for the long journey I had company. Had to sit on our kitbags in the corridor as the train was already packed. From York to Durham it was standing room only packed like sardines, couldn't even move from one leg to another. We could see snow on the hills and it was snowing on our arrival at Durham, only an hour late. We were marched from the station to the camp, put into platoons and naturally separated from our pals. We had to find our own way in the dark to the hut allocated to us. Nobody seemed to know the way. Eventually I found mine but each time I left it I had great difficulty in finding it again among all the hundreds of others, falling into puddles, hedges, snowdrifts and wrong huts along the way.

Fortunately we can have a fire during the evenings. NOT during the day of course. It wouldn't burn at all the first night, so not very welcoming. The circumstances are horribly reminiscent of Northampton. The lecture rooms are just above freezing but thank goodness the NAAFI has a fire around which we congregate whenever we get the chance.

We have to cram in a lot of lectures on Army Organisation, Discipline, Pay, Messing, Welfare, Gas (got to go through yet another gas-chamber soon), Teaching, Drill, PT, Hygiene and other odds and ends. We are a mixed bunch, drivers, mechanics, clerks, cooks, electricians, AA people from gun-sites, on predictors or searchlight sites – even a German girl. Heaven help her unit, for she is a cook. Her husband joined the German army so she left the country in disgust. I wonder how she was accepted into the ATS?

Paid a visit to the hairdresser – 6d. for a shampoo and 6d. for a set. Had a bob's worth in the warm and dry and came out feeling much more civilised, although the attraction was the warmth.

The food is fairly magnificent; big breakfasts, huge dinners, tremendous teas and then things like sausages and beans for supper. I just wish it would make me fat so I could cope a bit better with the cold.

This afternoon five of us visited a local skating rink. Hired rickety skates and patched boots and had a splendid time. Afterwards to a café for yet more sausage and beans.

I found the cathedral during a walk I managed alongside the river. I have applied for a pass to Darlington and Whitley Bay for Sunday. I don't find many pals for these outings, most prefer to sit in the NAAFI or else fugging away in the cinema (which is free, by the way). I'd really rather go on my own so I don't usually broadcast the fact that I'm 'going over the wire'.

25 November 1943

I scarcely know where we have got to in the war, we do have a half-starved youth coming to sell newspapers in the camp and I buy one sometimes. There are newspapers in the lecture rooms for us to read which does help – when you can find time or remember to read them, but it is difficult to take it all in when you are occupied with so many activities.

Today we had our third cross-country run in the snow in our shorts and blouses, no stockings, but we were allowed gloves! Up and down the hills and alongside the river, about three miles. I fear these trips are going to get longer and longer. One mile the first time, two the second.

Janet and I went to Newcastle on Saturday afternoon. Fearfully grimy, shops very poor except, strangely enough, the sweet shops which are almost up to pre-war standard and very tempting. We crossed over magnificent bridges but unfortunately Janet was more interested in the shops than sightseeing so I shall have to go again on my own to explore. After church parade on Sunday I slipped off with the camp dog for a long walk by the river and through Durham itself. The dog deserted me half-way but found his way safely back to camp. Durham very handsome, but grimy and tired-looking.

At the moment I am on guard duty with six others at the camp entrance. Each one goes on sentry duty in the box outside for half an hour while I stay in the old log cabin alongside keeping warm and ordering them outside when it's their turn. I am not very popular.

Not feeling fit I went on sick parade with my cough. "Come back in two days' time if it is not better". When I took up this invitation they bunged me in the sick bay. Lovely. Warm, clean sheets, meals in bed, waited on hand and foot. Unfortunately only two days there – no temperature. If rigor mortis hasn't actually set in and you're found to be breathing, you're fit for duty.

Only ten more days to go; this morning we have a written exam and there is to be a drill competition and various other tests, just to make life unpleasant. I do wish it had been summer so that I could have got out and about in my free time. I did manage a visit to the cathedral where the verger told that Cromwell had used the place as a prison for several hundred marauding Scots who tore down statues and brass work and generally made a muck-up of the whole place. They broke the medieval windows and there are only two of them now, made up from smashed bits and pieces that were recovered. All the rest are modern coloured glass which is the reason they have not been removed for safe keeping for the duration of the war.

December 1943

Since writing last we have had innumerable exams and the Drill Competition. And guess what? WE, 9th Platoon WON IT. We were judged by one of our own Regimental Sgt Majors and a Company Sgt Major from the Durham Light Infantry and we were awarded the highest marks for months, apparently. We are glowing with pride. Never mind how well we have done in other subjects – at least we can MARCH – for what good that will do us. We are to lead the Band in the passing-out parade on Friday.

Last night we held the Company farewell party, first in the theatre and then adjourned to the NAAFI. We invited all the Company officers and some of the HQ staff (those we didn't have any disagreeable moments with during the course). A very good time and splendid feast was had by all. Tomorrow we get our travelling arrangements. Friday morning through yet another gas-chamber, in the afternoon the CO's parade, winding up with a concert in the evening.

Last Saturday I went to Darlington. I was waiting for a bus when a van drew up and the driver offered me a lift. He was a very pleasant sort of chap who told me all about the local places of interest – where Antony Eden's estate was; how the local pits are owned by Lord Londonderry; the church that Lewis Carroll attended and the church in Darlington whose minister had aided at the marriage ceremony for the Duke of Windsor (the minister had to move away because he had so many debts, the driver said). I walked round the town, quite a nice place, bought some Christmas cards and yes, some sweets.

