

LIONESS





WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

(Incorporating the QMAAC & ATS Comrades Association)

Registered Charity No. 206184, founded in 1919

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Message from the Vice President

I have to start this foreword to Lioness with a huge thanks to all our members who came to the Grand Reunion in Harrogate in March. It was a fantastic weekend long party and, from the comments received afterwards, I feel the North Yorkshire Band of the Royal British Legion may become a permanent feature of our reunions in the future. We are now starting to plan an event in 2017 to celebrate the centenary of the formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and details of the date and location will be communicated as soon as they are confirmed; please support it. Mention must also be made of the National Armed Forces Day held in Guildford in June. Lots of respect to those who marched up the High Street following our National Standard; the day was boiling hot and the march was long, I hope the cheers of the crowd helped although I am sure the WRAC Association fleeces did not! For those who were there in 1988 when the WRAC were awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Guildford I hope the march brought back many memories.



The Association is now starting to look at increasing publicity as we seek to attract new members, and those who are members of Branches will have seen the new leaflet. Posters are on their way and these along with the website and the Facebook page are starting to gain some pace. I am sure we can do more to publicise the Association and all ideas are welcome.

We have embarked upon a programme of maintenance for the WRAC Association plot at the National Memorial Arboretum. This will include extensive re-planting and the replacement of the timbers around the raised beds. The work will be in phases and the first of these, the clearance of the rear 3 beds and replacement of the timbers was completed in July. In time we hope to be able to put in a paved path to the central plinth to improve access to the plot for those with reduced mobility.

Turning to the issue of finance. All of those who attended the AGM or have seen the audited accounts listed within Lioness will be aware that, overall, we are in the fortunate position of having quite considerable investments. However that money is not held in one 'pot' available for use across the Association's activities. The current legal structure of the funds is such that the Benevolent Funds (restricted in use for distributing grants for benevolence) possess the vast majority of the monies (c£5.4M) and the Association Funds (funding all activities supporting esprit de corps and comradeship) possess much less (c£600K). This discrepancy means that under our current spending pattern the Association funds will be exhausted long before those restricted for Benevolence use. The Trustees are now considering various initiatives to alleviate this historical position and we will use the AGM in 2016 to communicate these to our members. I strongly believe that continuing to foster esprit de corps and comradeship amongst our members now and into the future is a vital role for the Association. I do want to thank all of you who have donated to the Association, whether it be from a fund raising event, a one off, a standing order or via Virgin Money Giving. All such donations are very much appreciated.

During the last 6 months I have met many of you at various Area and Branch events and thank you to all that have hosted me and been involved in the organisation of events. We have new Branches opening and the Association has supported the launch of the Facebook group Griffin Branch which offers a "try before you buy" experience. The message of "come and join us" will be expanded in other initiatives in the near future. Please pass the word as our members are the best publicity we have.

Finally I want to say a public thank you to Ann Maskens-McIntyre on her departure from the role of the Area Chairman of the South and South West. We will miss her enormously and on behalf of all of us thank her for everything she has done for the WRAC and the WRAC Association since her enlistment in 1957. The position of Area Chairman is now gapped and during this period the branches in the South and South West should address any concerns or queries to the Association HQ.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Lioness and all that the WRAC Association offers.

Ali Brown

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It has been a busy six months in WRAC Association HQ, what with the Grand Reunion in Harrogate in March and the Armed Forces Day National Event in Guildford in June. As a result I hope you enjoy the many photos that are published in this edition. A big thank you to everyone who has submitted articles and photos, in particular the keen photographers (you know who you are) who make my job a lot easier.

You may have noticed that you have received this edition of Lioness slightly earlier than in previous years. This is to ensure that all members are aware of the changes to Life and Annual subscriptions, ratified at the AGM in March 2015, prior to the Annual subscription renewal date of 01 October 2015. Full details of the subscription changes are contained in the centre pull-out of this edition along with details of

how to set up a Standing Order for payment, should you wish to do so. We will also continue to accept subscription payments online, by cheque, over the phone or via Branches.

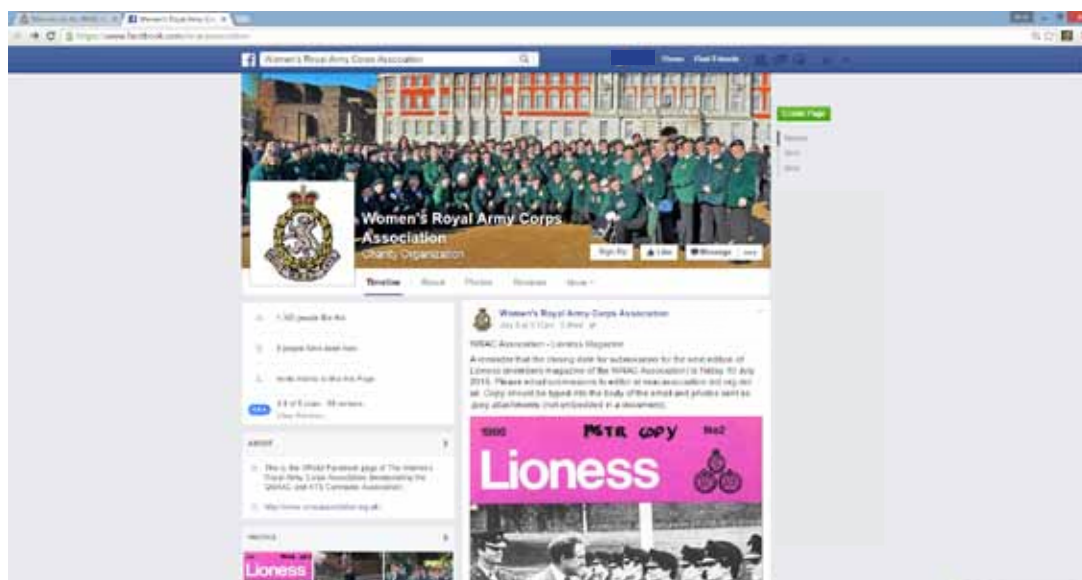
I would also like to draw your attention to the WRAC Association Facebook page which we increasingly use to communicate time sensitive information to you. I want to stress that this can be viewed in the same manner as a website i.e. you do not need to be registered with Facebook to view the Women's Royal Army Corps Association (in full, not WRAC Association) page. If you are unsure how to view it go to our website, www.wraccassociation.org.uk and click on the F symbol in the top right hand corner of the web page.

The closing date for the next edition of Lioness is Friday 18 December 2015, email to editor@wraccassociation.org.uk. Please type the text into the body of the email, not as an attached document. Please only send a maximum of 3 or 4 good quality photos (jpg format only) as attachments, do not embed them in a document!

Sue Hatton



Website



Facebook page

Dear Editor,

The Girls Who Went to War

A new book by bestselling authors Duncan Barrett and Nuala Calvi tells the stories of women who served in the forces during the Second World War. *The Girls Who Went to War*, published by HarperCollins in May this year to commemorate the 70th anniversary of VE Day, focuses on three women, one from each of the services.

Among them is former ATS private Jessie Denby, who served with 518 Mixed Heavy Ack-Ack Battery. Working on the height-and-range finder, Jessie helped defend targets all over Britain, and witnessed the devastation of Hull at the hands of the Luftwaffe. She was later transferred to a battery in Belgium, defending Antwerp against V1s, and ended the war in an RAOC depot in Hamburg, Germany. Now 93, Jessie is an active member of the British Legion, selling poppies every year outside her local supermarket.

Duncan Barrett and Nuala Calvi are the authors of Sunday Times bestseller *The Sugar Girls* and New York Times bestseller *GI Brides*. *The Girls Who Went to War* is their third book together. For more information, visit www.girlsatwar.com.

Duncan Barrett

Dear Editor,

I am now 92 and landed on Sword Beach Normandy with a small group of girls, the first to land there, with General Montgomery's HQ, 21 Army Group. I have been in touch with the ATS Officer in charge of us and we wondered whether we are the last two survivors of that time?

Sylvia P Wild (nee Cook)
Llanishen, Cardiff

Editor: If anyone has any information to pass to Sylvia please email editor@wracassociation.org.uk or phone 0300 400 1992

Dear Branch Members,

What can I say? I was absolutely overwhelmed and thrilled with the beautiful WRAC Association Brooch you gave to me at the AGM in Harrogate - it was totally unexpected and a wonderful surprise.

For once, I was lost for words! I shall always wear it with great pride and with such happy memories of my time as Vice President of the Association.

Sincere thanks to all of you.

Sue Westlake MBE



Dear Editor,

I have been contacted by an acquaintance who has been handed a medal for Cyprus service and it is engraved on the rim WRAC W/388909. If any one knows who this might belong to please email me jillianannhurst@msn.com or phone the WRAC Association on 0300 400 1992.

Jillian Hurst

AGM 2016. The 2016 AGM will be held at 14.30 on Saturday 12 March 2016 at the Victory Services Club, London. Afternoon Tea will be served on completion of the AGM. An agenda, full details and an attendance form will be published in the next edition of *Lioness* (early 2016).

Change of Address. Please don't forget to notify us of any change of address. Every time *Lioness* is distributed a number of copies are unnecessarily returned as members have failed to inform us that they have moved.

Donations. Did you know that you can send a donation to the Association at any time? You can specify whether you want your donation to go to the main Association account (cheques payable to WRAC Association), or if you want it to go to the ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund (cheques payable to ATS & WRAC Benevolent Fund). Donations can also be made on line via the Association website or by phone 0300 400 1992. Whatever you decide to do, PLEASE make sure that we have a Gift Aid form (see centre pullout) from you. If you pay tax, the funds can reclaim the tax and it adds to the donation you have made without it costing you any more.

easyfundraising.org.uk. If you ever shop online easyfundraising.org.uk provides an easy way for you to raise funds for the WRAC Association with no effort or cost to yourself. Sign up at <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/wrac>, download the find and remind toolbar and carry on shopping. easyfundraising work with the UK's best-known retailers including popular names such as Amazon, M&S, and John Lewis. When you buy something, up to 15% of the purchase price is donated to your good cause, at no cost or effort to you!

Event Tickets. We occasionally receive free tickets for events, or invitations to attend functions organised by The Not Forgotten Association. Historically these have primarily been offered to regional Branch members. However if you are an HQ Branch member and would like to register your interest in being sent information about these events please email office.manager@wracassociation.org.uk and type EVENT TICKET REGISTER as the subject heading. Please note that the vast majority of these events take place in London or the South.

Lioness (audio version). *Lioness* is available as an audio magazine on CD. If you suffer from failing eyesight and would like to receive an audio version of *Lioness* please email officemanager@wracassociation.org.uk or phone HQ WRAC Association on 0300 400 1992

Lioness. Articles for inclusion in the next edition of *Lioness* must be received by Friday 18 December 2015. Please email to editor@wracassociation.org.uk. Please type the text into the body of the email, not as an attached document. Please only send a maximum of 3 or 4 good quality photos (jpg format only), please do not embed them in a document!

Medals and Badges Etiquette. Etiquette rules for wearing medals only allow the wearing of official awards. Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed. The medals awarded to a deceased Service/ex-Service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative (no more than one group should be worn by any individual). The WRAC Association badge and the Veterans badge may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole. Unofficial medals, or badges other than the WRAC Association badge/pin and Veterans badge, should not be worn when representing the WRAC Association.

Memorabilia. Items are available to purchase on-line via the website, by post (prices include P&P) or by phone. See page 20 for details.

Remembrance. The Association receives an allocation of tickets for the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on the Thursday prior to Remembrance Sunday, for the Cenotaph Parade and for the service in Westminster Abbey on Remembrance Sunday. Tickets are open to any member of the WRAC Association who wishes to attend, prior attendance or Branch participation are not a prerequisite.

Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey (Thu 05 Nov 15) Tickets. If you work or live in central London and can spare an hour on the morning of Thu 05 Nov 15 we would love some more support for this event. Applications to be made no later than 01 Oct 15 by email (office.manager@wracassociation.org.uk) or letter only.

Cenotaph Parade (Sun 08 Nov 15) Tickets. Ticket applications close on 31 Aug 15, if demand exceeds supply a ballot will take place in early September.

Westminster Abbey Service (Sun 08 Nov 15) Tickets. Ticket applications as above, to read "Ticket applications by 01 Oct 15 by email (office.manager@wracassociation.org.uk) or letter only.

Overseas Members. Overseas Members are requested to pay an additional £5.00 per year to cover additional *Lioness* postage costs. Only sterling payments can be accepted.

Service Records. Veterans UK is your one stop shop for all queries about Service Records, Medals, Pensions and much more. Go to www.veterans-uk.info or phone 0808 1914218.

Subscriptions. Annual Members are reminded that subscriptions are due as at 01 October. Subscriptions can be paid via your Branch, online, by phone (0300 400 1992) or by post with a cheque/postal order (sterling only) payable to WRAC Association.

Veterans UK. Veterans UK is your one stop shop for all queries about Service Records, Medals, Pensions and much more. Go to www.veterans-uk.info or phone 0808 1914 2 18.

WRAC Dinner Club. The WRAC Dinner Club meets every year on the second Saturday in October, full details can be found at www.wracdinnerclub.co.uk

WRAC Officers' Dining Club. The WRAC Officer's Dining Club Dinner takes place at the Victory Services Club, London on 21 Nov 15. Details are distributed by the organiser, Debbie Coupland, debbiecoulpland14@gmail.com

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP STANDING ORDER

Have you ever thought about settling up a Standing Order to pay your annual membership subscription? Please see the pullout in the the centre pages of this *Lioness* for the details to enable you to set up a Standing Order, plus a proforma to inform us that you have done so.

GUERNSEY 70TH ANNIVERSARY LIBERATION DAY Marjorie Cole

I was one of nine Chelsea Pensioners to visit Guernsey from the 6th to the 12th of June to take part in the 70th Anniversary Liberation Day celebrations. Chelsea Pensioners have been invited to Guernsey and Jersey to take part in their celebrations for over 41 years. This was my third visit, being the first female Chelsea Pensioner to visit in 2010.



During our visit we were hosted at various places including; the Council Chambers by the Bailiff Sir Richard Collas, the Masonic Hall, one of the Primary Schools and the Yacht Club. We also took part in the Liberation Parade held at the sports arena, the salute was taken by HRH The Countess of Wessex.

In the afternoon of Liberation day there was a large cavalcade of WWII military vehicles which had come from all over the UK and Europe. At the gathering of vehicles prior to the parade I met up with WRAC Association member Pat Harpin, whom I had previously met at the Grand Reunion in Harrogate. She was there with her husband who was involved in the vehicle cavalcade.

During my stay I read in the Guernsey Press one evening about previous Liberation Day celebrations. At the 50th Anniversary parade in 1995 a group of WRAC took part, as well as the Chelsea Pensioners. It seemed fitting that being ex WRAC I could march in the 70th Anniversary parade. This being the last big anniversary I felt especially proud to have taken part, representing the WRAC Association as well as the Chelsea Pensioners.



Marjorie Cole and Pat Harpin

MAYOR'S AWARD

Chelsea Pensioners were delighted when Activities Coordinator Theresa Ayeche received the Kensington and Chelsea Mayor's Award for her contribution to improving the quality of life for hundreds of Pensioners during her career. Theresa joined the



Royal Hospital Chelsea as a carer in 1990, and now runs their thriving activities programme, running trips out, daily events, classes and tea parties. Chelsea Pensioner Audrey Merton BEM, who was one of the Pensioners who nominated her for the Mayor's Award, said:

"Theresa is the best person that I know. She does everything for the Pensioners and never thinks of herself – she always puts the Pensioners first and nothing seems to be too much trouble."



Second from right: Audrey Merton BEM enjoying Wimbledon

BRITAIN'S GREATEST GENERATION



Chelsea Pensioner Dorothy Hughes was featured on the documentary "Britain's Greatest Generation" broadcast on BBC Two in May 2015, to honour those who lived through the Second War World.

WING WALK

On 20 June 2015 Chelsea Pensioner Charmaine (Bimbo) Coleman completed a daring wing walk to raise money for the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and the Royal British Legion.



VE70

Over the weekend of 8-10 May 2015 the Royal British Legion marked the 70th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day by inviting veterans of VE Day to join in the national commemorations in London. There was a Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Friday 8 May, and on Sunday 10 May a Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey, followed by a Parade and reception in St James's Park. Five members of the Leicester & Nottingham Branch travelled to London to participate in the events; Barbara Danter, Joan De-Vall, Anne Atkinson, Vi Rawlins and Lillian Hollis.

The National Standard, carried by Sharon Joyce, was Paraded at the Cenotaph Service of Remembrance. Deputy National Standard Bearer, Tammy Kirkwood, represented the Association with the Tamworth Branch Standard in the Parade of Veterans from Westminster Abbey to Horse Guards Parade.



National Standard at the Service of Remembrance, Cenotaph © Sam Churchill Photography



Photo opportunity with Dan Snow



Meeting HRH The Prince of Wales



Enjoying St James's Park

WAR MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO ARTILLERY SCHOOL Marianne Hooker Marches & Mid Wales

The highlight of our year to date is without doubt our overnight trip to Tenby where we met the Pembrokeshire 'Gunners' and had a most enjoyable time in their company. You might be interested in the story that led to our visit to see the restored Memorial Gates. This restoration work (as mentioned in Lioness No1 of 2015) first came to my attention in June 2014. I had no knowledge of the gates and when I asked around I wondered why this marked memorial to the ATS and WRAC had seemingly been forgotten. In September 2014 I took our ATS member, Doris Parkes, home after the Branch gave her a 90th birthday party. She insisted on giving me three commemorative plates and a watercolour, because quote "I know you will appreciate them". The picture, soon found a home on my office wall. Doris explained that all the founder ATS members of AA Command Branch RAA were given a signed copy at the presentation ceremony of the original. Hence the two signatures. The plates were given pride of place on the dresser, beside my desk.



One evening I sat at my desk, looking at the picture depicting ATS in their varied roles serving in the AckAck. The original painting by Ann Bushell was, quote: 'Presented by Major DM Robertson on behalf of the ladies of the Mixed Heavy Anti Aircraft Batteries World War II to General Sir Martin Farndale KCB. Master Gunner 6th August 1995'. I then looked at the plates that commemorated 'ATS Members Of AA Command Branch Royal Artillery Association'. They are marked respectively 'Founder Member 1997', 'Commemorative Issue 2000' and 'The Last Post Reunion 24 & 25 July 2004'. It seemed a great shame that the ties between the ATS and the Royal Artillery ended at that 'Last Post Reunion' ten years ago. I served at The Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill in 1963, indeed, I passed my BII driver trade test there. A large contingent of WRAC personnel were there at that time. That evening I resolved to try to rectify this and began a painstaking online search.