Sunday morning by the nine-fifty train to Newcastle, had tea and buns in the WVS canteen then caught the electric train to Whitley Bay. Delightful little place, the sands and sea beautiful. I walked for miles, lots of houses bombed and finally found myself in the village of Cullercoats. Got back to Newcastle, walked round the town and over the bridges and paid a return visit to the WVS canteen.

We leave here on Saturday morning early and expect, with luck, to get to Cambridge in the evening. I'm sorry to tell you I've posted home a load of washing – I'm thoroughly ashamed of the colour but, honest I've only worn them one week. It's what living in huts does for you. Fortunately I had one respectable set to change into for the last medical inspection.

Routine was resumed for the next year, during which Jay had a short spell in Ely supervising an ATS searchlight team stationed there – even nearer home – so no need for letter-writing. Later she was sent on an anti-gas course at Winterbourne Gunner on Salisbury Plain. Unfortunately no correspondence remains of this time; it would be interesting to recall those days of constant trips through gas chambers – with and without! As it is, the experience remains hazy as would much else of those years had not the box-full of letters survived.

After D-Day life was of a different quality. Friends and acquaintances were now in France and life took on a more serious and urgent complexion. The Kinema Service was closed as customers departed. Life in Cambridge seemed of little importance. The AKS had formed up in Harpenden preparatory to continuing their work in France and Belgium and Jay was unceremoniously posted there to help out in the chaos that existed.

Memory is very clear, although there are no letters in existence, of Harpenden, of cold, uninviting billets in old houses with windows out, no fires, poor and scanty food and general mayhem.

Eventually Jay decided that nothing but a posting overseas would give her a chance to at last make some decisive effort to bring this war to its final and long-anticipated conclusion so she made the irrevocable step of "volunteering for overseas duty" recklessly uncaring about wherever "overseas" might be.

Obituaries

RITA JUDITH FISHWICK (née STUBBS)

Secretary, Darlington and South Durham Branch
of the WRAC Association



Serving and Social

Rita was a "small lady" with a "big heart".

She was born in Pakistan on 13 September 1942, where her father was an RSM and where she lived with her 2 brothers and sister for the first seven years of her life before returning to travel around Britain, and finally settle in Darlington.

Rita served in the WRAC (W/407186) from 1959 to 1961 as a Clerk – General Duties and was affectionately known as "Stubbsie".

She was a Councillor in Darlington for 28 years, and was Mayor of Darlington from 1991 – 1992. She had a great sense of public duty and was an avid supporter of Arsenal Football Club. She fulfilled a promise to "Dress Up" as a St Trinians Girl, when the "Gunners" won the Championship in 1991.

Rita was a long serving member of The Royal British Legion, for whom she sold poppies for 38 years. Her interests were many, including Case Worker for SSAFA, Secretary of Arthritis Care, Secretary of The Gulf Support Group as well as being a life member of the WRAC Association. She was a founder member and secretary of the Darlington and South Durham branch and, although our branch is small, Rita was proud of it and held it dear to her heart. Ten years ago Rita had major cardiac surgery but in spite of this and other health problems lived life to the full. She will be sorely missed. She died suddenly on 28 December 2002 aged 60 years.

The funeral service and Requiem Mass was held at St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church. A piper preceded the coffin (Rita was a member of the Clan Cameron). The church was well filled and included members of our local WRNS Association as well as 10 members of the WRAC Association. Rita's WRAC beret was on her coffin.

She was married to Don, her husband for 41 years. Our love, sympathy and thoughts go to him and to her son, daughter, and brothers and sister.

JOSEPHINE MARY LAWTON



Geraldine and Josie at Home after Medal Presentation

The sudden death of Josephine Mary Lawton at the age of 52 will, I know, have shocked many of her friends.

Josie (as she liked to be called) joined the WRAC in 1967 at the age of 17. She spent most of her army career in the UK, with the exception of two postings to 68 Sqn RCT in Germany.

It was during her tour of duty at 12 RSME Regt RE in 1981 that I first met Josie. She was the WRAC Staff Sergeant within the MT section and I was the SNCO Admin. One of my fondest memories of Josie was during that tour of duty. It was the time she decided that she would teach me to drive. For her bravery, she won the admiration of all my friends as they would all rather jump out of a plane blindfolded than sit in the passenger seat with me at the wheel. She had a little old mini (her pride and joy) and she had thoughtfully put blocks under the pedals so that I could reach them (I am somewhat vertically challenged). On no occasion did she ever show any sign of fear, impatience or embarrassment despite all the little mishaps I had. For that I will always be grateful and have enjoyed the freedom of the road ever since.

Josie left the WRAC in 1982 and spent a short spell in civvy street. In 1983 she returned as a Recruiting Sergeant in the Lincoln Recruiting Office, progressing to Office Manager in charge of all enlistments.

Away from work, Josie was a keen golfer and supporter of a number of Charities. In June 2002 she completed a 16 mile marathon in aid of Cancer Research.

I feel privileged to have known her, lucky to have been taught by her and like so many of her friends, miss her.

Mary Linnegan

MRS LOIS BULLEN (née TWIGG)

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of our Chairlady, Mrs Lois Bullen, who passed away on the 21 January 2003 after long and painful battle again cancer.

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We all feel very upset. Lois was originally a member of the Bradford Branch of the WRAC Association, and became the founder member of the Shipley Branch and worked very hard to get it organised, and encouraged new members to join us. We soon had an organised Branch with a varied programme of Speakers, Film Shows etc, and everyone enjoyed our monthly meetings. We shall all miss Lois very much, but we will continue to keep Shipley Branch going as she would have wished. We will remember with pride all the hard work she did to make it such a happy branch.

Shipley Branch

WO2 JEANNIE KERR

Jeannie Kerr was born on the 27 March 1946 in a small mining village in County Durham, the youngest of six. She joined the Women's Royal Army Corps in 1964 and, on completion of both basic and trade training in May 1965, her first proper posting was to 16 Signal Regiment, Krefeld where she was eager to learn and put her training to the test, a perfectionist in all she did.

After her first tour in Germany Jeannie was posted to Guildford to show her skills as training NCO, a posting she thoroughly enjoyed. On return to her trade as a Communications Centre Operator and later Data Telegraphist, she served in Edinburgh, Catterick, Salisbury, Cyprus and finally as a Warrant Officer II with the TA in Nottingham.

As a Senior NCO Jeannie became aware how unfair it was that ladies had to buy new outfits to attend Regimental Dinner Nights or go in uniform when the men had a mess dress to wear, so with the encouragement of Brigadier Heaney DWRAC Jeannie designed the WRAC mess dress. Although things have changed a lot since those days I am sure it saved a lot of ladies a considerable amount of money.

Jeannie left the service in 1974 and settled down to married life, but I know she always wondered how much more she would have achieved had she remained in the WRAC. An intelligent, friendly lady with a bubbly personality, always helpful and caring towards others, she died suddenly on 2 March 2003 and will be remembered with great affection by all her friends.

Dot Ryder

CHRISTINE (CHRIS) MacKINNON 25 December 1919 – 8 March 2003

Sadly, Chris died in Norfolk after a short illness.

Chris MacKinnon joined the ATS in WW2. She met and

married a bomber pilot who, she said, was the image of John Mills, the actor. Sadly, her husband's plane was shot down during a raid and Chris received that dread telegram advising her that her husband was 'missing in action...'

Chris learned from other men on the same raid that several of the crew had bailed out of the doomed bomber and they were convinced that there were survivors. The telegram of course, made no mention of possible survivors so Chris set out to establish her husband's fate only to be met with "doors closing in my face". Undaunted, Chris (in her ATS uniform of course) and her mother-in-law presented themselves at the Air Ministry but were denied entry. After several visits, they somehow managed to get past the guards and found their way to the most senior officer. He refused to see them so they took over the two seats outside his office and refused to leave until he agreed to answer their questions. Faced with such determination, he eventually relented. However, he was unable to establish the names or the fate of the crew members who were seen parachuting from the plane. Chris never saw her husband again.

Later, whilst involved in Army PR, Chris was required to keep a packed suitcase in her London office as she was often called away at a moment's notice. On one memorable assignment, she found herself in Aden with a publicity crew who were gathering information and photographs for various recruiting publications and it was there she met a young servicewoman whom she would encounter again later in her career. Of that period, Chris always said that her greatest thrill was when she was required to 'look after' her hero, Charlton Heston, at a PR function.

Chris was persuaded to come out of early retirement and return to uniform to take over as the Army Careers Officer, Women's Services, at Blackheath ACIO in the 1970s. It was there that I met her for the first time – and it was there that she met again that WRAC girl from Aden. Chris met each of the three WRAC members of staff, Sue Marcroft, me, and the third Recruiter who promptly reminded her of the last time they had met: "Ma'am, do you remember filming in Aden, when you insisted I stand on the very edge of a sheer drop? Another inch and I'd have been killed!" A moment of thought and Chris remembering the incident said "But Sgt Clewlow, it made such a good picture, don't you think?"

Chris MacKinnon brought to the job of ACO a great sense of humour, support for her staff and a social calendar never before experienced in that office! Later, she took over as ACO of an integrated office, taking over from Col 'Tommy' Thomas, RCT when he moved to the St Albans office. Further re-organisation of the London offices and Chris moved to the post of ACO CLRD but she kept her links with her former colleagues – and her social activities continued of course.

Chris brought a breath of fresh air to recruiting and the young applicants responded to her genuine warmth and interest in them and their future careers. I am sure the same was felt by all her staff in Blackheath and CRLD.

On retirement, Chris first moved to the South Coast then

eventually to Norfolk to be near her oldest friends. Apart from her many friends and interests, she had a lifelong love of animals, particularly dogs, and rescued or took in dogs who had been abandoned, ill-treated or needed 'a bit of love in their lives' and they received that in abundance.

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I last saw Chris at her home in Norfolk in the late 1990s and she was in very good form. She will be greatly missed by many people.

Pat Smith

EDITH COOK (née CARRINGTON)

Edith was born in Hartlepool on 1 October 1938, the second of four children.

At 15 years of age, she went to work at a wool factory in Darlington. It was there, at 17?, that she decided, with her two friends, to join the TA. She loved it. She did her driver training and passed her test with flying colours. After her second camp, she joined the WRAC. After her basic training she went on to become a clerk, reaching the rank of Corporal.

Edith then went to Germany and Singapore and, on her return to the UK, to Middlesbrough as a recruiter. Edith left the Army to look after her sister Maureen.

In 1965 Edith married the love of her life, Rayner. They had two daughters, Linda and Pamela.

In 1991 Edith joined the WRAC Association and was an active member, attending meetings and functions, going on trips to France, Belgium and Holland. She paraded with our Standard at the Menin Gate and visited many War Cemeteries, on our trips with the Normandy Vets.