In December a photograph of the newly refurbished gates appeared on the Royal Artillery Association website along with a full report, which was forwarded to Sue Hatton. She responded by sending me copy of the 1994 Lioness article that explained how our badges were added to the gates with thanks to the determination of the late Major Crooke WRAC. My research led me to the book 'The Girls behind The Guns' by Dorothy Brewer Kerr. This gives a fascinating and educational insight into the activities at the RSA Manorbier during WWII, as well as detailed descriptions of the beautiful, remote Pembroke coast.

In early 2015 I contacted Colin, Secretary of South Pembrokeshire Royal Artillery Association. He was very enthusiastic when I asked if he and his members would be willing to act as our hosts if we visited Tenby. Between us we planned to meet at the gates and pay our respects at the Memorial. The Gunners even obtained permission for us to visit the RSA and Range at Manorbier but sadly that had to be cancelled at quite short notice due to a sudden camp inspection. It seems some things in the Army never change!

It was a long way to go but having Ali, our Vice President, there and Sharon Joyce with our National Standard made the day very special for all of us. Another Hereford Branch member, Margaret Davies, was born in Pembroke; she knew Major Athoe as a close neighbour. Marg eventually became the first female Assistant Adjutant of 12 LT AD Regt at Manorbier so we were very pleased that she was also able to join us. Here is her summary of the day:

Marianne Hooker, of Marches & Mid Wales Branch, organised a gathering to view the newly refurbished War Memorial Gates at Tenby. The badges of the RA, ATS and WRAC, REME and R SIGNALS together with the gates and arch, had recently been restored thanks to local Ex Gunner Jeff Thornton.

We all travelled to Tenby on Monday 13 April. Our National Standard was paraded at 14.00 by Sharon Joyce together with a small contingent of ladies led by Marianne and our Vice President, Ali Brown. We were joined at the gates by the Chairman of South Pembrokeshire Royal Artillery Association, Chris Roberts and their Secretary, Colin Friend, together with a small contingent of RA Association members and their Standard Bearers.

Photos were taken, stories swapped and comrades remembered as we stood before the Memorial in the sunshine. We then parted company for a while to sample the delights of Tenby and its surrounds 'till the evening'. We left Tenby at around 1800 and headed in a 3 car convoy for Pembroke Dock. Much to the

consternation of the occupants of the following cars, I took the group on a sightseeing tour of South Pembrokeshire, through hilly, twisting, narrow lanes! We were able to view Lydstep Headland, the cliff tops around Manorbier Range and Pembroke Castle before arriving at our destination, Pembroke Dock Cricket Club.

Chris and Colin greeted us warmly and brought us into their meeting room where their Association members were starting to gather. We spent a most convivial evening being 'entertained', in the truest sense of the word, by Chris, "the lads" and their wives. I will never again look on a WRAC Branch meeting as anything other than slick and to the point. We giggled continually as Gunners, deafened by working with artillery, tried to converse and get decisions out of other Gunners during their formal meeting. It was a slow but highly amusing process. Marianne was thanked and presented with a framed photo taken earlier at the Memorial. We were treated almost like royalty by the "lads" who provided us with an outstanding and plentiful buffet which had all been prepared by an ex Signaler. Marches & Mid Wales' Chairman had made a beautiful cake to mark the occasion which also went down extremely well with one and all. Time flew by as we laughed, chatted, caught up with old friends and made new ones. It turned out that Chris was a Sergeant with 12 Lt AD Regt RA when I took over as Assistant Adjutant. I was present for the final firing of 22 Lt AD Regt RA Bofors guns at Manorbier RSA, before conversion to Rapier Missiles. We're hoping next year to be invited back to view the Royal School of Artillery, Manorbier, always providing they don't have another inspection sprung on them! We will certainly keep in touch with our new found Gunner friends.



With Ali's help we were able to locate and send a WRAC plaque to Colin as our 'thank you' to him and his members for a lovely and most memorable day. Our branch is tiny, but now the ties with the RAA have been forged once more we're doing our best to keep them. Marg and Chris will soon be meeting up again at our summer garden party. I'm sure they'll both enjoy talking to Eileen Carter who also knew Major Athoe and has fond memories of serving at Manorbier. Colin tells me that plans for our return to Pembrokeshire next year are already underway. If ever you are down in that beautiful corner of Wales, please do make a point of visiting Tenby Memorial Gardens and gates so that they are never forgotten by any of us again.

THE RIGHT TO SERVE WOMEN'S VOICES IN THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM Rebecca Newell - Curator



Why not YOU?, 1960

Courtesy of the Council of the National Army Museum

The National Army Museum is undergoing a major redevelopment project which will radically transform the building, the galleries and the work that it does.

The Museum collection is the largest single accumulation of the rich material culture of the British Army. With a mission to gather, maintain and make known the story of the British Army and its role and impact in world history from earliest times to the present day, it aims to provide a Museum experience that meets the widest range of need and connects the British public with its Army.

The Museum originally brought together collections that had been formed at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and to these were added complete regimental collections, including the Women's Royal Army Corps Museum collections donated in 1992.

In the interim period during redevelopment, many of the Museum's artefacts have been placed into storage and some have been loaned to venues in Britain and internationally. The Museum is currently delivering a diverse outreach programme of travelling exhibitions, including commemorative First World War and Waterloo displays. The collection of artefacts will return to Chelsea, London next year ready for the Museum reopening in autumn 2016.

The redevelopment has given staff the opportunity to reconsider how diverse stories about the Army are told in the Museum. Rather than shying away from sensitive or difficult moments in that history, they are working with serving and former personnel in order to tell the stories of service in new and diverse ways.

The role of women in the Army will be explored as one of the

themes in the new galleries and in programming looking forward to the relevant anniversaries in 2017. One project this year will look at the issues and challenges faced by women serving today, in the recent past, and a hundred years ago, to explore continuity and change. Another will see a significant part of the Women's Royal Army Corps and Women's Army Auxiliary Corps collections digitised to increase accessibility for researches and scrutinise afresh what rich stories it holds.

The Museum is looking for women, currently serving and former personnel, to participate in these projects through reinterpretation of collections and working directly with project staff in workshops.

If you are interested in sharing your story with the Museum, please get in touch with curator Rebecca Newell at rnewell@nam.ac.uk. To find out more about the redevelopment project please visit www.nam.ac.uk.

INTER-SERVICES HOCKEY COMPETITION MARCH 2015 Lynn Hines



The old rivalries of competing against the Royal Navy and the RAF at sport were certainly as strong as ever at the Inter-Services Hockey Competition in March. Held at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth, all teams fought hard for their Service to bring home the silverware. The Army Ladies Veterans team was well represented mustering 18 players, much to the surprise of the team manager. To qualify as a vet you must be over a mere 35 years of age and the average age of the team at any one time on the pitch must be 40. The team was split almost 50-50 between serving and ex-serving players from the Royal Army Medical Corps, Royal Signals, Intelligence Corps, Adjutant General's Corps and Royal Logistic Corps. Only five of the team were ex WRAC; Lynn Hines, Rachel (Charlie) Cull, Donna Druce, Andie Cole and Judith Hitchens, which highlights how long it has been since our disbandment.

The vets competition is slightly more relaxed than the seniors and the teams emphasis centres more on the social arrangements in the evenings than warm ups and team tactics! The turnout of 18 players and 2 days of laughing and catching up is all the proof needed to show that the camaraderie, banter and team spirit is the main attraction of the Army Ladies Vets team. Many of the friendships within the vets team have lasted throughout entire careers from basic training through to discharge and beyond service life into civvy street. However, on the pitch it does get a little more serious, and so to the results; Army Ladies Vets v RAF Ladies Vets 8-0 and Army Ladies Vets v Royal Navy Ladies Vets 11-0. A resounding success for the Army and this was matched by the Army Ladies Seniors who won both their games as well.

WRAC CRAZY FESTIVITIES MARCOTHON 2014 Karen Radford



In the middle of November 2014 I was getting myself ready to compete in the Marcathon 2014, which is an event held every year by around two thousand facebookers with the same passion for fitness that I have. The object of Marcathon is to complete a minimum of 25 minutes exercise or at least a three mile run for every day in December. This is an event that is usually for fun but I wondered if I could combine the two and get some ex WRAC ladies involved whilst raising money at the same time.

I put my feelers out through the Facebook WRAC Crazy Festivities page and spoke to a number of my friends from work. Bingo, I had the names of 16 ladies who were up for the challenge! Day one saw us all out there either running, walking, cycling, swimming and gardening. For some exercise was a first for many years and as the month went on many of us were in the gym completing exercise classes including spinning, weights, fitball, cross training and on rowing machines.

I have been unable to work out exactly how many miles and hours we managed to accumulate over the 31 days but it was in the thousands. The most satisfying was the amount of poundage we lost! I completed a Facebook diary of our efforts every day, which included some photos, but also some inspirational sayings that made many of us chuckle during those dark days when our legs were aching, our muscles screaming and the flu bug debilitating. "If you're on the treadmill next to me, yes we are racing", "Me jog?, if you see me running you better run too cuz something is chasing me", "I don't need an app that tells me how many calories I have burned. I need an app telling me how many glasses of wine I have earned" to name but a few.

The need for humour some days was the dangly carrot we required to get through it, especially on Christmas Day and Boxing Day! When the clock struck midnight on New Years Eve it was all over. No more running in the snow, ice, wind and rain. Wow didn't we all do well. We managed to raise a staggering £1,483.50. This was shared between the WRAC Association and the Defence Medical Welfare Services. What will this year bring I wonder. Ummm lets see shall we.

Ex WRAC who took part were Karen Radford, Barbara Blay, Karen Francis, Soo Thomas, Margaret Purkis, Kath Smith, Margaret Davies, Alison McGowan, Patricia Barker, Lorraine Weights, Melanie Strain-Moore, Chris Whitworth, plus my friend Sally Vine, and Police colleagues Julia Pexton, Amy Burrows and Philippa Hooper.

I would like to thank everybody who supported us through our challenge, especially those who added supportive messages each day as these really kept us going

HONOUR GUARD FOR KING RICHARD III Yvonne McCarthy



On 23 March 2015 members of the Leicester & Nottingham Branch formed an Honour Guard in Leicester Cathedral for King Richard III prior to his internment on 26 March 2015.

2015 WALKING CHALLENGE

Margaret Davies

This was the second year I had completed a 100 mile solo walk and this year my main charity was Dementia UK who, particularly through their Admiral Nurses, strive for the best care of patients, the support of carers and also the promotion of awareness and research. Many people have loved ones who suffer dementia (though often it is those who are left to watch their decline who suffer), so it's for all of us that I dedicated my 2015 Walking Challenge. I intended to walk hundred miles around the Llyn Coastal Path, an area I'd never been to before despite being born and growing up in Pembrokeshire. I couldn't have chosen a more beautiful location. I had planned the walk in autumn 2014 and had rather optimistically hoped that the weather could be reasonable in late April. I was not disappointed, I had fortuitously chosen a mini-heatwave!!

I travelled to the Llyn a day earlier than my support crew, my family "Team Davies", so that I could get an early start on the first day. The drive from Worcester through Mid Wales was a joy in itself with clear roads through mountain passes in the sunshine. I drove with an ear-to-ear grin, the pride in my country of birth welling up inside. I arrived at Criccieth, my base for the week, in excellent time and spirit. Having settled in I decided to catch the bus to Porthmadog to recce the transport and the walk start point. Once there I thought, "It's such a lovely afternoon - it's early - I might as well walk back to Criccieth along the route." So I did, wearing the wrong shoes and the wrong socks! It was a lovely walk but I realised after a couple of miles that I had probably not done the wisest thing. When I got back to base I examined my feet and discovered I had the start of a blister on the sole of my left foot! Not a good start. Still, I had the first 8 miles of the walk under my belt/feet.

On the first day I took the early morning bus to Pwllheli and then another one to Llanbedrog beach to walk eastwards, back to Criccieth. Wow! What a view, it could have been tropical (apart from the cool wind). Ever tried walking on loose sand? I don't recommend it, it's energy sapping! Once off the beach I had a pleasant, leisurely walk across flat, grassy headland to Pwllheli where I stopped for an early lunch. After lunch I walked onwards, sometimes beside the main road, back to Criccieth. When the scenery around me failed to impress the abundance of wildflowers made up for it. It was a long but enjoyable day in the sunshine & wind.



Day 1 Llanbedrog Beach - tropical!

My younger brother drove me to my start point, Llanbedrog again, on Day 2 (Sunday). This time I was walking SW towards Abersoch and beyond. I began the day with a climb up through the woods of Plas Glyn-y-Weddw (a "Must See" for a return visit) to the new Iron Man sculpture placed on the headland. From there it was easy going in the sunshine to Abersoch, where I picnic lunched by the golf course, and then on round the headland to meet my brother in the very nice pub at Llanengan! The weather was sunny, the breeze behind me, the scenery stunning and the air heady with the scent of gorse. We'd also found an excellent pub – happiness is!

Monday began away from the sea as it was high-tide and I couldn't walk on the beach. My first real view that day of Hell's Mouth (Porth Neigwl) beach and bay was on my steep mid-morning ascent from the NT property, Plas yn Rhiw up to Rhiw village. I needed stops to admire the view on the 600ft, near vertical, climb! Halfway up my ex-ATS friend, Vera Denning, phoned me; I happily stopped to take her call! Thanks Vera. I had my picnic-lunch at a Trig Point a mere 580ft above sea level. I viewed the previous day's headland walk to my east and to my south-west Bardsey Island. Spectacular! From lunch it was an easy downhill walk to the tiny seaside town of Aberdaron and a welcome cup of tea and slice of Bara Brith. My brother arrived and we celebrated my making it thus far with a nice pint of ale sitting in the sunshine on a balcony overlooking Aberdaron bay.

Day 4 was to have been a rest day but I decided to press on whilst the weather held. My elder brother & nephew kindly dropped me off at Aberdaron and I made my way along the twisting headland path. The sea was comparatively calm as I wound my way around the tip of the peninsula admiring the wildflowers, buzzards, choughs and other birds and drinking in the spectacular views of cliffs, coves and the tide race between me and Ynys Enlli. The going was tough with many climbs and descents but the scenery made it worthwhile. After lunch I skirted the "lump" that was Mynydd Analog (my brothers & I are still looking for the Digital Mountain!!) before descending to Whistling Sands (from the sound made when walking on the sand due to the grains' size & shape). I couldn't test the theory as the wind was making too much noise!! It was a very long walk past Porth Colmon and eventually away from the coast to my pickup point in the village of Tudweiliog. I may not have easily pronounced it but I was more than happy to see it and my brother & nephew after a tiring 17 mile walk. Oh boy! Were my feet sore!!

Wednesday and the weather was still good so, onward and upward, moving further northeast towards my goal, Caernarfon. I spent the morning at a leisurely pace, striding out on a path that ambled from a few feet above sea level to a maximum of 60ft. Bliss to my sore feet now well-padded with plasters! This had to be the most amazing day of the whole walk. After the first few miles of soaking in the sun and the scenery my attention was caught by something in the sea near a rocky outcrop. I stopped and tried to focus. To my delight I could make out a pair of Grey Seals diving and popping up again, obviously searching for food. I was able to watch them for several minutes but unfortunately they were too far away for me to photograph with my phone's camera. Before and after lunch I walked across what has to be one of the most spectacular golf venues in the world, The Nefyn & District Golf Course. The breathtaking sea views were stupendous and, tucked away at Porth Dinllaen, was a wonderful pub just feet from the water's edge. Sitting in the sun with a pint and a sandwich, contemplating the vista of tomorrow's walk on the other side of the bay, was my idea of heaven. My good spirits were momentarily deflated later that afternoon as I made my way

around the headland at Penrhyn Nefyn. Did I mention that I'm not a lover of heights? The path wound around the headland, a narrow path with an earth and gorse bank on the right and the sea on the left. It got narrower. I could see that the cliff-face had been undercut by the action of wind, rain & sea. A sheer drop of over 100ft! With heart leaping & thumping somewhere between mouth & chest, knees trembling and palms sweating I crept forward! Why had I chosen to do this walk? I hate heights? To my relief the path widened out within a few yards and I was able to breathe normally again. Well, it was supposed to be a challenge after all!

The penultimate day dawned sunny again as I set off on what I knew was going to be a challenging walk. It involved several climbs to the pass at Yr Eifl, then a steep descent to the village of Trefor and on, via the main road, to Clynnog Fawr. The scenery on this day showed the ravaged scars of granite quarrying on a massive scale. In the past whole chunks of mountain-side had been carved away and dropped down to waiting ships and transported to pave the streets of Liverpool and Manchester. It must have been an awesome and terrifying sight. Now, in the sunshine, the gorse, heather and grasses, fed on by sheep and mountain goats, make it one of the most breath-taking scenes I encountered. The slight downside of the day was that the final stretch to Clynnog was beside the busy A499 Caernarfon to Pwllheli road. My brother & I made up for it by discovering Pant Du Vineyard and sampling some of its delicious wares before making our way back to base.



Start of (last) Day 7

As the weather forecast for the Friday was bad I let the train take the strain and spent most of the day on the Ffestiniog Railway, a delightful and restful interlude for which my feet were eternally grateful. The final day's walking started off dull but dry along some main and minor roads busy with traffic. The worst and most dangerous bit was the comparatively busy country lane to the spectacular Iron Age Fort at Dinas Dinlle. From there, along the last stretch of Irish Sea coast and onto the path by Foryd Bay & beside the Menai Strait, it was much quieter. I stopped at a Bird Hide and watched Egrets enjoying their lunch almost as much as I enjoyed mine. After lunch I could see a storm rolling in as I set off on the last few miles and, almost within sight of Caernarfon Castle, the heavens opened and down came the rain, not particularly heavy but, driven by the wind, straight into my face. The footbridge and imposing castle walls were a most welcome sight as, almost 100 miles since the start, I reached my final destination.



Footsore but home!

My thanks to everyone who supported me throughout; for the many donations (over £3k including Gift Aid); for the unstinting encouragement; for my wonderful family 'taxi-service'; for the two fabulous paintings donated by Lauren (Fi Mac); for everyone allowing me to indulge myself walking in such a wonderful setting.

My chosen charity, Dementia UK, provide specialist Admiral Nurses who give expert support to families living with dementia.

They also run a national helpline, Admiral Nursing Direct, open Monday - Friday, 9:15 - 4:45. The national helpline can be contacted on 0845 257 9406 or emailed on direct@dementiauk.org

IMPERIAL MEDAL



Hereford Branch member Joyce Nicholls was presented with her Imperial Medal in June 2015 in recognition of 41 years working for the Civil Service as a Telephone Operator at MOD Hereford, the same job she held whilst serving in the WRAC. The medal was presented by General Arthur Denaro CBE DL and Colonel Sam Mallett at a Summer Reunion.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE Sharon Joyce

What an exciting day when nine ladies from the Hereford Branch had the good fortune to attend the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on Thursday 11 June 2015. Some of us went on the Wednesday and came back on the Friday, some travelled the same day and others stayed the night before.

Rosemary Jones, Joyce Nicholls and I stayed in the city at the Victory Services Club and Anna Toon and Jo Fielden stayed at Devonport House Hotel at Greenwich. Annabel Massey and Alice Matthews stayed with their sons who both live and work in the city. Rosemary and I had our meals in the Weatherspoons over the road where we met up with Kath Smith and Lynda Armstrong plus Sharon Bingham who came on her own from Swindon. The girls changed at our hotel, and then Jo Foster joined us and changed as well. It was nice to see all the ladies in their lovely dresses and hats, all looked stunning.



We took a taxi to Buckingham Palace, Anna and Jo took the river bus from Greenwich to the embankment and walked through St James Park and down the Mall. We all felt very special as we approached the Palace and the tourists were asking us what event was going on, they took pictures of us queuing to go in and wished us well for the day. By this time we had also met up with Alice and Annabelle.



As we waited in line for the admission time of 2pm to arrive I found myself next to comedian Ken Dodd who was happy to have his photo taken with us. The clock struck 2pm and the Beefeaters in traditional dress marched through the arch of Buckingham Palace and led the 2000 guests through the entrance hall and into the garden for our lovely party to start.

When we got in we managed to get a big round table inside the tea tent where we could all sit together and stay in the shade as it was a very sunny day. We wandered around the gardens at our leisure, mingled and had photographs taken with other celebrities.

Simon Williams, who played James Bellamy in the series *Upstairs Downstairs*, was a lovely man, some of the girls rescued him from a situation and so he was very happy to be with us, to ours and Rosemary's delight. Some of the girls also had their photo taken with Anita Harris and we also saw Esther Rantzen.

Afternoon Tea at the Palace consisted of ice coffee, tea, lemonade and water, as much as we wanted. The sandwiches included the famous cucumber and mint, egg and cress, and salmon, followed by petit fours cakes of small strawberry scones homemade Battenburg, chocolate cake with the crown on it and fruit cake, all totally delicious. Unfortunately as the weather was really hot the chocolate crowns had to be eaten very quickly as they were melting in our hands and we didn't want to waste anything.



The Princess Royal was the guest and Host of the day as she is Patron of the Not Forgotten Association who hosted the 2,000 Veterans for the day. Vice Admiral Timothy Laurence was also with HRH and they both walked about, there was plenty of opportunity to see her closely and meet them both.



Joyce Nicholls and Rosemary Jones meet the Princess Royal

I stood next to a soldier who had been injured from his role in Bomb Disposal and was at Headley court, The Princess Royal stopped to speak to him, I am sure she thought I was his mum as she kept looking and smiling at me and was very interested with the soldier's story. Lynda got adopted by a couple of Chelsea Pensioners and HRH spoke to all three of them. After the Royal guests had left a few of us had a nice walk around the grounds by the lake and Rose Gardens, and then we listened to the Beating of Retreat, a very nice day was had by all. When it finished we caught a taxi back to VSC.

Anna, Jo and Alice managed to get a cheeky invite to the House of Commons after the Garden Party and met up with local Herefordshire MP, Jesse Norman. Unfortunately the invite was limited to only 3 people as it had been short notice when Anna had texted Jesse. They did however manage to have a drink on the Terrace of the House of Commons and had a nice guided tour. Jesse has promised to host more of us in the future if we give him a bit more notice. A shame really but they enjoyed the evening.

WRAC LIONESSES GATESHEAD 10K GREAT NORTH RUN Wendy Hooton

For those of you who are new to the WRAC Association here is a short background into how the WRAC LIONESSES began. Our National Standard Bearer Maureen Deeley passed away in 2012 and I thought it would be an idea to raise funds for her favourite charity Troop Aid, as well as the WRAC Association.

In 2013 I entered the BUPA Manchester 10K run and invited others to join me. We had 8 runners and 7 supporters. You don't have to be ex WRAC to join us, we have civvies too and call them Klingons! We had such a great time we decided to do it all again but this time we entered the British 10K London run in 2014. We had 24 runners and 45 supporters, raising money for the WRAC Association and Help for Heroes. Another brilliant weekend, this was now becoming an annual event!



So....this year we went to Gateshead for the Great North 10K run. There were 20 runners (sadly 5 of our runners had to drop out due to injuries or other commitments) and 15 supporters. Our Chief cheerleader Captain Ann Leyland who hasn't missed an event, was unable to join us but was deputised by the very able Tanya Lolly Hall, Vice Captain. We raised funds for the WRAC Association and Cancer Research UK. We had an addition to the team this year, our mascot "MO BEAR" (named after Maureen Deeley) and bought from Sammy Bear's History Collection, www.militaryheroestrading.org.uk. The announcement of the next venue for our Annual 10K run will be made at the WRAC Dinner Club in October. I also post on the WRAC Facebook Groups, WRAC and ATS (Women who have served or serve in the Army), WRAC/ATS, Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) and SFKAWRAC. Our grateful thanks to all the administrators of those groups for allowing us to advertise our event and fundraising page on their pages. You can run, jog or walk the 10K, or be a supporter, we have a fabulous weekend and would love you to join us helping to raise funds for worthy charities.

And so the build up began with a 10 day countdown on our facebook WRAC LIONESSES FUNDRAISING GROUP page. The excitement began, hotels had been booked and transport arrangements made. People were posting, "Where are you staying? What time are you arriving? Where shall we meet? mobile phones were on overdrive! My gratitude to Tanya Lolly Hall and Gina Spacey who had done a recce for me to find a suitable venue to meet for Friday and Saturday evenings. Friday arrived and so did the WRAC Lionesses and supporters. We met at the Pitcher & Piano by the River Tyne on the Newcastle side of the river. A fabulous evening was had by everyone and we all departed looking forward to meeting again the next evening.

On Saturday morning I did a recce to the Gateshead International Stadium which was the start and finish of the run, and took a couple of volunteers(?) with me. I wanted to find a suitable place for a Group photo, a place for our supporters and a place to meet up afterwards, and post details on our facebook page. With the job done we, Helen Meades Davies, Lori Weights, Pat Barker, Nell Frary and Dawn Mackender made our way to the Quayside pub, also on the Newcastle side of the river, and awaited the arrival of our reliable photographers and wonderful supporters, Heather Gaughran and Rosie Garrison while partaking in light refreshments. On Saturday evening we were back at the Pitcher & Piano where more WRAC Lionesses and supporters had arrived. I briefed everyone and gave out the WRAC Association stickers for runners and supporters for our T-shirts and tops. We had a brilliant evening meeting old friends and making new ones, loads of esprit de corps, everyone gelled brilliantly. Some, not to be mentioned, did wander up into the city for late night takeaways but everyone was bright eyed and bushy tailed on Sunday morning.



**Back Row L-R: Pam Malcolm, Danii Collier, Babs Anderson, Gina Spacey, Sam Stretch, Betty Gash, Helen Meades Davies, Karen Stratford, Marg Davies, Annette Jackson, Denise McKenna, Pat Barker
Front Row L-R: Nell Frary, Debbie Green, Lorraine (Lori) Weights, Ruth Watt, Mo Bear (Mascot named after Maureen Deeley), Wendy Hooton, Kathy Kerr, Diane Walsh**

Most of us met at Jurys Hotel to walk to the stadium and we all met up for a photograph at the International stadium at 9am. The place was buzzing, 200 Gurkhas were running, raising funds for the Nepal Earthquake Appeal. We met Colin Plews, "The Big Pink Dress" who is 6ft 6ins and raises funds for Breast Cancer, and we even met a Stormtrooper! Tanya Lolly Hall had sorted out the Supporters area, she had put up our Support our Troops union flag, and a huge WRAC Association Badge, they had marked their territory by the Finishing line! It was time to move to the start area, most of us had pink numbers but our fastest runners had orange and green so they headed off to the front as different colours (waves) have different start times. The music was playing and we could see the pink balloons for our start area. After an organized warm up, our hearts beating faster, the adrenalin running it was our turn to go, and Mo Bear was on her first run. The atmosphere was electric, with music playing from the local radio station and the presenter giving a running commentary as we approached the 5k point, giving out inflatable batons and bottles of water. All was going really well until the 9k point, who put that hill there! The sign at the bottom said ENJOY - Geordie humour! We struggled to the top as Chariots of Fire blasted out from the speakers, it was awesome and you thought it was

the end, but still there were a few hundred metres to go and the stadium entrance was in sight. Finally on entering the stadium, seeing Heather Gaughran with her camera clicking away, seeing the Finishing line and seeing our supporters cheering us on was incredible, and a great relief! As we finished, collected our medals and goodie bag we joined our supporters to cheer everyone in. After Group photos we made our way to Jury's Hotel for drinks and celebrations and more photos.

I am so proud of all the WRAC LIONESSES achievements, everyone completed the course with a smile. Betty Gash was our first runner home and 2nd in her category, followed by Helen Meades Davies, great result ladies. Nell Fray (Klingon) got a PB of 1hr 1.59mins. Well done to you all, we had 11 first timers this year.



LCpl Mo Bear
(promoted on completion of the run)
named after our late National Standard Bearer Maureen Deeley

EASTERN AREA LUNCH **Wendy Hooton**



It was our pleasure to welcome our Vice President, Ali Brown, to Norwich to meet some of the ladies from the Eastern Area. Cambridge, Chelmsford, (sadly Gina Shadrack, the Chairman/ Secretary was unable to attend) Suffolk, Norfolk, and our new Peterborough Branch were all represented. We had a very enjoyable lunch at the Nelson Hotel. My grateful thanks to Joan Awbery for booking the venue, Marjorie Spears for the beautiful flower arrangements and Lyn Hatch for organising the menu choices and payment! We gave Ali our best wishes, and the chatting began.....

THE FORCES MARCH 2015 **Lorraine Weights**

Editor: This is an abridged version of the full article

About a year ago I made a decision to tackle something I had never done before, to take on the almighty challenge of The Forces March. It is based on a legendary march taken by men of the newly formed 6th Airborne Division during early training for D Day in the summer of 1942. Following weeks of intensive training and PT in the Ilfracombe area the men were stood down but were assigned one last task, to walk back to their barracks in Bulford, a distance of approximately 139 miles. They completed this arduous route in 5 days in full kit carrying up to 80lbs in weight!

The Forces March has now entered its 6th year and the sole aim of the event is to raise funds for The Veterans Charity. Participants come from all walks of life and there is a mixture of elite endurance athletes, military teams, novice runners and walkers. I had decided to enter all 5 days, which consisted of an ultra marathon a day, as a walker.

Having entered the event the next step was to start the training and fundraising. My diary was soon nothing more than, work, walk, eat, sleep, repeat. Fundraising started in earnest with online donations, text giving, bucket collections, cake stalls, book stalls, sponsorship and very soon I had reached my initial target of £1000. The days passed by in a blur of training, amassing equipment - did I mention I was camping each night?



Fastest Lionesses Helen Meades Davies and Betty Gash with Mo Bear

Thank you all for your fantastic company, real Esprit de Corps, and your amazing fundraising. Thank you to Debbie Green for organising a Pamper evening and raising £386, to Helen Holman's Company for £600 (hopefully you can join us next year Helen), to Cotteridge Church and Birmingham Branch for their multiple donations and to the many others who have given so generously. Our online fundraising page www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/wraclionesses3 is at £6,100 without Gift Aid and we have sponsor money from our sponsor forms still to come in. Thank you so much to all those who sponsored us for the 2 worthy charities, friends, family, work colleagues, WRAC Branches, your generosity is overwhelming. You have all helped us make a difference.

If you would like to join us next year as a runner or supporter, my email is wendyhootonski@aol.com or you can find me on facebook. Set yourself a challenge like many did this year, you will surprise yourself and you do have a year to train!

All too soon it was time to set off for Ilfracombe. I had not met any of the participants in person but had got to know them through a Facebook thread set up for the event, so it was with some trepidation that I set off to meet them shortly after arriving. Everyone looked so fit and athletic and were chatting about PBs and ultra events they had previously entered, I very soon felt somewhat overwhelmed by it all. I soon found others just as nervous and apprehensive as me, first timers who had also never done anything this huge before so I started to relax and get to know everyone.

There were a few 'athletic runner' types, some ex military, a cow farmer who had never run a marathon before, an inspiring young man called Danny with only one arm, he had served twice in Afghanistan only to be nearly killed in motor bike collision in the UK which resulted in the loss of his arm and shoulder and shattered both legs. He was an amazing character always laughing and joking. Then there was a young lady Holly who had broken her back, now replaced with titanium, and had had to learn to walk again. Rita (aka downhill running woman) who started running at the age of 57 and now 7 years later had completed 254 marathons. Alongside these amazing folk were men and women who were back for the 6th time, saying it felt like their annual holiday. What an amazing mix of characters and within hours it felt like one big family.



Day 1: At the race start with two of the elite runners

Day 1 Ilfracombe to Exford (28.7 miles). The start day dawned and after trying to eat breakfast (nerves were really kicking in) I set off with all my kit for the RV point and met lots more participants. We were introduced to all the support crews; the team who transported our kit and set up camp, the medics (who claim to use approx 700 needles to pop blisters, and miles of dressing during the 5 days) and the amazing physio team.

At the off the runners sped away into the distance whilst us walkers were bringing up the rear. The first hill loomed after a quarter of a mile and that became the theme of the whole day, hills, hills and more hills! The realisation that my training walks in the flat fens of Cambridgeshire were not going to help me now became very quickly apparent. I took the advice of Rita (downhill running woman) and walked up the hills but tried a gentle jog/run down them (less pressure on your knees). It wasn't long before I was on my own, everyone going at their own pace, I knew I wasn't last because the rear vehicle wasn't behind me but I had

no idea how many were behind me. So a steady pace and the miles soon passed by, support crews parked up every few miles offering water and jelly babies and cheers and hugs. The medics drove back and forth in their vehicles making sure all was well. The scenery was breathtaking and I wished I had taken the time to take photos but knowing I was probably going to be rear end charlie most days I didn't want to get back to camp any later than necessary. Plodding on after about 8 and half hours I became aware that the rear vehicle was now crawling along at about 4 miles an hour right behind me - how did that happen? No one had overtaken me, I was informed that 3 or 4 people behind me had been lifted off the course as they were too far behind to get in before the cut off time. Cut off time, what cut off time? This was news to me. There is nothing more off putting than having a vehicle cruising behind you. I finally reached the campsite in Exford to cheers from everyone who assembled at the finish line to meet me. My fellow campmates then proceeded to bring me cups of tea, food and had even put up my tent for me. I had walked 29 very hilly miles in 9 hours! It was tough. Shower then straight to bed, too tired for physio.

Day 2 - Exford to Crowcombe (26.7 miles). I managed to somehow crawl out of my tent and hobble over to the physio tent. After a very painful beating (well they call it massage) I started to pack up my tent and belongings. I had to get help with the pop up tent, much easier going up than down and I had practised it loads of times before!

Off we went, again straight up more hills, only today I was very aware of the cut off time. Doing the mental calculations of how many miles an hour I could do I realised that if I power walked 15 min miles for 9 hours, without stopping to go to the loo or eat or drink I might just do it! This was obviously not going to happen so my only option was to try running a bit (something I hadn't trained for). I started chanting our Corps Motto to myself, saying it was just mind over matter. Unfortunately my legs didn't agree and at roughly the halfway point I had to request the medic, who arranged transportation back to camp. I was one of 7 picked up so at least I wasn't the only one suffering. On arrival back at camp I had time to put up my tent, get some much needed treatment from the physios and be at the finish point to cheer the others as they finished. Amazingly some of the elite runners were only taking 4-5 hours.

Day 3 - Crowcombe to Langport. (29.9 miles). Woke up to discover it had been raining all night, this was to be the cause of the disaster that was about to follow. I was feeling remarkably refreshed, and somewhat pain free, so was looking forward to the days walk. I started to manipulate my tent, preparing myself for the twist and turn action that turns it into a perfect circle that fits in the perfectly round bag, when I slipped backwards on the wet grass and went flat on my face on top of said tent and heard the loudest crack (bit like shotgun fire) I had ever heard. Tent kaput, no more, dead, finished, I am homeless. With the help of a few others we managed to persuade the mangled mess into its bag and that is where it stayed until I returned home. I was immediately inundated with offers of tents. Karen, an RAF SSgt, offered me her spare on the condition that she put it up and took it down as it belonged to the Squadron and cost around £400! I took her up on the offer but I hardly dared move in it for the next 2 nights for fear of damaging it.

There was a 1.5 mile walk up a 1:3 gradient hill to the start point, not included in the 29.9 mile part of the course! The best bit was it was all downhill and flat from there. I had a lovely surprise that day, a fellow WRAC called Vicki Fielder, who I had only met on

Facebook was at the top of the hill with her RBL standard and she had also arranged posters to be placed along the first few miles of the route just for me. On arrival at the halfway point (Bridgewater) I was about to say that it was for the day when a fellow participant, ex army veteran Paul, said he was carrying on despite the worst blisters I had ever seen so I said to him, if you can do it so can I. I am so glad I did because another surprise was waiting for me a few miles further along in the village of Westonzoyland. I was met by another ex WRAC, Helen Bridgeman (also only known through facebook), who had patiently waited with her hubby at the local pub to greet me with a big poster depicting a huge WRAC badge and the words Go Lori Go. I received a much needed hug and after such encouragement I set off again and walked the last few miles alongside the team members from RAF Wittering. The team leader was the CO and we hobbled over the line together encouraging each other to keep on going. I completed the whole day (around 30 miles) in just over 8.5 hrs.