She was a member of the WRAC Dinner Club and loved going to Stoke where she made many friends.

Edith died on 16 May leaving her husband Rayner, daughters, Linda and Pamela and three Grandchildren, Joe, Katie and Danielle. She will be greatly missed by her family and her many friends in the WRAC Association who loved and respected her, and were proud to call her our friend.

Cleveland Branch

PHYLLIS LOWRY-HILL

Phyllis was born on 17 February 1920 in Constantinople, (now Istanbul) Turkey where our father was in business. Soon after, the British had to leave Turkey and the family came back to England and settled in Greenwich. She was educated locally and then joined the Commercial Union Insurance Company in the City as a secretary and it was there that she developed her interest in amateur operatics, having a fine voice and appearing in many productions.

In May 1943 she joined the ATS and trained at Guildford. Her first posting was to 487 Bty, 137 (M) HAA Regt RA

located on North London gunsites until after D-Day. In December 1944 the unit relocated to Belgium as part of the air defences in Antwerp and she was there on VE Day before moving to an airfield near Hamburg. She returned home in April 1945 having been selected for officer training at Windsor. Three tours in the UK followed and in 1949 she was posted to Singapore and I think that she enjoyed that tour as much as any. One of her duties was to be appointed Registrar for Births, Marriages and Deaths for the Far East Land Forces. This was at the time of the emergency in Malaya and required a good deal of travelling including to Hong Kong and up into Malaya. After further UK tours she was posted to BAOR as Adjutant of 12 Bn WRAC in 1960 and then promotion to Major in 1964 took her to Aden as OC of the WRAC Coy, returning to UK in 1966. That year she was married to Larry Lowry-Hill, a former RAF officer whom she had met during her service in Aden. She was then on her last posting, at Donnington and in January 1967 she retired from the WRAC.

All in all, a pretty impressive Service history and one of which she was rightly proud. She so enjoyed reminiscing about her life in the Service, particularly the years that she served abroad. For most of us, it is not just her Service career that she will be remembered for, but the later years when she was so involved with charities. In March 1971 her association with Kings College Hospital began as Secretary to the Friends charity. When she formally retired in 1994 at the age of 74 after 23 years there, Phyllis continued to go to the office every week to do the books and to work as Treasurer in their flower shop, in spite of her severe handicap. Also during this time she spent one other day each week at the Save the Children shop in Eltham. Other voluntary interests were the East Lewisham Conservative Party, and the Women's Royal Army Corps Association, Greater London Branch, of which she was Secretary from 1976 – 1981. So, a lifetime devoted to public and charitable service gathering countless friends along the way. She was always helping and supporting others and never forgetting anyone.

She was, of course, a very positive and direct lady who could appear at times a trifle bossy! She would even inform the nurses at Lewisham Hospital in very clear terms if she thought that anything should be done differently, although in the two months that she was there a great relationship developed between her and the nurses and care assistants during the wonderful care that they gave to her.

She was a super sister to me, to her two sisters-in-law, Joyce and Lilian, a much loved "Auntie Phyl", as she was always known, to our children, to the grandchildren, and to many children of relatives and friends that she regarded as her extended family.

Phyllis died on 12 April and representatives from all the voluntary organisations mentioned joined family members for her cremation service at Lewisham Crematorium, Hither Green on 23 April. She will be sadly missed by all, but never forgotten.

John Baldwin (Phyllis's brother)

MISS AUDREY ADAMSON

I first met Audrey Adamson when I took up an appointment in the School's Liaison Organisation as WSLO in North East District, York in the early 1970's where she was a Staff Captain in the office of the Director Women's Services in North East District. We soon became firm friends and remained so until her death in March 2002. Her friendship never wavered and she could always be relied to give wise, sound advice.

Audrey joined the ATS in August 1941 and was posted to units in UK during the War years. In 1949 the ATS became the WRAC and from 1948 – 1965 Audrey served in numerous postings both at Home and overseas including, MELF, BAOR and Cyprus/FARELF on two occasions. She was awarded the General Service Medal with the Malaya/Cyprus clasps and through these years rose to become a Warrant Officer and was awarded the MBE in the 1963 New Years Honours list for her meritorious service in FARELF and UK. She was discharged in August 1965 when she was appointed to a Commission in the WRAC. As an Officer, Audrey continued her Army career in various postings in UK until retiring from the Army in York in August 1975.

She then returned to her beloved home near Durham where she worked for 'Friends of the Earth', and looked after her widowed mother. On her mother's death she and her sister, Irene, moved into a small house near Crook, Co Durham, where I continued to see her on many happy occasions over the years. She and her sister were generous hosts. Audrey loved to attend WRAC Reunion events and had many good memories of her life in the Army that she had enjoyed while serving Her King, Queen and Country with distinction over 34 years.

Sue Hoppe (Captain Retd QARANC)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for next year are due for payment on 01 October 2003

Members of Headquarter Branch should send their subscription together with their membership card and SAE to:

WRAC Association
AGC Centre
Worthy Down
Winchester
SO21 2RG

MAKING THE INEVITABLE EASIER TO COPE WITH

by Melanie Adams, National Accounts Manager for Charities

Funeralcare, The Co-operative Group's Funeral Service

We plan for most things but many of us are still reluctant to contemplate life's great certainty...its end. Melanie Adams a senior advisor for the UK's leading funeral director the Co-operative Group's funeral Service explains why knowing in advance about funeral procedures makes good common sense.

We meet them on a regular basis; those grieving people who, having lost someone close really do not know what to do about arranging a funeral. They just want "to get things sorted out" at a difficult time and over with as quickly as possible. They settle for whatever everyone else has and that will suffice. As a nation we "deal" with funerals but don't necessarily take a step back to really think about how we could celebrate a life rather than mourn the sad passing of a loved one.

It's understandable that many of us find it hard, or even distasteful, to think about funeral arrangements other than at a time when we need to make them. Yet most of us will have to cope with the loss of a family member or friend at some stage and the last thing we need when we're grieving is to have to deal with procedures we know little or nothing about.

Recent research showed that more than four in ten of us know little or nothing about what needs to be done when someone dies. Nearly half of us who've arranged a funeral wished we'd known more about what the person who died really wanted.

We believe that a funeral offers the opportunity to make a unique tribute to a unique life and everybody should be remembered in the way that they would wish.

When a death occurs

When someone passes away, there are so many things that need to be considered and a number of key decisions to be made:

- Is it to be burial or cremation?
- Will you want to pay your last respects (Many people find it very comforting)?
- Are there any special touches you want to bring to the arrangements? Maybe a particular piece of music, or perhaps they were a member of a particular organisation which could be represented. Perhaps a favourite poem or passage of text could be read.
- Where will the funeral ceremony take place?
- If cremation is chosen, what will happen to the cremated remains?
- Is a memorial/headstone required?
- Should there be flowers or donations to a particular charity/organisation?
- How much will it cost?

The questions can be endless.

Today funeral arrangements can be as diverse as you wish. From a straightforward "quiet" event to an elaborate horse drawn procession, it is all down to personal choice. Knowing that you have carried out your loved one's wishes is so much better than the line "it's just what they would have wanted".

Funeralcare is offering special benefits for the ATS and WRAC Association Members and their immediate family, should the need arise. A £25.00 discount off Funeral Pre-payment Plans (the ability to arrange and pay for a funeral in advance) and also a 5% discount off our Co-operative Funeral Services. If you would like to receive information about our Plans or to find your nearest funeral director, please call Freephone **0800 289 120**, quoting code 144/B/C.

ASHWORTH Mrs Margaret Ashworth, née Robinson, of Bradford on 22 February 2003. ATS

BELFIELD Mrs Betty Gene Belfield, née Davidson, of London on 5 February 2003. ATS

BELL Mrs Mary Bell, née Brown, of Luton on 3 February 2003. ATS

BIGGS Mrs Jean Biggs, née Kerr, of Redcar on 2 March 2003. WRAC

BILL Mrs Constance M Bill, née King, of Harlow on 28 April 2003. ATS

BIRD Mrs Ethel Bird, née Willert, of Rotherham on 10 March 2003. ATS

BRIANT Miss Dorothy Briant of Bournemouth on 23 May 2003. ATS

BROCKLEBANK Miss Angela Ruth Brocklebank of Midhurst in 2002. ATS

BUGLER Mrs Rhoda Bugler, née Townsend, of Bridport on 15 May 2003. ATS

BULLEN Mrs Lois Bullen, née Twigg, of Shipley on 21 January 2003. ATS

BUTLER Mrs Mary Butler, née Allison, of Leeds on 29 May 2003. ATS

CARNELL Miss Joan (M E) Carnell of Cranleigh on 20 April 2003. ATS

CHANNING Mrs Alice Mary Channing, née Parr, of Newton Abbott. ATS

COLTMAN Mrs Louisa Coltman, née Bowering, of Thurmaston. ATS

COOK Mrs Edith Cook, née Carrington, of Hartlepool on 16 May 2003. WRAC

COWDREY Mrs E M Cowdrey, née Lovett, of Weymouth on 23 January 2003. ATS

COWNLEY Mrs R F Cownley of Newbury on 10 October 2002. ATS

CRADDOCK Mrs Doreen Craddock, née Pratt, of Crewe on 16 April 2003. ATS

CRUMP Miss Winifred Crump of Birmingham on 20 March 2003. ATS

DAVIES Mrs Gladys Davies, née Jones, of Huntington on 26 December 2002. ATS

DAVIES Mrs Sheila M Davies, née Wylde, of St Albans on 8 February 2003. ATS

De CHADAREVIAN Mrs J De Chadarevian, née Sergeant, of Abingdon. ATS

De TEMMERMAN Mrs Freda De Temmerman of South Australia on 12 January 2003. ATS

EASTICK Mrs Nancy Eastick of Norwich on 30 March 2003. ATS

EASTON Mrs Winifred Easton of Weymouth on 7 June 2003. ATS

EWEN Mrs Jean Ewen, née Innes, of Aberdeen in December 2002. ATS

FINCH Mrs M Joan Finch, née Ham, of Shoreham by Sea on 21 May 2003. ATS

GAMBLE Mrs Mary F Gamble of Sheffield on 16 January 2003. ATS

GRANT Mrs Margaret Joyce Grant, née Bottle, of Bicester on 30 January 2003. ATS

HAMBLIN Mrs Bertha Joan Hamblin, née Blackwell, of Rochester on 29 January 2003. ATS

HAMMETT Mrs Agnes Jane Hammett of Dundee in 2003. ATS

HANDLEY Mrs Jane Handley, née Cobb, of Blackpool on 17 February 2003. ATS

HARDING Mrs Ena Reid Harding, née Watts, of Middleton in March 2003. ATS

HARRISON Mrs Ruth Harrison, née Marshall, of Bradford on 10 February 2003. ATS

HENDERSON Mrs Gladys (Trudi) Henderson, née Chesworth, of Tipton on 18 May 2003. ATS