Day 3: Support from Helen Bridgeman ex WRAC

Day 4 - Langport to Maiden Bradley (28.5 miles). Having had much needed physio the evening before I awoke to very painful swollen legs and was unable to put any weight at all on my left leg. It was obvious that I was going to have to take Day 4 as a rest day. This was a shame as my daughter and her partner had travelled down for the weekend to cheer me on. I felt guilty but I was just unable to take part. I decided to join one of the support crews and seeing things from the other side made me realise just how amazing the runners were. Saturday night is traditionally curry night at the local pub in Maiden Bradley and much merriment was had by all, I've no idea how they can eat curry, drink beer and run 27 miles the following day but they do.

Day 5 - Maiden Bradley - Bulford (26.5 miles). Determined to attempt part of the day despite my injury I had the physios strap me up and lined up with all the others at the start. I am glad I did because my daughter had gone to the trouble of having a massive banner made with my picture on and lots of encouraging words and she was able to wave me off in style. I had only gone about 3 miles when I was seriously in trouble with my legs so I managed to get to the first water point (7 miles) and had to pull out. I was told I could rest up and then go back out for the last mile of the course so I could cross the finish line. This is exactly what I did and even though I didn't do the whole day the cheers I received at the end were as heartfelt as any others. A fantastic BBQ and medal presentation followed and then it was time for home. A few of the stalwarts stayed an extra night camping at Bulford.

I have to say it was simply one of the most amazing experiences I have had and I am already looking forward to doing it all over again next year. I just have to lose a couple of stone, get fitter, train more and aim to improve on this year. I am also pleased to say my final fundraising total for The Veterans Charity was a staggering £2289.77. As I hobbled off for my journey home all I could ponder on was whether or not I would recover in time for Armed Forces Day Parade in Guildford and The WRAC Lionesses 10k in Gateshead. Oh and if anyone else would like to take on this challenge with me perhaps we could have a WRAC team?



Day 5: Just before the start

THE YORKSHIRE WARTIME EXPERIENCE

Helen Poole

The North's largest re-enactment and military vehicle show. A tribute to World War One, World War Two and right through to more current conflicts.



is. Where could you find hotels here in the UK that can easily hold 675 wheelchair athletes, with plenty of space to spare? At least it keeps you fit pushing up and down miles of corridor. Most were up early to get the bus to the Convention Centre to re-register for the different sports, and it's also the day of the Opening Ceremony. I have never lost that feeling of pride when donning my 'Brit Kit' and marching into a Hall or Stadium behind our Union Flag. It has to be one of the most enduring memories one can have. It doesn't matter whether it's an audience of 75,000 in a Paralympic Stadium or 2,000 or so here at the Vets Games, it's national pride and all our team feel the same. We always receive a fantastic welcome, we have sent a team since 1987, and it's a great start to a wonderful week.



Whilst these games are quite competitive, and do have participants who are Paralympians and International athletes, they were set up by the Paralysed Veterans of America and the Veterans Administration to further rehabilitation and not as a rival to the Paralympics. That's why there are different categories, from the Novice section to Seniors, as well as the classes of disability. It is this mixture of sporting ability, for all ages and most physical disabilities, that makes for a varied and exciting sports competition which encourages the newly injured and allows more proficient athletes to give something back to their sport.

Unfortunately for the women there can sometimes be a lack of real competition in your class. For example, in table tennis, the women were in two classes and three sections. So I suggested we all play each other which gave everyone a good number of games and the medals were still given for their class and section. It's very noticeable that our US friends find no difficulty in 'showing off' their medals to anyone, whilst we Brits tend to just shove them in our bags and be rather modest about any prowess, which is why I wish someone else could have written this. So yes I won the Table Tennis but having said that, so I should, because even though my Paralympic days of the 80s are now far behind me, my level of proficiency gives me a great advantage. Of course I do still practice but I don't 'train' anymore.

This year, one of my old World Championship opponents from the early 80s came to help with a TT clinic as she actually lives in Dallas. One of the retired US coaches attended too so it was great to assist in the coaching clinics with them both, rather than just do it on my own as I usually do. And that's what these games are all about. Giving of yourself to enrich and enable others, the newly injured especially, and there were some 150 novices attending this year's Games, the highest number on record.

BRITISH EX-SERVICES WHEELCHAIR SPORTS ASSOCIATION (BEWSA)

DALLAS ADVENTURE

Paralysed Veterans National Wheelchair Sports Championship Dallas

Anne Peskey (nee Taylor)

Anne, a former WRAC PTI, has competed Internationally during the 1980s in both Summer Games (Table Tennis) and Winter Sports (Ice Sled Racing). She has won European, World and Paralympic medals in both sports and is a founder member of The British Ex-Services Sports Association for the Disabled.

Our trip to Dallas required a 04.30 start, being a night owl dawn is not my favourite time of day! If you think you have a hard time checking in at airports, think basketball chairs, air guns and archery equipment, as well as all our own personal wheelchairs, and a load of bodies to manhandle. It all takes forever. Still we had the big D to look forward to and although some of us had visited Texas before, none of us had been to Dallas so to be quite honest, everyone was quite excited (despite the fact we would be up and on the go for over 27 hours).

Dallas, home to the Texas Cowboys, cow pat sized steaks, JFK's assassination, and of course, the world famous Southfork Ranch. They say everything is big in Dallas hence the big D, and it sure

I won my rifle shooting too, even though my scores were down this year but I think I'll have to pull my socks up and start wearing my glasses to shoot as there are a number of really good shooters in the younger section who are getting really good scores. Finally, some real competition. Because the games are over 5 days, the rules say you must enter a minimum of 3 events and a maximum of 5. Your first event is the one you are most competent at and it does help to be a good all rounder. My Nine Ball is my 3rd sport, because to be honest I'm too old to go flogging round a race track or hoisting great heavy shot puts. The competition was a similar scenario to Table Tennis, only two in my class. So, we played the other girls and I won overall, not because I am good you understand, but because none of us could actually play very well and the winners of each game won by either a fluke shot or default. I guess that made the competition equal anyway.



We now even have one of our girls playing with the men in the Basketball tournament. Good for you Emma, you certainly held your own out there and showed those boys what for. These are all scratch teams, not State teams, which gives everyone who wishes to a chance to play. One of our guys played in the bronze medal team and another in the silver medal position so in effect we compete with the Americans as well as against them.

As you can imagine big means BIG in Dallas. American centres are huge by our standards, but in Texas they are gargantuan. The room used for the Shooting range was just one of a number of similar sized halls in the Conference Centre attached to the

hotel, so imagine having to give a presentation in front of that lot. The Convention Centre was even larger, each hall being bigger than some aircraft hangers. Yes there was plenty of space but we were all dwarfed by the size of the place, which made it look as if there were no spectators and in some cases, not many athletes either.

In 2016 the Games will be hosted by the PVA Salt Lake City so I hope I get selected for these. Unlike some organisations, BEWSA is run by the athletes for the athletes and we believe sport is for all, not just the most able. You don't have to compete for a place in the team, we just take turns if there are more people wanting to go than places available. We are there for everyone who has served their country and who now has a disability, even if your disability occurred after your service. We would love to have some more girls in the Association, so if you are interested in joining us please get in touch. We often meet in Telford for the weekend, which is heavily subsidised, and use RAF Cosford's sports facilities. We can also teach you to scuba dive and we organize bi-annual trips to Egypt which many of our members love as it gives them the freedom to move around unencumbered by their chairs or disability.

You do not have to be confined to a wheelchair to be a member of BEWSA, just use it for sport. Even though we are a grassroots sporting organization, we do have retired Paralympians and Invictus Games medallists amongst our membership, so we can help you no matter what level of sport you wish to participate in. You will be with people who can help you and encourage you so don't be afraid if you think you are not good enough. We cover all the major sports, from Archery and Basketball, to Field events, Shooting, Swimming and Table Tennis. Some of our members are into Hand Cycling and are doing lots of road races at the moment. So ladies, there is something for everyone. Don't let your disability stop you from keeping fit and healthy and achieving goals in life. If you are newly injured then you certainly need the opportunity to meet others who have and are, leading exciting and fulfilling lives. We are a family orientated organisation too, so you can bring your partner and sometimes the kids as well, so come and join us.

Team BEWSA had a very successful tournament and did GB proud by bringing home 22 Gold, 4 Silver and 2 Bronze medals. The other ladies in our team were; Emma Burns (athlete) Navy, Margaret Mitchell (athlete) Ulster, Steff Harrington (Assistant Team Manager) WRAC, Bev Bungert (Team Nurse) QRANC.

For Further details of BEWSA and its activities go to www.bewsa.org



Anne Peskey enjoying some well earned downtime

Memorabilia Shop

All items can be purchased online via the website, by post, or phone 0300 400 1992. Cheques should be made payable to WRAC Association and sent to: WRAC Association, Unit 39 Basepoint, 1 Winnall Valley Road, Winchester, SO23 0LD

All prices include postage & packing



WRAC Association Fleece

£25.00

Green fleece with embroidered WRAC Association logo.
Sizes XS, S, M, L, XL
(these are unisex and come up large)



WRAC Association 2016 Diary

£5.00

Get organised with the WRAC Association 2016 Diary, week to a page, facing page for notes



WRAC Association Polo Shirt

£19.50

WRAC Association Polo Shirt is a high quality, unisex Fruit of the Loom cotton shirt with embroidered WRAC Association logo.
Sizes S, M, L, XL



WRAC Association Trolley Token

£2.00

Next time you go shopping don't be caught without a coin for your trolley



WRAC Association Brooch

£4.00



WRAC Pin Badge

£3.00



ATS Pin Badge

£3.00



WRAC Association Tea Towel

£7.00

Superb quality large tea towel (50x80cm) with green WRAC Association logo



WRAC Association Notepad

£10.00

A5 lined hardback notebook in dark green with gold embossed badge and logo



WRAC Association Wristband

£1.50

A simple and stylish way to show your support for the WRAC Association



WRAC Association Ballpoint Pen

£5.00

High quality WRAC Association branded ballpoint pen in dark green



WRAC Association Paperweight

£15.00

A beautiful 4 inch diameter paperweight crafted from Bristol Blue glass (includes display stand)



WRAC History Booklet

£2.50

A short history of the WRAC from 1949 to 1992

WRAC Association Notepad and Pen

Purchase the A5 notebook and ballpoint pen together for only
£12.50

ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund - Making A Difference

From the daughter of a beneficiary... 'Please could you pass on our heartfelt thanks for helping my mum and father since he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. I cannot begin to describe what a comfort it has been knowing his efforts as a commando and my mum's service in the ATS has not gone unnoticed. The onies have allowed my mum a safety net whilst the DWP sorted out her benefits. The annuity will make a big difference and the money given for taxis will help her tremendously and not to worry'. £650 for taxis to visit her husband in his care home and a PRMF annuity.

Since November 2014, the first 9 months of the financial year 14/15, your Benevolent Fund has received 260 applications for assistance from former ATS and WRAC servicewomen and awarded £189,975, of which nearly £28,000 was for funeral expenses and just over £20,000 was for Nursing Home Fee top-ups. A further £31,450 was awarded in the form of Princess Royal's Memorial Fund maintenance grants to 20 beneficiaries. Your oldest beneficiary was 99 and your youngest 42, and applications were received from as far afield as the USA, Zimbabwe, Spain and France.

'I would just like to write to say a big thank you for furnishing the money to floor my bungalow. This has allowed me to roll my wheelchair much more easily than on carpet or bare concrete floors. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me out'. £935 on flooring.

Who is eligible for help?

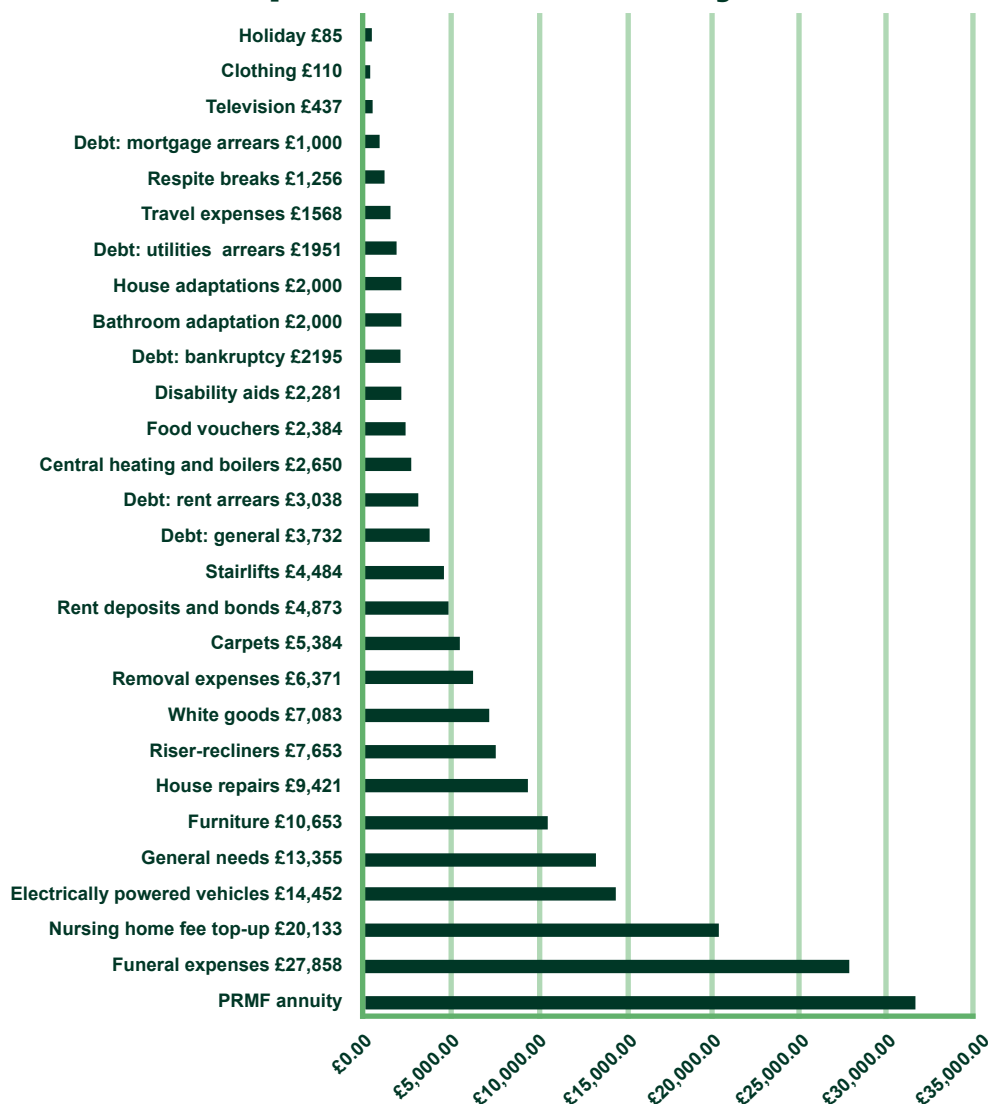
Any former servicewoman, including TA, with one day's paid service or more is eligible for assistance.

'I have received my wheelchair and am delighted with it. It will be so useful. Thank you'. £93.98 for a folding hand operated wheelchair.

Are there any other criteria?

Yes, you must be in need of financial help. There's also a limit on the amount of savings that you can have above which the Benevolent Fund is unable to make an award. To qualify for a maintenance grant you must be living alone on a basic state pension and in poor health.

ATS & WRAC Accociation Benevolent Fund Grant Expenditure Nov 14 - July 15



'I am writing this to say a big thank you for the donation towards purchasing my riser-recliner chair. This is very much appreciated and also for sending me a copy of Lioness. It has bought back some emotional and happy memories of serving in the WRAC'. £1,100 towards the cost of a riser-recliner chair.

How your Benevolent Fund can help

Since the start of this financial year your fund has helped with grants in a wide range of categories including:

bathroom adaptations	central heating/boilers
house repairs and adaptations	carpets and flooring
EPVs and electric wheelchairs	clothing
riser-recliner chairs	furniture
stairlifts	tv's and tv licences
disability aids	white goods
funeral expenses	removal expenses
priority debt	rent, deposits and
food vouchers	bonds
respite breaks	maintenance grants
travel and transport	care home fee top-ups
	general needs

'This is just a short note to say thank you for your donation towards my new boiler which was installed before Christmas 2014. I was so pleased to have warmth and hot water for the winter'. £1,000 for new boiler.

Is there anything with which your Benevolent Fund cannot help?

Your Benevolent Fund is unable to assist with clearing non-priority debt such as overdrafts, bank loans, credit card bills, HP payments; legal fees; or medical and dental procedures available via the NHS.

'This is just a short note to give a big thanks for my new Hoover. It was so good of you to let me have it: I don't think my old knees could have gone on much longer. I am so glad there are people like you that can help people like me that don't have much so once again thank you.' £78.98 for new Hoover.

So how do you apply for help?

If you are a former ATS or WRAC regular or TA servicewoman who needs assistance, or if you know someone who is, then your first port of call is your local branch of SSAFA or regional RBL office. SSAFA or the RBL will arrange for a trained caseworker to interview you in your home to establish the full range of assistance that you need. The caseworker will complete a report that includes details of your household income. This is called means-testing and ensures that your Benevolent Fund's charitable money goes to those in real need. When the report is complete it is sent to the Benevolent Fund Secretary. Once received, applications are considered at the appropriate grants committee meeting and a decision is taken.

From a SSAFA caseworker. 'Thank you for your assistance. Through your kind provision of £670 Miss --- has been able to purchase some much needed clothing, an orthopaedic pillow and a television for her room in the nursing home. the short period of time between the request and your payment has ensured that Miss --- will be able to purchase her new items before Christmas. Thank you once again - the assistance from the ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund has been fantastic'. £670 for clothing, television and orthopaedic pillow.

How often do the grants committee meetings meet?

There are 2 types of grants committee meetings:

- Minor grants committee meetings are held daily as required and can award immediate grants up to £1,000
- Major grants committee meetings (MGCM) are held at least once a month and can award grants up to the annual maximum of £3,000. The MGCMs also consider applications for care home fee top-up fees and maintenance grants, and for applicants with fewer than 6 months service.

'Many thanks for your contribution. The money helped to fill our oil tank up. It was a difficult position to be in as we've never asked for help before. Due to my husband's ill health he had to stop work so I can only say thank you again and best wishes. £600 for general needs including clothing, heating and food vouchers.