HENDERSON Mrs Margaret Henderson, née Dixon, of South Shields on 10 May 2003. ATS

HODGKINSON Mrs Enid Hodgkinson, née Stanley, of Thornton Cleveleys. ATS

HOMFRAY Mrs Rhona M Homfray, née Breton, of the Isle of Wight on 26 February 2003. ATS

HOWLAND-JACKSON Mrs E A U Howland-Jackson, née Nicol, of Rowledge on 30 January 2003. ATS

HORNBY Miss Susan Margaret Hornby of London on 22 November 2002. WRAC

HUMPHRYS Mrs C M Humphrys, née Cook, of Romney Marsh

HURLEY Mrs Rosie Hurley, née Walton, of Shelford on 12 December 2002. ATS

JAMES Miss Enid James of Bristol on 11 March 2003. WAAF

JOHNSON Mrs Margaret Johnson, née Knight, of Brixham on 31 March 2003. ATS

JOWETT Mrs Phyllis Jowett of Barnsley on 23 March 2003. ATS

KENNY Mrs Monica M Kenny, née Harvey, of Bradford on 6 February 2003. ATS

KERR Mrs Jeannie Kerr on 2 March 2003. WRAC

KIRK Mrs Mary Kirk, née Dobbs, of Chester on 25 March 2003. ATS

LAVENDER Mrs Anita Jean Lavender, née Barker, of Gillingham in April 2003. ATS

LEACH Mrs Janice Leach of Milton Keynes on 3 January 2003. ATS

LOWRY-HILL Mrs Phyllis Lowry-Hill, née Baldwin, of London on 12 April 2003. ATS/WRAC

MACKINNON Mrs Christine (Chris) MacKinnon of Norfolk on 8 March 2003. ATS/WRAC

MEDCALF Mrs Noel Eugenie Medcalf, née Broadbent, of Blackpool on 9 March 2003. ATS

MELZER Mrs Jeanne Melzer, née Boardman, of Leigh on Sea on 30 April 2003. ATS

MENDUM Mrs Florence Mendum, née Keehn, of Colchester on 15 June 2003. ATS

MOOR Miss Brenda F E Moor of Tunbridge Wells on 23 January 2003. ATS

MORGAN Mrs Frances Morgan of Omagh on 6 January 2003. ATS

MORRIS Mrs Emily Jane Morris, née Summers, of Campbelltown (S. Aus). ATS

NASH Mrs Doreen Nash, née Edwards, on 14 May 2003. ATS

NIMMO Lt Col (Retd) Helen Nimmo OBE of Edinburgh on 4 July 2003. ATS/WRAC

NORCOTT Miss Mildred Emma Norcott of Stafford on 30 May 2003. ATS/WRAC

OWENS Miss Margery J O Owens of Plymouth on 28 January 2003. ATS/WRAC

PASCOE-PRICE Miss C K Pascoe-Price of Rochester on 4 April 2003. ATS

PATIENCE Ms Jessie Patience of Inverness on 14 January 2003. ATS

PETFORD Mrs Sheila May Petford, née Leech, of Southport on 31 July 1997. WRAC

PHILLIPS Mrs Beryl Phillips, née Pakeman, of Cardiff on 19 March 2003. ATS

PICKETT Mrs Audrey D Pickett of Bexhill-on-Sea on 28 June 2003. ATS

PURSER Mrs A H A Purser, née Haines, of Weymouth on 3 June 2003. ATS

RICHARDSON Miss Phyllis Richardson of Salisbury on 23 April 2003. ATS

ROBINSON Mrs Renee Robinson, née Johnson, of Keighley in January 2003. ATS

SMITH Mrs Annie Smith, née Ryan, of Wakefield on 23 April 2003. ATS

SPENCER Mrs Margaret Annie Joan Spencer, née Bartlett, of Bridport in January 2003. ATS

STEVENSON Miss Margaret (Peggy) Stevenson of Downpatrick on 20 June 2003. ATS

STUART Mrs Eileen Stuart, née Winter, of Bexhill-on-Sea on 16 June 2003. ATS

TAYLOR Mrs Muriel Kathleen Taylor of West Vancouver on 25 March 2002. ATS

THISTLETON Mrs Audrey Thistleton, née Jones, of Stoke-on-Trent 5 March 2003. ATS

THURLEY Mrs Elizabeth Thurley, née Hill, of Stafford on 31 May 2003. ATS

TURNER Miss Edith A M Turner of Halesworth on 7 May 2003. ATS

VICKERS Miss Barbara Vickers of North Curry on 19 May 2003. ATS/WRAC

WALKER Mrs Barbara F Walker, formerly James, née Cole, of Horley on 9 January 2003. ATS

WEAVER Mrs Daisy Florence Weaver, née Peacock, of Sunderland on 30 April 2003. ATS

WEBB Mrs Gwendoline Webb, née Old, of Henfield on 14 January 2003. ATS

WEBB Mrs Isobel Webb, née McCandless, of Belfast in February 2003. ATS

WELSH Mrs Doris Welsh, née Lowery, of Bear Park on 23 February 2003. ATS

WHITE Mrs Angela Rosemary White, née Jensen, of the Wirral on 4 November 2002. ATS/WRAC

WHYTE Miss Florence Whyte of Glasgow on 27 March 2003. ATS

WILES Mrs Joan Wiles of Heanor in April 2003. ATS

WYSE Mrs Violet Lucy Wyse of London on 14 April 2003. ATS

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT THE GREAT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
PDF Compressor Free Version **ON 12 APRIL 2003**

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman opened the meeting by reading the letter received from the Palace which thanked the Association for the book of condolence that had been compiled following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

She was sure that the thoughts of all present were with those members of the Association and other soldiers on active service in Iraq and that they joined her in hoping for a safe and early return.