What happens next?

When a grant is awarded it is paid by digital bank transfer to either SSAFA or the RBL rather than direct to an applicant. This means that SSAFA or the RBL receive the grant immediately and are able to ensure that it is used for the specific purpose for which it was awarded as soon as possible.

Please find below the contact details for SSAFA and the Royal British Legion if you, or someone you know, are in need of assistance.

SSAFA

www.ssafa.org.uk

0845 241 7141

The Royal British Legion

www.britishlegion.org.uk

0808 802 8080

BAND Ann Jones

I'm so sorry that I was not able to attend the Grand Reunion as I have heard very good reports that it was very successful. I must thank Carole Tyler for taking over for me and marching in the Parade. There were a group of Band members from 1957 who attended, it was a shame that many more were not there.



Mary Hill, Carole Tyler (nee Tupling), Sheila Burton



Carole Tyler

I do intend for us to have a Band Reunion in Manchester in May 2016, which unfortunately will probably be our last. I have reluctantly arrived at this decision as not enough attend and I can only get good deals on accommodation with sufficient numbers. Please do think about coming and let's make it a real good one. I hope you have all enjoyed a healthy and happy summer, hope to hear from you soon.

BATH Sylvia Musgrave

Bath Branch continues to meet twice per month but with reduced numbers, generally around 8. There are five of us who served in the ATS, two WRAC and we welcome one ex WAAF. We also 'meet' in between meetings for lunches or special events. Recently we were invited by the Chairman of the local Council to participate in the Flag Raising ceremony.

We have to report the death of our former Treasurer, Miss Pam Finney, who served in that position for many years. She was also a skilled needlewoman and over the years made many items for our Sales of Work. One of our founder members (1947) died recently aged 100. She served in the ATS as Junior Commander Mary Millard. We kept in touch by phone and letter although it is many years since she was able to join in Branch activities.

We have welcomed a new member to our Branch, Lorna Almonds-Windmill who served with the Royal Signals. She has added colour to our Branch as she is an author and her Father was involved in the founding of the SAS. Thanks to our members who are car owners we are able to get out and about, and of course we use our bus passes. We try to visit places of interest besides our normal meetings so we are keeping as active as possible.

BIRMINGHAM Babs Anderson

Our exciting news is that our very own Chairman, Betty Webb was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, obviously, we are bursting with pride. No doubt there will be photographs of the investiture in due course. She has become quite a celebrity with her TV appearances talking about her time at Bletchley Park and doesn't mind at all if someone asks her to sign her book for them.



Betty Webb MBE

It would be easier to tell you what Birmingham Branch haven't done since our last report. It has been non-stop fun, fun, fun. We started the year with a visit to Shropshire Branch for their post-Christmas lunch. We had a great time meeting up with other Branches and trying our best to win all the raffle prizes. In February we joined with Shropshire Branch and Phoenix Branch for a trip to the theatre to see Calamity Jane. There were 35 of us and we gave it our best shot at singing along, even though they had changed a few of the words. We had such a good time that we are looking to do it again early next year. We would be happy for other Branches or individuals to join us.

March was an exciting month, with a trip up the motorway to Harrogate. Brum Branch were able to muster a sizeable squad of attendees who had an absolute ball. HQ did us proud and we enjoyed every minute. Even the AGM was interesting, with Sue Westlake showing us her newly acquired MBE. The fancy dress theme was challenging but we all managed to rise to the occasion with our union flags. Beating the Retreat was a joy to behold and dancing to the Yorkshire Band of the Royal British Legion all night was exhilarating. As we marched through the park an older civilian lady was heard to say "I didn't know there were women in the Army." Her husband replied "Yes, a few." There were about 300 of us on parade that morning, so we can only guess what he thinks 'a few' amounts to.

In May, Birmingham celebrated VE Day and several of our members were able to join the parade. There was even a shot of them on the local evening news. They are happy to sign autographs now they are famous. Members of the Branch attended the Area Reunion in Crewe, hosted by Phoenix Branch. Several of us made it a long weekend and had a fabulous time. It is always good to meet up with old and new friends from the Area. We are looking forward to revisiting Shrewsbury next year as Shropshire Branch and Marches and Mid Wales play host.

We held a Bring and Buy at our June meeting and raised enough to send a donation of £50 to Troop Aid. The next week we took

ourselves off to Pizza Hut for our quarterly pizza night. We normally manage to put out a squad of twelve for these fun filled evenings and obviously, we would be pleased if anyone would like to join us on these occasions.

Some members of Birmingham Branch were lucky enough to be selected to march in the Armed Forces Day parade through Guildford. Despite difficulties with hearing orders and the sound of the band ricocheting off the buildings the WRAC Association marched with dignity along the cobbles of the High Street and eventually managed to give HRH the Duke of York an eyes right. It was a proud day for us, marching through our spiritual home. In the meantime, many Brum Branch members were manning our stall in Birmingham city centre. They joined other veterans to march into Centenary Square for the traditional service and their efforts were appreciated by the general public. Another great showing by our ladies and fellow veterans.

For the third year running, some Brum Branch members joined Wendy Hooton's team of runners and smashed the Great North 10k in Gateshead. A very hilly course ensured some gasping for breath but every member of the team made it over the finish line and achieve decent times. A couple of hares ensured we looked good overall but the tortoises amongst us spread ourselves throughout the field to show a presence at all levels. A fine effort brought in a decent amount of sponsorship, though we don't know the final figure at the time of writing. The only question is - where next? We've done Manchester, London and Gateshead, so it will have to be good. Birmingham Branch send you all good wishes and the hope that you might join us at our meetings sometimes.

BOURNEMOUTH **Val Wright**

Bournemouth Branch started the year with our post Christmas Bring & Buy in February, which raised some funds for the branch enabled members to chat and catch up on news since the Christmas lunch. Then in March we had the first of our informal chat gatherings in the bar of Premier Inn, which we repeated in May. Three of our branch members enjoyed the Grand Reunion at Harrogate in March, as can be seen from the photo, 'no names, no pack drill'!



In April we were interested to learn from Joyce Thorne, a retired MacMillan nurse, on how she had set up a new District role for MacMillan. In June our speaker was Mrs Pam Hoyle who spoke to us about war gardens; in particular the floral and vegetable gardens that had been developed in an internment camp in Germany between 1914-1918, where the internees from all walks of life banded together to improve their existence during their time there.

Cheryl Noble represented the branch at the Remembrance of VE Day, which was rather low key in Bournemouth, being the day following the General Election. There were several D Day veterans present, looking very smart and wearing a huge array of medals. Cheryl was dressed in her WRAC Association fleece and beret and the representatives of the WRENS, WRVS and RBL all remarked how they would like their Associations to have a similar 'uniform'.

Marilyn Gibbons had been at the Chelsea Pensioners' Founders Day when the French Legion d'Honneur was presented to WW2 Veterans in a very moving ceremony. The highlight in the first part of this year was our 'Pensioners' Lunch' in July, which has replaced the historic Cream Tea. We were delighted to welcome and meet Ali Brown, our Vice President, who was pleased to see so many ATS members enjoying the event.



Nearest the camera Kathleen Brownbill and Jillian Hurst (Branch Social Secretary)

BRISTOL **Jackie Naysmith MBE**

This has been a busy 6 months for our members. We started the New Year with a Bring and Buy sale which is always popular and good for members to get a bargain. In February we had our Annual Lunch and the theme was the 40's; an added touch was hearts as name tags, with members name on to emulate the tags the children who were evacuated wore, also it brought in the Valentine Day theme as well. Our menu and place names were Ration Books, on the table were milk bottles with an assortment of flowers, it all looked very colourful. Staff dressed for the occasion as well. The hotel laid on tea and coffee for members when they arrived and the speciality for those members who wanted it was Camp Coffee and carnation milk. We are always pleased that Maj Mac is able to join us, for us it was especially sad as this was to be her last official invite as she was retiring from post as our Area Chairman.



1940's Annual Lunch

We were looking forward to the Grand Reunion at Harrogate and we were not disappointed. The weather was very kind to us and the hotel was friendly. It is always nice to meet up with friends and do 'catch up'. Our thanks to Ali Brown, Sue Hatton, Gabi Shanahan and Tanya-Jayne Park who worked behind the scenes to make this such a successful occasion. We appreciate all the planning and hard work that is involved with organising such a very important event for the members.



Enjoying the Grand Reunion

We had an Easter Bonnet event at our next meeting, unfortunately my hat fell to pieces as I took it out my bag. All the members however enjoyed the challenge and fun. Our meetings are very well attended and average about 25 members which we hope we can maintain. With the support of Sharon Bingham of Swindon Branch I took 100 hats, that were knitted by members, to a local hospital for the Bristol/Mbarara project for babies.



Easter Bonnets

On Armed Forces Day the weather was again kind to us. The Chairman and myself had attended Flag Raising on the Monday in Bristol and then it was to South Gloucestershire to meet with a couple of our members for Flag Raising in the afternoon. On the Saturday at South Gloucestershire we had a display in the park which generated interest, and on the Sunday another display in Bristol which was not so good, it was heavy rain to start with but thankfully it brightened up and the sun came out which helped.



Jackie Naysmith laying a wreath on ANZAC Day

We are planning our Branch day out in September, which will probably be at Weston-super-Mare as this is a favourite with the older members. We have members in the Branch who have not been in good health, and we wish them well, although some of them are now unable to attend meetings they are 'not forgotten'.

BURY & ROCHDALE Susan Feeney nee Reeves

Yet again we have had a very busy 6 months, starting with Harrogate. Eight members of the Branch wound their way up across the border from Lancashire into Yorkshire for a weekend of fun and frolics. We would like to say a huge 'Well Done' to the organisers and we are all looking forward to the next one. Our members did themselves proud with their costumes to say we scrubbed up well is an understatement.



As Bury is the home of the Lancashire Fusiliers we were invited to attend the Gallipoli 100 year anniversary events, ending with a Parade through Bury with various organisations. Our branch was well represented, the day was long and emotional with 100's lining the Streets of the town centre. While waiting to be given the order to march a rather cheeky Fusilier Veteran told us that if we were out of step he would ask us to fall out! Needless to say this was never going to happen as with straight backs and swinging arms we negotiated the potholes, speed hump and kerbs like a pride of light footed Lionesses.



At our May Branch meeting we had a VE Party, this consisted of VE costumes, a fabulous buffet and a great afternoon was had by all. In June a number of us went on a trip to The Imperial War Museum North this was a very enjoyable afternoon, which as usual ended up with Lunch at The Lowry centre. We are hoping to go later in the year to the National Memorial Arboretum and are looking forward to the next half of the year.

As a branch we are growing in numbers and would like to welcome our new members Cheryl and Joan and hope to see you both soon. Yet again this November we will be found in both Marks and Spencer and Debenhams in Bury selling Poppies. Some of our members still meet up once a month in Oldham for a meal and a catch up and all are welcome if anyone wants the details please contact either Susan Feeney 07813 313508 or Kath Kirtley 07534 632787(new number).

CANTERBURY

Sue Foulks

I am pleased to report that Canterbury Branch is still continuing to meet on a regular basis. Our numbers have been boosted by three new members, Sharon Addis, Maryann Clark and Carol Cole have joined us and we are very pleased to welcome them.

Our first meeting of 2015 was in April, 11 members were present. Susan Wing, Chairman, explained the resolution passed at the recent Grand Reunion in Harrogate about the change in membership of the WRAC Association. Our associate members, WAAFs and WRNS, have also agreed to pay a small yearly sum to assist with the cost of hiring the venue, drinks etc.

Two members, myself and Susan Wing had attended the Grand Reunion and the rest of our meeting was spent recounting what an amazing time we had. From the moment we arrived until our final goodbyes it was filled with fun and laughter. There was so much going on, grateful thanks must go to everyone at HQ for putting on such a splendid weekend.

Our next meeting was in May and we discussed our programme for the rest of the year. In June, Lorna Bedford gave us a talk on the work of the Canterbury Street Pastors. A group of volunteers from local churches who care for, listen and help people out on the streets of the city at night.

Our meetings continue through the year on the first Wednesday of the month at Housing 21, Cowdray Place, Canterbury, CT1 3PB at 1.00 pm. If anyone would like to join us please don't hesitate to contact me, Sue Foulks, Branch Secretary. New members can guarantee a warm welcome!

CHELMSFORD

Gina Shadrack

Our first meeting of 2015 was in March when we met for a social afternoon together, with a hands on opportunity to make a paper carnation. This went surprisingly well and we had some good results!. At our April meeting we listened to an illustrated talk by Dennis Rensch MBE, husband of Diane. Dennis had completed a sponsored walk in the Sahara Desert and we sat spellbound at his ability and his achievement. A truly memorable afternoon.

A quiz was planned for our May meeting, until the Hon Sec had one of her better ideas and we met for a Fish and Chip lunch instead. This proved really successful (as it would), what a pity illness prevented the Hon Sec from attending! At our June meeting we listened to an enjoyable talk on the Life of Beatrice Potter and in July we celebrated our Anniversary Lunch together.



25th Anniversary Luncheon

We are sad to report the death of one of our longest serving members, Dorothy Turner ATS. Dorothy attended meetings regularly and was a popular participant. This was reflected in the number of members who were able to attend her funeral - we shall miss her.

We have welcomed two new members to the Branch, Janet Watkins and Betty Warren, both WRAC. If you live near Chelmsford and would like to come along to meetings we would like to be welcome you. Please phone 01245 251088 for further details.

CHESTER

Pat Sanders



I hope everyone has been enjoying the lovely weather and it has not been too hot for you. I am pleased to say that the Branch is starting to expand again after losing members over the last couple of years; we have had 4 new members join us this year, Sheila Brown, Dot Apps, Stella Joseph and Carol Younger.

In March members of the Chester and Wirral Branches attended the funeral of Marie Hemmings, Marie had previously been the Chairman of the North West Area until she retired, and it was an honour to be asked to take our Standard with our Standard Bearer Joy Griffiths. The ladies who attended the Grand Reunion thoroughly enjoyed themselves and had nothing but praise for the organisers for a great weekend. Pat Wakefield, Lynne Cook and Sheila Brown discovered cocktails and cannot wait for the next weekend away to try some more.

We have been very busy with our meetings and outings. One of the most memorable was the outing to a bowling alley, imagine it 11 ladies with ages ranging from 45 to 93 divided into 2 teams. Boy are these ladies competitive, the winning team consisted of Audrey McDermott ATS (top scorer), Sheila Brown, Jackie Jones, Pat Mathews and Stella Joseph the runners up team were, Dorothy Garnett ATS, Lynne Cooke, Frances Rimmer ATS, Trish Carr, and Joy Griffiths, the winning team won medals. Audrey wanted to take up bowling as a hobby but all Pat Sanders said was "never again" Hopefully next year we will be having a competition against other Branches. By the way Pat's score was not counted as she still holds the WRAC highest score. We have also been to a Royal Signals Lunch, a 40's Lunch, a Birthday Lunch with the Birmingham Branch and a trip to Chorley where they went on a canal trip and then a visit to Botany Bay, a very tiring but enjoyable day.

In July we are visited the Arboretum and of course August was our annual Chester canal trip where we had a delicious lunch. Our final trip out is a visit to Chester Zoo in September then we will be having our Christmas Lunches, as I have said we have a very busy year. We will tell you about our other outings in the next issue of the Lioness. Well that is all from the Chester Branch except to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

CLEVELAND BRANCH

Audrey Grainge

In December we held our annual Christmas lunch at the College and once again had a superb meal cooked and served by the students. Our yearly Bring and Buy auction was held in March and in the absence of Irene, Audrey Grainge took over the gavel along with Pam Ashenden acting as the runner everyone had a great time fighting over the goodies on offer that the members had so kindly donated by our members.



Mary Hill and Judith Gallacher showing off the goods

Once again our hard working Standard Bearer has been here there and everywhere showing the flag. In January she was honouring the women of WW1 in Norton and in Larkhill with the Artillery. She also did a Flag Raising to honour Paschendale. In April she attended the Royal Hospital Chelsea, Billingham War Memorial and Blackpool to name but a few. Our Anne certainly clocks up the miles. She has also attended a great many funerals including that of ex WRAC Kath Codlin who sadly died in April at the age of 91.



Parading at the Royal Hospital Chelsea

We are very fortunate to maintain a good turnout at our monthly meetings. At the AGM our management changed with Irene McClean moving from treasurer to Chairman and Maxine Lane going from Chair to Treasurer. Judith Gallacher is taking over from Chris Mimms organising the monthly raffle and we thank them all and wish them well in their new positions. A special thank you goes to Chris for supplying the raffle for many years. Hazel Crammen is still our very efficient Secretary.

We had a very busy commitment to AFD in Stockton, Middlesbrough, and Redcar which was in the capable hands of Jan Williams Landess, Kath Steele and Suzanne Allan who had us all roped in to help on the stalls.



Stockton AFD L-R: Hazell Crammen, Chris Mimms, Kath Steele, Singer, Jan Williams Landess, Suzanne Allen



Redcar AFD L-R: Kath Steele, Jenny Hall, Suzanne Allen, Wendy Wall

A reminder that we hold our meeting on the 4th Wednesday of the month at the Settlement Centre Middlesbrough Please come along, you will be made most welcome. We have a good crowd of women with many unsung heroes amongst them.

COLCHESTER

Wendy Hooton



Back Row L-R: Caz Thompson-Smith, Audrey Thompson-Smith, Jackie Smith, Vinnie Vincent, Kerry Warnes, Jenny Pizzuto, Gwen Greenwood, Yvonne Wilson
Front Row L-R: Betty Warren, Janet Watkins, Wendy Hooton, Debbie Green

Facebook did its job and helped us round up several ex WRAC from the Colchester Area for an inaugural social evening at the Bricklayers pub near Colchester Railway station. Vinnie Vincent was the organiser and even arranged a light buffet too, a big thank you to Vinnie. As often is the case it was meeting up with old friends and making new ones which gave to non stop chatting and laughter. The unique bond we have brought out lots of esprit de corps and a desire to meet again. With this in mind Kerry Warnes set up a Facebook page WRAC/ATS Veterans of Colchester and Surrounding Areas. Don't miss out, join the group, especially if you live in the area. Our second meeting was held in August, "Seaside Havoc" a day on Clacton Pier and a fish and chip lunch, organised by Kerry Warnes.

DONCASTER **Veronica Hanson**

The Doncaster Branch of the WRAC Association held their Christmas lunch at the Barley Twist Doncaster on Thursday 29th January 2015.



Left column: Joan Osborne, Eileen Ridge, Christina Seymour, Doreen Lowry, Jean Simmonds. Right column: Veronica Hanson, Joan Round, Pam Morgan, Helen Lloyd, Babs Thorpe.

GRIMSBY **Gail Davey**

The Grimsby Branch of the association has been fairly quiet up to now. We started the year with a New Year party after the January meeting. Our Standard Bearer Carole attended the Grand Reunion in Harrogate where she met up with some old friends and enjoyed the weekend very much. The June meeting, being on 8 May, we attended a celebratory fish and chip lunch before the meeting, all enjoyed the delicious Grimsby fish. We had an outing to Springfields shopping outlet, near Spalding, in July and hope for another outing later in the year.

HEREFORD **Sharon Joyce**

Since the last edition of Lioness it is with sadness that I have to report that we have lost two long time members of Hereford Branch; Edith Bell died on her 90th birthday and Peggy Rose who was also 90 years young and had attended the Grand Reunion in Harrogate. They will both be sadly missed at our monthly meetings as both had a wicked sense of humour.

On a happier note June was a busy month for us. On 07 June the Herefordshire Royal British Legion County Rally was held in Ross on Wye, the Branch Standard was on parade (well done Jo Foster) with 15 other Standards, with the band, Veterans, Cadets

and Scouts marching it was quite a parade with lots of clapping and cheering from the crowd lining the route. On 11 June nine branch members went to the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. This was a good excuse for the ladies to indulge in some retail therapy for a new outfit. (see page 11 for the full article).

On 17 June there was a branch trip to Bletchley Park, the 'Home of the Codebreakers'. Thanks to the coordination efforts of Joyce Nicholls we set out from Hereford at 0800 hours on the dot, picking up various members on the way. The final pickup was from Worcester where one person nearly got left behind; Anna Toon was so busy talking she hadn't noticed that her daughter had not got back on the coach! Unfortunately not all our members could make the trip as the funeral of Edith Bell was being held on the same day. However, it was good that her comrades were spending the day together where she could be collectively remembered in thought.

We arrived safely and on schedule thanks to our excellent driver. Our coach arrived at the same time as the Birmingham Branch minibus who were also visiting; Bletchley Park was being taken over once again by the women in uniform! A slight delay before disembarking, receiving instructions for the day, issuing of tickets and guidebooks and we were all off and exploring.



Visiting Bletchley Park

Bletchley Park housed the codebreaking operation during World War Two and was the birthplace of modern computing. At its peak, around ten thousand people worked at Bletchley Park and its associated outstations. Women made up the majority of the personnel at Bletchley Park, and not only in supporting roles; they made a significant contribution to the codebreaking. It has global significance. The intelligence produced here contributed to all theatres of World War Two. Bletchley Park pioneered cooperation with other intelligence services including France, Poland and the United States.

Bletchley Park is unique. It housed a collection of brilliant minds tasked with codebreaking during World War Two, thereby altering the course of history. Contained in the buildings and huts are Colossus, the world's first electronic digital computer designed by Tommy Flowers, and the Bombe which was developed by Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman. There is much to see and take in at Bletchley Park, too much for one visit. By the time everybody was seated back on the coach for the homeward journey there were many sore feet, and within half an hour many closed eyelids. If you've not managed to visit yet it is highly recommended.

The Armed Forces Day National Event at Guildford saw many branch members attending, Joyce Nicholls and Rosemary Jones were lucky enough to get tickets to attend the Cathedral Service alongside the Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Fallon and many other top names. Branch member Barbara Davies was

the Parade Commander of the ex WRAC ladies on parade, it was long march up the cobbles of Guildford High Street to Stoke Park on a very hot summer's day. Later in the day Hereford Branch member Marg Davies received her Veteran's Badge from Lance Sergeant Johnson Beharry VC. All Hereford Branch members enjoyed the weekend as we all had a chance to meet and catch up with friends.



Rosemary receiving her award from Lady Darnley

Rosemary Jones one of our branch founder members and long time member of the RBL received her long service award for 55 years as a Poppy Appeal collector. She received her award from Lady Darnley, Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire.

We held a Veterans Lunch in July attended by 25 to 30 members and our Summer Draw and Picnic at Queen's Wood near Leominster in August, more news in the next issue.

LEICESTER & NOTTINGHAM

Sue Slattery

2014 ended with a Christmas lunch at Devonshire Place and was attended by 35 members and 12 guests, as usual the meal was of a high standard. 2015 has been a very special year so far, both for the Branch and individuals. We have been involved with the interment of King Richard III, TV interviews, VE70 commemorations in London and one of our ladies was given the honour of raising the flag for Armed Forces Day. What a great bunch we, are can the rest of the year get any better than this.

In January our first Branch meeting of the year was attended by 28 ladies who enjoyed a talk by Helen Emery (ex wrac), who explained about her involvement of setting up workshops entitled A Century of Stories, based on individual WW1 experiences. We welcomed new member Ann Montgomery, to the Branch. In February 31 ladies enjoyed our Nibble and Natter as we celebrated Joan Thornton's 95th birthday with cards, gifts, and a cake made by Joan's daughter Ann, which was quickly



Joan Thornton celebrating her 95th birthday

demolished. Pam Richards (Welfare Officer) reported that 4 of our ladies were in poor health.

At our March meeting, despite a drop in numbers, our Bring and Buy raised £180 which was a good boost for our funds. Sadly this month we lost 2 of our ladies, Sylvia Schofield and Barbara Cameron, their funerals were attended by our Standard and a number of ladies. We welcomed another member to the Branch, Joyce Forrest who nows lives in our area having moved from Lincoln. Sixteen members attended the Grand Reunion in Harrogate, they had a fabulous weekend, thanks to all at HQ for their hard work which made this such a success. Also in March Leicester & Nottingham Branch was involved in history being made in our when 8 members provided a Guard of Honour (4 of us at a time for 1 hour) during the time King Richard's remains lay in repose in Leicester Cathedral. Prior to the actual event Joan, Carol and Sue were interviewed by a Central News reporter who asked each of us what it would mean to us, as individuals to become part of history, you may have seen us on the TV. On the day the four Guard of Honour slow marched to take up their positions at the coffin, where we stood to attention with our heads bowed at four corners of the coffin. The public then filed passed to pay their respects and take photographs. We all felt so proud and honoured as individuals and for our Branch to have been part of history in the making, despite our aching limbs which had not stood in such a position since our days on the square, but it was a day that none of us would have missed for the world.



Joan De-Vall

In April Christina Jones (Yvonne's daughter) gave us a talk and update on the role of the female soldier in a combat unit and explained about the pros and cons of this happening. Also in April 20 of us visited the Imperial War Museum in Manchester where we meet up with Jenny Hersey, one of our Branch members who lives in Cheshire. We had a very interesting and enjoyable day. Our Standard plus 7 ladies travelled to Tamworth to pay our respects to a true gentleman Tom Jenkinson, husband of Belle.

For our May meeting we tried something different, "Show and Tell". Firstly Sandra talked about items and the memories of her mother. Yvonne then told us a very personal and moving story about her mother's life during WW2 and the difficulties she encountered which affected the whole of her family. Yvonne admitted she found it difficult to talk about her mother's life and found it upsetting, as did everyone in the room. Without going into too much detail we all felt that Yvonne was very brave to share

her mother's sad life story with us, we found it hard to understand why some humans can be so cruel. Sadly we had another of our members pass away this month, Marjorie Brutnell, a founder member of our Branch. Our Standard and a number of ladies attended her funeral.

Our next outing was to the Birmingham Branch birthday lunch where 11 ladies had a enjoyable, good value meal and met up with old friends. Also 6 of us travelled to Crewe for the Area Reunion hosted by Phoenix Branch, where again we met our friends and comrades. On 08 May our Standard Bearer, Lyn, Sue and Carol attended County Hall for a short service and two minutes silence to commemorate VE Day. During the same weekend 5 of our lucky ATS ladies travelled to London where they joined other WW2 veterans for the VE70 commemorations. Some of you may have caught a glimpse of them on TV, it seems they all had a wonderful time and were all treated like royalty.



Leicester & Nottingham Branch enjoying a river cruise



Armed Forces Day Flag Raising



At our June meeting craft and hobby demonstrations were given by Doris, Pam and Lynda, showing us their hidden talents which included items to make using para cord, pottery/decoupage and embroidery. Another outing this month was to Wicksteed Park Pavilion in Kettering to see a show 'D Day Songs That Won The War' plus lunch and tea. Seventeen ladies plus nine guests clapped and sang our little hearts out. Also in June 24 ladies plus 8 guests set off to Nottingham for a river trip and lunch on the Nottingham Princess, a very relaxing three hours spent chatting, eating and drinking. The Standard and 5 ladies attended the 71st Anniversary of the D Day Normandy Veterans service at Packington. On 19 June the Standard, plus 8 members, attended the Armed Forces Day Flag Raising ceremony at Leicestershire County Hall. This year with a difference as our very own Joan De-Vall was the selected veteran to raise the flag, the very first female to be given this honour in our county. This has been another action packed 6 months for the Branch, well done to all those who have made it so.

LINCOLN & DISTRICT

Chris Corker

We closed 2014 with our Christmas Lunch at the Carre Arms in Sleaford where it was lovely to welcome back Barbara Hudson for a fleeting visit. The New Year weather was kind to us and we held a January meeting for the first time in several years and caught up with everyone's news.

Several members went on the visit to Stamford Brewery in early March. The AGM, usually held this month, was moved to May as there were not many members attending the March meeting. The Anniversary Lunch was held on Saturday 25th April at the Lincoln Hotel this year for the first time and although numbers were small we had a lovely lunch and raffle.



Jackie Walton, Ella Reast, Pat Wood, Karen Smith, Mary Faver and the back of Jenny Quirk!



Maureen West, Nora Jones and Ann Watkiss (affiliated member)

At the AGM in May the decision was taken to remain in our current location for meetings even though the hall is rather on the large size. The current committee are remaining in place for the present; Sylvia Stubbs has become "Secretary Under Training" and will take over next year. Mary Faver and Linda Hilton have come forward to act as Events Organisers so we look forward to an exciting/interesting programme for next year.

On Saturday 6th June, 8 of the ladies from the Lincoln Branch, along with various guests and mascots in tow, travelled down to Bletchley Park, picking up members at designated places on route. Once everyone had arrived and been issued their ticket it was every woman for themselves and we entered the world of the code breaker. It remained sunny and dry all day allowing the group to wander freely around the various huts and exhibits, looking at the wartime secret code breaking unit and equipment. Great hilarity ensued when we tracked down the original guard hut, complete with dodgy looking chair, and went "on stag". The group posed for the traditional group photo, although there were a few absentees, before being counted back onto the coach ready for departure. An enjoyable day had by all and well worth a return visit



Jackie Walton, Helen Haynes, Linda Hilton, Chris Corker, Dot Ryder, Shirley Dawe, Sophie, Karen Smith, James, Mary Faver.



Mary Faver, James (Mascot), Chris Corker, Dot Ryder, Linda Hilton, Karen Smith and Sophie

If you are in Lincoln please call in on the third Thursday of the month at the Central Methodist Hall, High Street, Lincoln LN5 7PR (except April, August and December).

MEDITERRANEAN BRANCH

Ann Colclough

I think this may be the first entry in the Lioness for the Mediterranean Branch, I have read the previous two copies with great interest, and hope I don't let "my Branch" down! I have both Regular Army and TA service and had dithered about joining the WRAC Association for some time, but I live in Spain so there didn't seem much chance of me meeting up with other members.

Things changed when a friend from Hindhead days told me about the new Mediterranean Branch which had been formed, I called a very nice lady to chat about it – who turned out to be the very famous Mel Howell – and I was in! Mel and I live in the same part of Spain and she passes through my nearest town of Moriara regularly, so we arranged to meet for coffee. Although we served in different places in a different generation the old Esprit de Corps was there and we hit it off right away.

I was happy to be just a member of the Mediterranean Branch, but Mel and I were idly chatting on the phone one day and she slipped in a quick question about me becoming the "Chair" for the Branch, always up for a challenge I said yes, having no real idea what would be involved!



We are of course different to other Branches as many of us live in different parts of the Med, some permanently, but many members come and go between homes over here and in other parts of the world. We do though have one thing in common, we have all proudly served in the ATS or WRAC and carry so many memories between us, both happy and sad. Unlike other Branches we are not able to hold regular Branch meetings, however Mel made me aware of an imminent invasion by about 30 members of the Association to Benidorm in late May. She had booked a hotel, and all sorts of trips and visits had been arranged to keep everyone entertained, and show them a taste of what this wonderful area of Spain is all about. Of course Murphy and his law never take a break, and I found that on the dates Mel mentioned, I would be away in the UK celebrating my 70th birthday with family!





Many of the group had returned to the UK by the time I got home, but I was back in time to go on the coach trip to the Cherry Orchards with the folks still here. It wasn't an exclusive WRAC trip, there were "civilians", both male and female on the coach too, but it was fun and laughter from start to finish. Of course it was all arranged by Mel so it went without a hitch and we all had a great time. I sent a report to one of the local free papers, The Round Town News, and I'm pleased to say it was published, so perhaps there are more ex WRAC/ATS members in the area who know about us now.

I hope the photos will give you a flavour of the good time had by all of the "Benidorm Babes", and once again, huge thanks to Mel for arranging it all. There is talk of another visit already, but no doubt Mel will keep us all informed!

PETERBOROUGH

Chris Corker

The newly formed Peterborough Branch held their first meeting at the TA Centre in Peterborough on the Saturday 28th March 2015. It was a very informal get together with a bring and share lunch where 18 ladies attended and spent a couple of hours chatting and getting to know each other. Although a very informal meeting we all enjoyed the time together and we arranged our next meeting in the evening to ensure those ladies that work could attend, this time we had a meal in a Toby Carvery. There is a lot of enthusiasm for us to meet about once a month but everyone seems to prefer to meet on a casual basis. Our next meeting which we hope to hold in July could even be a picnic.



Standing: Wendy Hooton (Area Chairman) Jan Waller, Jan Burchett-Vass, Sue Goodes, Dot Ryder
Sue Beevers, Lori Weights, Chris Corker, Tracy Duggan
Seated: Val Dixon, Mary Faver, Jean Legg, Pam Sussex, Pauline Mason, Cathy Munro, Tina Hancock
Angela Slater and Debs Murphy Farr

PHOENIX

Sheila Johnson

Membership of the Branch has now risen to 33 which is heartening. Three gatherings; a Christmas Lunch in December 2014, a Spring Lunch in March and the slightly more formal Wales & The West Area Reunion in May 2015 have all contributed to Phoenix's aim to cater for Association members who are unable to make it to regular monthly meetings.



Phoenix Branch Lunch 07 March 2015

Up to 40 members from 7 Branches attended the Reunion, where Ali Brown was the guest of honour. Maggie Purkis welcomed her, along with those attending their first Reunion such as Tamworth Branch members. A decision was made to have future Reunions hosted by successive Branches. Phoenix took on 2015's and it is intended that Shropshire Branch host the next one in May 2016.



Wales & The West Reunion 16 May 2015

The Crewe Arms Hotel was chosen as the venue for all three events, in addition Phoenix held their 2015 AGM there in July. It has proved to be a popular venue, largely due the hospitable staff, wholesome catering and proximity to Crewe railway station.

PORTSMOUTH

Sally Watson

Hello to Members and thank you for your continued support of our coffee mornings which are always a pleasure and good to catch up for a 'chin wag' and our raffle, we never know what may come wrapped! There have been a couple of events since our last input to Lioness and the most memorable for two of our ladies, Marjorie and Megan was a visit to Ypres in April together with other Veterans organised and funded by The Not Forgotten Association.

The Trip started with an overnight stay at The Union Jack Club followed by a boat to Calais with a two night stay in Leper from where visits were made to Lyssenhoeke Cemetary, Talbot House Poperinghe and Hooe Museum. At Passchendaele Marjorie

was honoured to be asked to lay the wreath together with the medical orderly Darren, remembering those who gave their lives. On to the Menin Gate where a wreath was laid for the Association. This visit had been a party of mixed ages, different times of service, both during war and peace. At each memorial a wreath was laid with a verse and two minutes silence. Let's all remember! We would like to thank all those involved in making the trip an experience and for taking wonderful care of Marjorie and Megan.



Not Forgotten Association Ypres Trip

Armed Forces Day in Guildford was attended by Sally, there were members from around the country and all mixed in very nicely together. The March started off across the river and on to the High Street with the salute being taken by the Duke of York, then onward up the High Street and on to Stoke Park. Wow! What a distance and especially in the heat but all went well and all ladies kept up together with the long forgotten shout of 'Left, Right, Left Right'. One never forgets! Well done to all! The turn out to cheer on the Veterans, WRAC and Cadets was enormous. Thank you to the people of Guildford. In Stoke Park there were various stands and exhibits, a good day was had by all. I expect there were many a Vet going home exhausted! Thank you to the organisers of the Day and thank you also to Headquarters for relaying all messages/instructions etc.

Our next visit is to Mother Kelly's for our annual Lunch. Mmm! Can't wait. Delicious! Wishing all our ladies continued good health.

PLYMOUTH Ruth Jennings

On a sunny day in May eight members from Plymouth took the train to Truro for a very successful reunion trip. Nikki, Sue, Lorraine and Sandy who live in Cornwall joined us. Also Sue Westlake and Mack Maskens-McIntyre came to the Kernow Club to be with us, the rest came by car from Plymouth and brought the total to 18, we all enjoyed a lovely buffet lunch. Once again we thank Sue and Mack for coming so far down south to visit us and, specifically, to see members in Cornwall who cannot commute to Devon on a regular basis

I am writing this in June and we have just had our minibus trip to Dart's Farm with Nancy and Victor arranging the transport from Plymouth for 9, another 2 came by car. We hoped that some ladies would come to join us again this year but nobody extra came from the Exeter or Torbay area. In spite of that we enjoyed first class food and service from the ever cheerful restaurant staff and look forward to another trip in the future.