Although the membership was beginning to fall off, she was delighted to see that there were 550 members gathered in Birmingham for this Grand Reunion and confident that, with its proud past, the Association had a vibrant future if it wished to grasp it.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following:

Brig Dame Mary Pihl, Brig Dame Joanna Kelleher, Col S P Richards, Col The Lady Martha Bruce, Lt Col M Rook, Capt P M Cooper, Mrs J McLellan and Miss B Killick.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated and no comments received.

It was proposed that the Chairman sign them as a true record.

Proposed: Bournemouth Seconded: Shropshire
Unanimously agreed

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

There was no business arising.

5. COUNCIL REPORT

Lioness

There has been an excellent response to the appeal for regular donations. This, together with other contributions that have been made, has ensured that the journal is financially secure for the foreseeable future.

Revised Rules

The revised Rule Book is in the process of being published. As soon as it is received back from the printers, it will be circulated. Meanwhile, the draft that was published in the Lioness last year should be used for reference if required.

Branch Closures

The Association is going through an inevitable period of transition. More and more branches are closing due to the difficulty of finding members willing or able to hold office. The problem is how to support the members of those branches and maintain human contact. Currently, on closure of a branch, the membership can move to another branch or join HQ Branch which is now over 1000 strong. This is generally satisfactory but not always.

The Executive Committee will meet to investigate whether there is a need to set up additional structures. Hopefully other groupings, such as the various dinner clubs, will come to have more formal relationships with the Association.

Composition of Council

Approximately 3 years ago, all the retired Directors WRAC were invited to become Life Vice Presidents and they have brought with them to Council the accumulated wisdom of many years. Since then, we have looked to fill those positions on Council which had become vacant and have been lucky in the number and quality of willing volunteers who have presented themselves. These newer members of Council are: Lt Col Nicky Murdoch, Mrs Janice Robinson, Mrs Anne Deakin and Mrs Andrea Denham. The inclusion of younger people, some still serving and all still active, will assure the future of the Association.

Executive Committee Report

The report of the Executive Committee is included in the Report of the Council as the main work undertaken during the year had been the organisation of this Grand Reunion and the results of their deliberations were therefore apparent to be seen. However, they had also scrutinised the applications for awards of Certificates of Appreciation and the Council had approved the following:

Mrs Irene Raffell	Chelmsford
Mrs Queenie Headington	Medway
Mrs Joyce Nicholls	Hereford
Mrs Mary Nicholls	Hereford
Miss Brenda Killick	Aldershot
Mrs Mercy Jordan	Canterbury
Mrs Ena Price	Hereford
Mrs Joyce Wright	Chelmsford

BENEVOLENT FUND REPORT

It was proposed that the Benevolent Fund be accepted

Proposed: Chelmsford Seconded: Cambridge
Unanimously agreed

7. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Audited accounts for the year ending 31 October 02 were circulated in the last edition of the Lioness.

You will recall that I started the report last year by commenting on the appalling year in the stock market and the effect that this had had on the Association's funds. I am afraid that I bring you no better news this year, our investments having fallen a further £535,619 in value. However, as you will see when we turn to the statement of financial activities, we have again achieved an excess of income over expenditure. The actual value of the total funds of the Association, including the Benevolent Funds was therefore £3,942,414, some £466,445 less than at the end of the previous year

Turning to the statement of financial activities, you will see that the Association, excluding the Benevolent Funds, had a net income for the year of £57,883 which has more than offset the losses in investments. Much of this increased income was due to legacies, a very welcome response to our appeal for donations towards the cost of producing the Lioness and to one very generous donation of £20,000. As you will see at the bottom of the page, the Association is now worth £312,426, £17,407 more than at the end of the previous year.

Unfortunately, the Benevolent Fund has not fared so well. Although it achieved an excess of income over expenditure of £13,217, the investment losses far outweigh this and the value of the funds has dropped by over £480,000. Despite this, both the Benevolent Fund and the PRMF are still healthy enough to meet their commitments and while the markets remain so unstable, the trustees have adopted a policy to maintain high levels of cash in our deposit account as opposed to making any further investments.

Looking at the financial activities in a little more detail. A comparison of the Lioness publication costs cannot be made from this statement as, you may recall, our auditors did not separate out the Lioness costs in 2001 and only included donations in the income. However, in that year Lioness expenditure exceeded income by £1,860. In 2002 you will see that income actually exceeded expenditure by £165! In reality this £165 has probably been expended on the Lioness through postage of those copies that are sent out through the HQ, especially overseas, and not through the distributors.

You will see that total investment income is down by approximately £18,000 which unfortunately is to be expected in the current situation. Donations are also much reduced, but it should be noted that the 2001 figure is unusually high due to unexpected large legacies received during that year.

Grants and annuities from the Benevolent Fund and the PRMF were made to the value of £199,053, an increase of over £27,000 on the previous year. However, in the current economic climate it is unlikely that we will be able to sustain this amount of expenditure in the foreseeable future and the level of grants is set to revert to the level set for 2001 to ensure that funds will be available in the future for the on-going need to support ex-servicewomen in financial hardship.