On the 5th and 6th of June, the Plymouth and District Federation of Ex-Service Associations arranged 2 mini D Day celebrations; both in my home area. There is a small monument dedicated to The United States Naval Coastguard and Mercantile Services on the green beside the Brunel rail and Tamar River road bridges and down at river level a Memorial dedicated to the 5th and 7th U.S. American Corps who left our shores at Saltash Passage to go to Dunkerque in 1944. This year's memorial services were very brief and low key compared to last year's 70th anniversary but well worth the effort of attending alongside a dozen Standard Bearers from the Federation along with a scattering of local folk; and, yes, there was lunch afterwards in the Ferry House Inn just along the road!



US Army 5th and 7th Corps Memorial



US Naval Coastguard and Mercantile Services Memorial

At the end of June Plymouth celebrated Armed Forces week and Armed Forces Day on Saturday 27th, Many people went to the Hoe and enjoyed a great program of events, designed to suit young and old throughout the day. Now that we are so few in our branch we join forces with the local Alzheimer Society to share a display table in the Veteran's Marquee, organised by our Treasurer, Evon and her daughter Ruth. Happily we had more volunteers this year to enable us to have a sensible rota.

On Saturday 29 August 29th we enjoyed lunch at Knightstone Tea Rooms. Our Christmas lunch is on Friday 11 December; to which all are welcome with family and/or carers etc. Sadly, we recently had the news from Dave Gosling that his mum, Millie, had died after spending several years in a nursing home. On the plus side we welcomed Pam Roose as a new member earlier this year.

We have our meetings on the 4th Tuesday of the month except in December, at 1.30 in the Lower Abbey Hall, behind the Minster Church of St Andrew in Royal Parade.

SHEFFIELD BRANCH

Brenda Colley

Our first meal out this year was for Jean's 80th Birthday in March. A lovely meal in one of our favourite places, Sheffield Catering College.



Jean's 80th Birthday

Three of us went to the Grand Reunion in Harrogate. A fantastic weekend and Harrogate is a lovely city in which to spend it. We thought Bristol was super and couldn't be bettered, but we were wrong. It seems our Grand Reunions just keep getting Grander. The parade through the park went without a hitch, and the band who paraded for us at the hotel really 'put the lid on' this amazing weekend.



Grand Reunion, Harrogate

On 21 June the Standard of ATS members of AckAck Command Royal Artillery Association was laid up in York Minster. Unfortunately I was the only one able to attend this important event from our Branch, but 3 came up from London (one of whom I had met a few years ago at Lord Kitcheners and had put a photo in Lioness). Our member, Beryl Holder, who only recently stopped editing their magazine, handed over the Standard to the Minister for safe keeping. It was a lovely service & quite emotional.



Beryl Holder at York Minster

much happier circumstances. June Lowe is going to become a Chelsea Pensioner. She has attended a couple of interviews, spent several weekends there and will be leaving us in October. Congratulations and Good Luck June. We look forward to seeing you in November when we join you in your Social Club for the evening!

Our August meeting was scheduled to be held at my house and we have two events to look forward to in September. Our Area Reunion in York, always a good event, and the Remembrance Service and parade at Eden Camp, North Yorkshire. In addition I have almost a full contingent who are hoping to march in London this year, eight of us, the number grows each year.

SHROPSHIRE BRANCH

Sandra Davis

Hello from all the Shropshire Branch, we hope that 2015 is treating you all with kindness. We started the year with our own branch post crimbo lunch. It was once again held at the Myton & Mermaid near Shrewsbury. We welcomed a lot of new faces, as well as saying hello to the many people that have supported us in the past. The lunch went very well, so well in fact we forgot to take some photos of the branch members!

February saw the first meeting of the year at the usual haunt of the Red Lion public house. It was good to exercise the jaw and do a spot of catching up! The branch joined forces with Birmingham Branch for a trip to the Alexandra Theatre to see Calamity Jane. Chris, Lucy, Nancy, Sheila and Sandra donned their greens to attend the funeral of Terri Goff, who was a long standing branch member and will be sadly missed as she was a regular attendee to the meetings.

March was a fairly quiet month to start with. During the evening meeting steam was seen to be coming from out tables, from too much talking! We were notified of yet another loss, that of Chris Rangecroft. Chris was also a regular attendee and her lively input will be very much missed. The Branch holiday to the Isle of Wight was hailed a great success and was deemed excellent value for money. For evidence of this please see the group photo, it looks a bit scary but it took several attempts to get to this one due to everyone falling about laughing! We did an out of season Secret Santa and everyone was well pleased with the gift that they received, something more to remember the holiday by! Chris, Mel, Sheila, Alison, Ruth (Sandra's sister) and Sandra made the coach journey down to Portsmouth for the ferry crossing. The



hotel was in Shanklin, they had no prior knowledge that we were descending on them, the element of surprise! We took full advantage of the free house spirits with our evening meal and they were doubles at that!

Enjoying the Isle of Wight

We unfortunately lost another member this year, Alice Walton. I had never met her, but she was a pleasure to talk to whenever I rang her. We will be losing another member shortly, but in April saw our afternoon meeting and yet more chin wagging was done. We were in attendance at the funeral of Chris Rangecroft.

Sandra took the Standard at the request of Chris and her family. On a lighter note a surprise 60th Birthday party for Alison was organised by her family and we were there to help her celebrate in style. Alison will probably give me a severe beating when she reads this as she didn't want her age mentioned!

May saw the area reunion on the 16th in Crewe. Members who made the trek were Chris, Alison and Francis. The event went well and I had no reports of anyone being naughty. On the 6th Alison, Francis, Debbie, Sheila and Chris hit the trains for the Birmingham Branch birthday lunch. A good time was had by all. Sheila, Alison and Chris joined 27 others for the first meeting of the Mediterranean branch. If any of you are on Facebook then you couldn't help but see all the evidence of them having one hell of a good time.



Chris and Mel visiting the Mediterranean Branch

On 17 June Shropshire branch joined forces again with Birmingham branch for a trip to Bletchley Park. Members in attendance were Sheila, Debbie, Alison and Chris. The trip was enjoyed immensely and it has been suggested that another visit should be made as it was not possible to see it all in just the one visit. The Armed Forces Day national event on 27 June was held, as you all know, in Guildford, the Corp spiritual home. Branch members in attendance were Mel, Sheila and Chris. They felt proud to have represented the Branch and Association at such an event.



Armed Forces day Guildford

To round off my ramblings I would like to make a collective mention for the members whom we have bid farewell to this year. Terri Goff, Chris Rangelcroft, Lillian Boardman and Vera Ostrowski; keep the Branch up in the sky going strong ladies, you are very much missed. Can't sign off without saying hello to our members in care homes, Beryl Lane, Hilda Dakin and Lucy Bowyer. Best wishes to all branches from Shropshire.

SOUTHAMPTON

Jean Doe

We started 2015 with a couple who sang to us, and her husband was very funny. Everyone enjoyed the evening and it was a good start to the New Year. We followed this with Part II of the slide show of Sue Westlake's Army career, and what a career! For a start it was great to have Sue with us again and our friends from Portsmouth joined us as well. Like many Branches our numbers are down but the spirit within the Branch is good.

We had a full minibus for the Southwick village and Southwick House D Day revival weekend in June. This really was superb do, the village and its committee put a lot of effort in, ensuring that everyone had a good day. In the afternoon an old bus took us to Southwick House and a visit to the Map Room where we had an excellent talk on the preparations for D Day.



Southwick D Day Revival

On 11th June eight of us went to the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. The Not Forgotten Association really do an excellent job and we are very grateful, everything about the day was superb and our two D Day veterans were selected to meet the Princess Royal. A great highlight of our year - so far!

On 8th July we had a trip to Stewarts Garden Centre at Christchurch, followed by a visit to Burley for lunch at The Old Farmhouse. They really look after us so we have already booked 09 December for our Christmas trip.

TAMWORTH & DISTRICT

Marie Smedley

Tamworth Branch has been very busy so far this year. February saw us celebrating our AGM and our 6th Birthday with Cake, a new Secretary (Marie Smedley) and a very warm welcome in our new venue; the RAFA Club in Tamworth. Some of you will know we have been quite nomadic for the last few months but we are now settled and happy in our new 'home'.

The Grand Reunion was next on the Calendar, an amazing weekend was celebrated, which left those of us unable to attend green with envy. Many stories have been told of the wonderful camaraderie in Harrogate, great food and entertainment and the usual high jinks and fun you expect when so many Ladies that 'Can and Did' are in one place.



Standard Bearer and Branch Members at Harrogate 2015

Closer to home, and to introduce ourselves to the RAFA natives, we held a Skittles night in May. WRAC v RAFA v RE, we did invite the Navy but they were too scared to come ashore! Pat Williams won Best Lady Player and lots of fun ensued as we got to grips with this new Skittle Alley. Also in May our Standard Bearer was on parade at the VE Day 70th anniversary weekend celebrations in London. Tammy Kirkwood did us all proud when she took part in the Veterans Parade from Westminster Abbey to Horse Guards Parade. Tammy paid another visit to London to see Bimbo Coleman, to wish her well for her forthcoming 'Wing Walk' and to drop off the Branches donation to the worthy cause in person. Charmaine is an inspiration to us all.

Tracey Skivington was able to take a trip down memory lane this year. "Dave Harris, an old Army buddy, arranged a trip back to CAD Kineton (now MOD Kineton) a while ago. The Head of Security there, Mr Tom Bunting, took us on a tour of the place. He was a LCpl when we were based there in the 70s and then worked his way up through the ranks. It was a really good day. We went to a lot of the old haunts. Tom said that if any of the ATS or WRAC who served at Kineton at any time who wished to have a Reunion, that we would be more than welcome. The NAAFI isn't even used anymore, sacrilege! He said it needs us to show it how to party again. Afraid there are no photos, as it's still under high security, but thank you Tom for giving us your valuable time to show us around."

Vee Moore, Tammy Kirkwood, Anne Gwynne, Janet Bourke, Pat Williams and Marie Smedley were seen to hot foot it over to Crewe for the Wales and West AGM in May. We were honoured to host Ali Brown, Vice President of the WRAC Association on our table. We were warmly welcomed, rekindled old and forged new friendships and had a scrummy nosh up too. Thank you Ladies of the Phoenix Branch for hosting a wonderful day.

In June, Pat Williams went down to London for the Colonel's Review of the Trooping the Colour. "I was honoured to have a front row seat along with several veterans from the Royal Artillery, everyone was very smartly dressed. The Guards paraded first, there were six different Guard Company's, they did us proud with their very smart and very precise drill, we do things very well in this country and it makes you proud to be British. The colours were presented this year for the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and then marched past the Colonel. The Household Cavalry, the Blues and Royals, and then the King's Troop RHA came by too. It was very windy, so they kicked up a bit of a dust and it was a little cold but this did not dampen the atmosphere. A good day was had by all."



View from Pat Williams seat at the Colonel's Review

A hot and sunny Armed Forces Day saw Tamworth & District Branch mingling with hundreds of Veterans at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas. A beautiful day greeted us as we gave our all. We were entertained by Marching Bands, Cadets, RAVC displays and we took part in a humbling Church Service. We watched younger members of the public scale walls, zoom along zip wires as well as many other activities that were there for everyone to enjoy. Marie Smedley, Pat Williams, Lesley Wallace (nee Mortimer) and Christine James marched with many other Armed Forces veterans, whilst Vee Moore, Nicola Scott, Tammy Kirkwood, Ann Gwynne, Janet Bourke and Judy Hasnip provided us with support and encouragement.



Tamworth Branch at Armed Forces Day 2015, National Memorial Arboretum

We also held a Charity Quiz Night in Tamworth, raising funds in aid of Fisher House, 'a home from home' for families of wounded soldiers based at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. To find out what we are up to in the coming months please look us up on Facebook.

ULSTER Joan McCabe

The Ulster Branch has recently seen some new members join us and it is so good to see us begin to grow, we would like to welcome to the branch, Stephanie Wilding, Patrice Taylor and Paula Lamb.

This year has been quite historic for us, as in March some of us took part in Northern Ireland's largest Military Parade in Ballymena, organised by the Royal Irish Regiment, and they were good enough to invite our branch to join them. There were over 2000 Veterans marching and the turnout to support us was brilliant, it felt so good to be able to parade in our blazers and berets, something that would have been unheard of in the

past. Afterwards there were lots of stalls and places to eat, and of course it wouldn't have been an army event without the beer tent, although we all sat in the food tent drinking tea.



L-R: Florence Logan, Marie Jenkins, Sylvia Connaghan, Joan McCabe
Front: Sally Davies

In May some members had a day out at the famous Titanic Quarter in Belfast, this was enjoyed by everyone and they finished off in the café downstairs enjoying home made scones and tea. In June the group visited the brand new Royal British Legion 'Pop in' shop in the centre of Belfast, the building was beautiful and the staff were excited about our visit as they said they had not had the opportunity to entertain a group, so they looked after us and plied us with more tea and more scones. A lovely lady called Kate gave us a presentation on the services the Legion provided to service/ex service personnel. It was good to see the building in the location it was, in the centre of the city, another great sign that Northern Ireland is moving on.



L-R: Stephanie Wilding, Rae Halley, Joan McCabe, Patrice Taylor, Marie Jenkins, Sylvia Connaghan, Sally Davies

Armed Forces Day took place on 27th June in Carrickfergus, and once again the girls in green turned out for this. I was disappointed to learn that after the parade there were no stalls or army displays like there were last year, but it didn't spoil the day, Lee Telford, who lives in England, turned up to watch the parade. and was spotted in her green fleece by Marion Dunbar and Marie Jenkins. They encouraged her to join them in the group which she did and enjoyed.



L-R: Florence Logan, Marie Jenkins Lee Telford, Maggie Prigden
Front: Sally Davies

Sadly this year we lost our oldest member of the branch Ruby Agnew, (ATS) Ruby was 92 and attended most of our meetings and outings right up until her short illness and she passed away on 15th April, Ruby will be missed by the group.

Anyone visiting Northern Ireland who would like to meet, give me a call and I am sure there would be no shortage of volunteers to have a cuppa and a chat.

WINCHESTER Herme Emary

Once again we gathered at the Golden Lion in Sept for our Branch AGM. A great turnout this year, from only 3 wanting to attend at the beginning of Sept, we actually had 16 turn up. Thanks to Jackie and Rachel who could not stay but at least came and said Hi, nice to see you both. The meeting was even more chaotic than normal, we were seated at the long table by the back door, rather than at 2 tables at the front, so I had to

go up and down a few times to get any views and pass on decisions. It seemed to work though. The food as ever was excellent with very generous portions.



On Friday 14th November 2014 ten of us, and one guest, visited Zizzi in Winchester for lunch. Once again portions were very generous. It was nice to see everyone and have a chat especially with both Debbie and Ursula who had been unable to join us for a while.

On 19th January 2015 fourteen members and two guests, Ray and Sarah (Janet's Niece) met for lunch at the Winchester Hotel. Unfortunately 2 members had to cry off at the last minute as they were unwell, lucky for them we had 2 latecomers so they did not have to pay their deposit, and, the hotel did not charge us for the 2 uneaten pre ordered meals. Two people also got lost having asked for directions from the locals! We also welcomed Ishbel who joined us for the first time and managed to meet up with other members whom she had not seen for a while. Denise unfortunately had to leave early to go back to work which was a shame, the rest of us hung around until 2.30. All in all a good meeting and great start to 2015.

On 13th March twelve members gathered at a new venue for the Branch, Brasserie Blanc situated on Jewry St in Winchester. A number of members had recommended it so we thought we would give it a try. I was unable to attend but reports seem quite positive. We welcomed, for the first time, Jennifer Jones ex Signals who has just joined us. Welcome and we hope to see you again.



The 14th of May saw us meeting up for an evening meal at ASK. What a night, at least 2 members attending got soaked making their way to ASK (a plaintiff cry as we were leaving "my bum's still wet"!) and the rest of us got a little damp. One member got lost, so much for google maps! I started off with 2 attending that went up to 7, so I booked a table for 8. Got an extra 3 and then one was unable to attend so that left us with 9 on the night. And what a happy bunch we were. It must have been something we said because by about 8 o'clock there was only us and a couple left in the place. We started to get a bit worried when the lights were turned off until we were informed it was for Birthday candles, different. Its been a couple of years since we had a meal in ASK but I think everyone enjoyed what they had and enjoyed a good night.

WIRRAL **Pat Sanders**



The Wirral Branch has had a very busy year so far what with our trips out with the Chester Branch and our meetings. We have gained 5 new members this year; Dorothy Cheffings, Kath Harrison, Julie Dally, Pauline Stuart and Julie Mercer (Honorary) who is a Soldier's daughter and works with the local Soldiers Welfare team. Considering we started with one member we are expanding at a great rate.

Jan Gillison has now taken on the position of Welfare Officer for the Branch and is doing a wonderful job, everyone appreciates receiving cards when they are ill or birthdays.

The ladies who went to the Grand Reunion all agreed it was a fabulous weekend, especially the cocktail triplets Lynne Cook, Pat Wakefield and Sheila Brown. Everyone is counting down until the next one.

We have had loads of trips out this year Tenpin Bowling, a trip to Chorley where we went on the canal and to Botany Bay, we also joined the Birmingham Branch to help them celebrate their Branch Birthday, the Branch has been invited out to quite a few lunches, Royal Signals, and a 40s lunch to name two. We still have our trips to the Arboretum, Chester Zoo and the Chester Canal trip to look forward too and also our Christmas lunches.

It has been great meeting up with everyone this year at the different events we have been too and hopefully we will meet up again soon. That is all from the Wirral Branch except to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

WORTHING **Janet Goldsbrough-Jones**

The first two months of 2015 were very quiet, although we managed to meet every month for our 'formal' meeting, and for lunch in between. On 4th March we went for a special lunch for Greta Carlisle's birthday and on 10th March we welcomed a new member, Becky, at another lunch.

Ten of us, including two who had moved away to another branch, filled a table at the AGM. A lovely hotel, if a tedious journey. We enjoyed meeting everyone else as usual and made a few more friends.

In April 4 of us went to a lunch arranged by Worthing Combined Ex-Services Association, of which we are a working part. It was a wonderful lunch among some wonderful veterans. Also in April a group of us went to Tangmere Museum on the old airfield.



Visiting Tangmere: Caz Hill, Janet McKechnie, Eddie Sinclair and Greta Carlisle



Jean Pointer and Eddie Sinclair flying low!