Despite the state of the stock market and the losses that the Association Funds have suffered, the funds remain sound and we can meet our commitments without having to realise any of our investments.

It was proposed that the financial statements be accepted
Proposed: Bury Seconded: Stafford
Unanimously agreed

8. LIONESS REPORT

Last year, for the first time in many years, possibly the first time ever, the Lioness was not produced at a loss. This was largely due to the generosity of both individuals and branches who donated £4,770 towards its costs. As a result of the response to the Chairman's appeal to life members for regular donations towards the Lioness, I

confidently expect the journal's financial position to be maintained for the foreseeable future. £3,250 has been pledged annually by 359 members. £2,171 of this has been Gift Aided which means that we will be able to claim back tax to the value of £607.

As you are aware, there has been no advertising in the Lioness for the last 2 years since Combined Services Publications went bankrupt. The possibility of resurrecting some advertising revenue was investigated last year through an independent sales agent. However, the projected revenue was not considered sufficient for the amount of additional work that would be involved and as the journal is now on a much sounder footing, it was decided not to pursue this course.

The publication dates of the Lioness were changed at the end of last year so that the journal is now sent out at the beginning of March and September, one month later than previously. The reasons for this change were twofold. First, so that articles and photographs concerning Acts of Remembrance in November could be included in the first edition of each year, which is much more appropriate than the later edition. Second, to overcome the administrative problems associated with a publication date so near to Christmas.

Although the journal's finances have now been sorted out, another problem may be arising, although I hope that this is just a temporary aberration. Until now sufficient copy has always been received from members to fill each edition. That which arrives after the cut-off date is held over for the next magazine and normally within a month of one Lioness going out we have at least a third of the copy for the next one. However, this is not the case at the moment. Hopefully, I am worrying about nothing and lots of articles and letters will come flooding in over the next two months.

9. RESOLUTIONS

- a. Motions of Urgency
There were no motions of urgency
- b. Council Resolutions
There were no Council Resolutions

Branch Resolutions

Aberdeen – That the tartan designed for the Association in 1996 be officially adopted.

The Chairman informed the meeting that this particular tartan has never been registered to the Association and that the Council declined to adopt it in 1996 and again in 2002, there already being a “uniform” laid down in the Rules.

There is very little of the original bolt left and the manufacturer is disinclined to make any more without an assured market as a bolt costs £700 – £800 to manufacture. The cloth currently retails at approximately £25 per metre and he can make kilted skirts for £60 – £65.

Discussion was thrown open to the floor of the meeting prior to a vote on the amended proposal that the Chairman raise the matter again with Council.

For: 7 branches Against: 17 branches Not carried

- d. Election of Vice Presidents of Council
Branches were asked to ratify the election of Lt Col A K Brown for a third year in office.

Proposed: Bury Decondal Gloucestershire
Unanimously agreed

Branches were asked to ratify the election of Mrs J M C Robinson for her first year in office.

Proposed: Weymouth Seconded: Bournemouth
Unanimously agreed

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a. There will be a memorial service in May at Great Yarmouth to mark the 60th anniversary of the deaths of 27 ATS killed in a bombing raid.
- b. The results of the Grand Reunion Prize Draw were announced.

CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

At her first address to the Association in Cardiff in 2000, the Chairman had declared her aims for the Association. The tools for the job were now in place – stability in the HQ, the Lioness on a sound financial footing, a set of Rules to take the Association forward and new members of Council who will be a powerhouse of ideas and enthusiasm.

She informed the meeting that she was not going to stand for election again as she thought that it was time to hand the torch on to the next generation. Lt Col Sue Westlake had been unanimously elected by Council and would take over as Vice President after the next meeting. Not only was she both well qualified and well placed to take on this role, but the Chairman was confident that she also had support across the generations. The Executive Committee, under her chairmanship, had ensured that this reunion was a success.

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place in the Victory Services Club, London on Saturday 03 April 2004, the time to be confirmed at a later date.

Signed as a true record.

.....
(Chairman)

Date

COPY DEADLINE

Articles for the inclusion in the next edition of the *Lioness* must be received at Association HQ by

25 November 2003

CORRIDORS OF POWER

Do you remember who *really* wields the power in the Army?

Brigadier	Leaps tall buildings with a single bound. More powerful than a shunting engine. Faster than a speeding bullet. Gives policy to God
Colonel	Leaps short buildings with a single bound. More powerful than a steam engine. Is just as fast as a speeding bullet. Walks on water (if the sea is calm). Talks with God
Lt Colonel	Leaps short buildings with a running start (in favourable winds). Is almost as fast as a speeding bullet. Walks on water ~ in indoor swimming pools. Talks to God if special request is approved.
Major	Barely clears a nissen hut. Loses tug-of-war with a steam engine. Can fire a speeding bullet. Swims well. Is occasionally addressed by God
Captain	Almost succeeds when trying to leap tall buildings. Is run over by trains. Can sometimes handle a gun without inflicting self-injury. Dog paddles. Talks to animals.
Lieutenant	Runs into tall buildings. Recognises trains two out of three times. Is not issued with ammunition. Can stay afloat if properly instructed in the use of a life jacket. Talks to walls.
2nd Lieutenant	Falls over doorsteps when trying to enter buildings. Says, "Look at choo-choo". Is never issued with a gun or ammunition. Plays in mud puddles. Mumbles to herself.
Sgt Major	Lifts tall buildings and walks under them. Kicks steam engines off the track. Catches speeding bullets in her teeth and eats them. Freezes water with a single glance. SHE IS GOD!

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