We also had two other wonderful trips in May; to Heaven Farm to roam the bluebell woods and have lunch (of course) and a cream tea later; then to Buckler's Hard near Beaulieu, where the pub by the Hard does the best ever Ploughman's lunch - and, believe me, we are experts!

On a more serious note a few of us attended the VE Day service here in Worthing at the War Memorial where Eddie Sinclair, who served in the war, was presented to the dignitaries along with 4 or 5 other veterans.

If you wish to amend your details please email editor@wracassociation.org.uk or phone 0300 400 1992. If there is no Branch listed for your area but you would like to meet up with like minded members, and consider forming a Branch, contact HQ WRAC Association.

LONDON

Greater London

When: 14.00 on a Saturday in March, May and September
Where: Hyde Park Barracks, Knightsbridge, London
Contact: Val Gaff Tel: 020 8854 8477

London (Informal Branch)

When: 1st weekend of each month
Where: Location varies, phone to confirm
Contact: Lauren Fia MacKenzie Tel: 07709 172351

SOUTH & SOUTH WEST

Bath

When: 14.00 on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month, except on a Bank Holiday when the meeting is held on a Wednesday
Where: Manvers Street Baptist Church, Manvers Street, Bath, BA1 1JW
(www.manversstreetbaptist.wordpress.com)
Contact: Sylvia Musgrave Tel: 01225 339904

Bournemouth

When: 2nd Wednesday of the month, except January and August
Where: Premier Inn, Poole Road, Bournemouth, BH2 5QU
Contact: Val Wright Tel: 01202 314047
or Jillian Hurst Tel: 01202 679433

Bristol

When: 10.30 on the 1st Thursday of the month
Where: Broadmead Baptist Church, 1 Whippington Court, (entrance on Union Street), Bristol, BS1 3HY
(www.broadmeadbaptist.org.uk)
Contact: Jackie Naysmith MBE Tel: 0117 971 2524

Plymouth

When: 13.30 on the 4th Tuesday of the month (except December)
Where: Lower Abbey Hall, Catherine Street, Plymouth, PL1 2AD. See page 27 for details of regional lunches.
Contact: Ruth Jennings Tel: 01752 363118

Portsmouth

Contact: Sally Watson Tel: 02392 666712

New Forest (Informal Branch)

Contact: Madge Evans Tel 01425 620995

Salisbury (Informal Branch)

Contact: Lt Col (Retd) Val Trout Tel: 01980 623692

Southampton

When: 19.00-21.30 on the 1st Thursday of the month
Where: All Saint's Church Hall, Desborough Road, Eastleigh, SO50 5NH
Contact: Jean Doe Tel 01794 523146

Swindon (Informal Branch)

Contact: Sharon Bingham slbingham1@yahoo.co.uk

Torquay (Informal Branch)

Contact: Elaine Harwood Tel: 07821 942947 or 01803 394323, alternatively email elaine.wayne@hotmail.co.uk

Weymouth & Portland

When: 13.00 on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month (no meetings from late December to late February and late June to late September)
Where: RAFA Club, Maiden Street, Weymouth, DT4 8AY
Contact: Di Lawrence Tel: 01308 425149

Winchester

When: 2nd Thursday of January, March, September and November plus a summer outing
Where: Location varies depending on lunch or evening meeting
Contact: Herme Emary sec.wrac.winchester@gmail.com

SOUTH EAST

Bexhill-on-Sea (Informal Branch)

When: 14.00 on the 1st Thursday of the month (except January)
Where: Poppins, 40 Devonshire Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 1AX
Contact: Jenny Nye Tel: 01424 731882

Canterbury

When: 13.00 on the 1st Wed of the month
Where: Housing 21, Cowdray Place, Canterbury, CT1 3PB
Contact: Sue Foulks Tel: 01304 823824

Medway (Informal Branch)

When: Meetings held monthly, location varies.
Contact: Margaret Gallafent Tel 0208 308 0521

Worthing

When: 10.00 for 10.30 on the last Tuesday of the month (except December)
Where: Cornerstone Methodist Church, Brighton Road (by Steyne Gardens), Worthing, BN11 3EA
Contact: Janet Goldsbrough-Jones Tel: 01903 207485

EAST

Cambridge

When: Lunchtime on the 1st Monday of the month (2nd Monday if a Bank Holiday)
Where: Location varies, phone for details
Contact: Avril Williams Tel: 01954 210859

Chelmsford

When: 13.30 - 15.30 on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, except January and August
Where: RAFA Club, Oliver House, Hall Street, Chelmsford, CM2 0HG
Contact: Georgina Shadrack Tel: 01245 251088

Colchester (Informal Branch)

If you are interested in joining a newly forming Colchester Branch contact Vinnie Vincent on 07814 869520 or via Facebook.

Norfolk (Informal Branch)

When: Once per month (most months) for an outing or lunch, phone for details.

Contact: Joan Awberry Tel 01603 455070

Peterborough & District

We are pleased to announce the arrival of the Peterborough & District Branch. If anyone is interested in joining please contact one of the following:

Dot Ryder: dot.ryder412@aol.co.uk Tel: 01476 979422

Chris Corker: chris.corker425@aol.co.uk Tel: 01476 979422

Admin email: wracpeterborough@gmail.com

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WRACPeterborough/>

Suffolk

When: 14.00 - 16.00 on the 3rd Thursday of the month, except December

Where: Ipswich Labour Club, 35 Silent Street, Ipswich, IP1 1TF

Contact: Sheelagh Wilson Tel: 01473 725707

NORTH EAST

Cleveland

When: 13.00 on the 4th Wednesday of the month

Where: Newport Youth and Community Settlement Centre, St Pauls Road (off Union Street), Middlesbrough, TS1 5NQ

Contact: Hazel Crammen Tel: 01642 290830

Darlington

Contact: Sandra Hubbard Tel: 07923 572917

Doncaster

Contact: Veronica Hanson Tel: 01226 714575

Grimsby

When: 14.00 on the 2nd Friday of each month

Where: Cartergate Social Club, Cartergate, Grimsby, DN31 1QZ

Contact: Gail Davy Tel: 01472 347868

Hull & East Riding

When: The 1st Friday of the month

Where: Wenlock Barracks, Anlaby Road, Hull, HU3 6PB

Contact: Confirm details with Janet Mitchell Tel 01482 508087 or Janet Marshall Tel 01482 809042

Leeds

When: 12.30 on the 1st Wednesday of each month (except January)

Where: The New Headingley Club, 56 St Michael's Road, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 3BG

Contact: Pat Harpin Tel: 01226 201628

Lincoln & District

When: 12.00-14.00 on the 3rd Tuesday of the month

Where: Central Methodist Church Hall, High Street, Lincoln, LN5 7PR

Contact: Jean Evans Tel: 01964 534280

Newcastle

When: 12.00 on the 3rd Thursday of the month

Where: Newcastle Companions Club, 45-47 Leazes Park Road, Newcastle, NE1 4PG

(www.newcastlecompanionsclub.webs.com)

Contact: Tanya Hall Tel: 07552 758093

Sheffield

When: 11.00 on the 1st Thursday of the month except January and August

Where: Wetherspoon, Cambridge Street, Sheffield

Contact: Brenda Colley Tel: 01709 365828

York

When: 14.00-16.00 on the 1st Wednesday of the month (except August), phone to confirm

Where: Haxby & Wigginton Methodist Church Hall, Haxby, York, YO32 2JJ

www.haxbyandwiggintonmethodistchurch.org.uk

Contact: Feona Dixon Tel: 01904 633438

NORTH WEST

Bury & Rochdale

Monthly Meeting at 13.30 on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at The Old White Lion, 6 Bolton St Bury, BL9 0LQ

Contact: Pat Oldham Tel: 0161 761 7926

Informal Evening Meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Toby Carvery, Burnley Lane, Chadderton, OL1 2QS.

Contact: Susan Feeney Tel: 07813 313508 or

Kath Kirtley Tel: 07534 632787

Chester

When: 13.00 on the 2nd Monday of the month

Where: Chester Military Museum, The Castle, Chester, CH1 2DN

Contact: Pat Sanders Tel: 07733 270567

Cumbria (Informal Branch)

If you are interested in joining a newly forming Cumbria Branch please contact Kerryanne Wilde on 07972 799307 or email khtraining@aol.com

Liverpool

When: 13.30 on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, 12.00 in the hotel foyer if you would like to join us for lunch

Where: The Adelphi Hotel, Ranelagh Place, Liverpool, L3 5UL

Contact: Pat Brown Tel 0151 733 3453

Wirral

When: 19.30 on the 1st Wednesday of the month

Where: TA Centre, Chetwynd, Wexford Road, Birkenhead, L43 9TF

Contact: Pat Sanders Tel: 07733 270567

WALES & THE WEST

Birmingham

When: 12.00 on the 1st Wednesday of the month (except January). There is also an evening meeting every quarter (phone for location)

Where: Irish Centre, 14-20 High Street, Deritend (Digbeth), Birmingham, B12 0LN www.irishcentreirmingham.co.uk

Contact: Babs Blay Tel: 07748 300492

Derby (Informal Branch)

Contact: Judy Smith at judy.hirst123@ntlworld.com or phone 07790 848364.

Hereford

When: 19.00 on the last Tuesday of the month

Where: The Herdsman, 54 Widemarsh, Hereford, HR4 9HG

Contact: Sharon Joyce Tel: 01905 821189

Leicester & Nottingham

When: 13.30 on the 2nd Tuesday of the month
Where: Devonshire Place, 78 London Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 0RA
Contact: Sue Slattery Tel: 0116 259 2743

Marches & Mid Wales

When: 3 - 4 times per year
Where: Location varies, phone for details
Contact: Marianne Hooker Tel 01588 640553

Oxfordshire (Informal Branch)

If you are interested in joining a newly forming Oxfordshire Branch contact Christine Townsend Tel: 07756 681441

Phoenix (a regional Branch covering Wales, parts of the Midlands and North West)

When: Every 3 months
Where: Phone for details
Contact: Maggie Purkis Tel: 01952 251717 or 07808 139543

Shropshire

When: 14.00 or 19.00 (alternates month by month) on the 1st Wednesday of the month (except December and January). Come 1.5 hours earlier if you wish to join us for lunch/dinner
Where: The Red Lion, Holyhead Road, Wellington, Telford, TF1 2EW
Contact: Chris Powell Tel: 01743 241646
chris.powell3@mypostoffice.co.uk

Tamworth

When: 19.30 on the last Wednesday of the month
Where: RAFA Club, 22 Lichfield Street, Tamworth B79 7QD
Contact: Marie Smedley Tel 01530 273980

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen

When: 10.15 on the 1st Monday of the month (except January & May)
Where: Ma Cameron's (Snug Bar), Little Belmont Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1JG
Contact: Joan Bartlett Tel: 01224 596520

Dumfriesshire

Contact: Dorah Mundell Tel: 01387 811524

Fife & Tayside

When: Last Thursday of the month
Where: Salutation Hotel, 34 South Street, Perth, PH2 8PH
Contact: Kate Arnold Tel: 01577 830136

Glasgow

When: 13.00 on the 2nd Monday of the month
Where: RHF Museum, 518 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, G2 3LW
Contact: Joyce Steele Tel: 0141 322 5639

Stirling

When: 12.00 on the last Saturday of the month
Where: Allanpark Hotel, 20 Allanpark, Stirling, FK8 2QG
Contact: Liz Dixon Tel: 01786 743635

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ulster

When: Meetings 3-4 times per year
Where: Location varies, call to confirm details
Contact: Joan McCabe Tel: 02842 788013 or 07702 751010, joanmccabe24@gmail.com

NATIONAL & OVERSEAS

Band

When: The Band Branch is a national Branch and does not meet on a monthly basis. Phone for details of our next meeting.
Contact: Ann Jones Tel: 0117 9406185

Griffin Branch

Griffin Branch is a virtual Facebook group primarily designed to unite those ex members of the WRAC who do not yet belong to the Association, or if they do already belong do not have a geographic branch to attend. Search for WRAC Griffin Branch on Facebook.

Mediterranean

When: At least every 6 months or more
Contact: Melanie Howell melphil@britvegas.com
Tel: 0034 9658 78963 Mob: 0034 622 036333

Postal & Courier (Informal Branch)

When: A WRAC Postal & Courier reunion is held once per year.
Contact: Margaret Grant MBE Tel: 01875 611777 or mgrant2009@live.co.uk

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016

The 2016 AGM of the WRAC Association will be held will be held at the Victory Services Club, London at 14:30 on Saturday 12 March 2016. It is planned to serve Afternoon Tea on completion of the meeting.

Full details of the meeting, including Agenda and attendance application form, will be published in the next edition of Lioness (early 2016).

SAVE THE DATE!

WRAC OFFICERS' DINING CLUB SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2015

The next WRAC Officers' Dining Club Dinner will be held at the Victory Services Club, London on Saturday 21 November 2015

Organiser Debbie Coupland will be emailing full details to all those who have attended previously, debbiecoupland14@gmail.com

ATS MEMBERS OF Ack Ack COMMAND ROYAL ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION Jane Birdsall - daughter of Beryl Holder



The End of an era. The Association Standard of ATS members of AckAck Command Royal Artillery Association was committed for safe keeping within York Minster, thus formally closing the Branch. It was very fitting for this to take place at York Minster, this being where the Standard was originally dedicated, and of course the Branch had a very close association with York where they held many happy reunions. The service took place on Sunday 21st June 2015, during the Choral Matins, in the presence of Lord Mayor, Cllr Sonja Crisp and Lord Mayor's Consort, Mr Ian Crisp.

We had a good turnout of members, considering their ages, which ranged from 87 to at least 97 years of age, and a special mention for Belle Stark, who had travelled from Sydney, Australia. We also welcomed representatives of the local branches of the RA Association, WRAC Association and Royal British Legion.

Feona Dixon, ex ATS and Secretary of the York Branch of the WRAC Association, read the first lesson and I, on behalf of my Mum Beryl Holder (Association Chairman), read the second lesson. The service concluded in the North Transept, where Mum handed over the Standard to The Reverend Canon Dr Christopher Collingwood, Chancellor and Canon in Residence.

Special thanks are extended to York Minster and especially to The Reverend Canon Peter Moger, Precentor, for his support. Additional thanks go to LCpl Fox of 2 Signal Regiment, Imphal Barracks York, for acting as Standard Bearer for the service. Finally, I must thank all those of you who were able to attend and extend apologies to those who did not receive the information in advance.

GIBRALTAR BARRACKS BURY ST EDMUNDS Frances Nunnally

Each time a new edition of Lioness arrives I think of the many friends I made while serving in the ATS at Gibraltar Barracks in Bury St Edmunds, where are they now? I reproach myself for not having stayed in touch! Our Platoon was somewhat unique as

most of us were Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria who had escaped from the Nazi regime. Sadly my parent, brother and many relatives perished in the Holocaust.



Returning to civilian life in February 1946 brought many challenges. Not having any family meant there was no home to go to. Luckily a friend offered me a place to stay and I found a job as a File Clerk in London. In 1950 I emigrated to the USA where I had some distant relatives and where I met my husband.

I gradually learned that, sadly, a number of my ATS friends had passed away. However I am in touch with one lady who lives in Australia. Gibraltar Barracks was a training centre for British troops and we worked in the Cookhouse and Mess Halls. We were not in the frontline but the feeding of hungry soldiers was an important part of the eventual victory!

THE WELSH GUARDS' GIRLS SANDOWN PARK 1943-1945 W/284167 Sgt Doris Goss

There were a dozen or so of us, members of the ATS, stationed at Sandown Park to support the Training Battalion Welsh Guards. We lived in a beautiful house in Esher, which seemed less luxurious when the bombing started and we had to sleep on mattresses on the ground floor. However the Welsh Guards had to live in the stables at Sandown Park racecourse, their wartime training centre.

We were there to do office work to ensure smooth the running of the Battalion. The officers in charge were Lt Col Tom Oakshott, Maj F Ellis and Capt Dai Llewellyn. I was a Shorthand Typist and sat on the third row of desks in the Orderly Room (now the top of the racecourse grandstand). The office was controlled by "Ack" Harris, a cheerful, loud voiced Warrant Officer, who kept an eye on everything and everyone. On Wednesday morning we had Gas Mask Drill, when we had to continue our work wearing a bulky mask. This was particularly hard on Peggy, our telephone Switchboard Operator, who could neither make herself heard not clearly understand the incoming calls when masked. Every Wednesday she would beg Ack harris to let her take the mask off. The more she pleaded the more he insisted she wore it (and the more the rest of us laughed), he was just keeping her safe and following orders, he grinned!

We learnt to march on the Parade Ground (now the racecourse car park). After a solemn inspection by the CO we proudly swung our arms as we followed the Welsh Guards on on St David's Day. We marched to the tune of The Rising of the Lark, the regimental quick march, I can still hear it today.

On 30th June 1944 we went to the Police Sports Ground at

Imber Court, to watch the Battalion Sports Day. The start of a race had just been announced when we heard the sound of a V1 flying bomb overhead. Its roaring noise suddenly cut out, the signal that it was falling. As it turned I was running in the wrong direction and one of the Guardsmen threw himself on top of me to protect me, there was then a large explosion. We were all numb with shock, I found blood running down my side and as taken and was taken, with others, to St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey.

Lying in the Casualty Ward I could hear the soldiers being asked their names and regimental numbers, maybe the last thing some of them said as 18 soldiers died that day. One of our ATS girls was also killed, a girl who had been traumatised by a previous bombing at her home, in which her sister died. She would scream in her sleep at night, it seemed to us that she had a premonition of her own death. Luckily my own injury was not severe, a shrapnel wound which soon healed and I returned to my job in the Orderly Room.

As I write this it is the 70th Anniversary of VE Day. On that day in 1945 I was one half a dozen ATS girls who took the train from Esher to central London. There we were on the Mall, among the huge crowds being shown in the press coverage today. We made it back to Esher and spent the night in the local Fire Station; I'm not sure how or why!

The war was not over for me, I was then stationed in Egypt; living in a tent in the desert, in charge of a pool of typists which included two German POWs. Every day I was driven from work by a German prisoner, a delightful old man who would tell me about his grandchildren until I felt like one of the family. Then he would wish me a very good appetite as he drove back to his prison camp. Next I was sent to Jerusalem to work at the British HQ in the King David Hotel, which was subsequently blown up by Zionist terrorists on 22 July 1946.

After the war I became a Nun, another story! I am writing this at the age of 90, having just been asked to lay the wreath at this year's Imber Court memorial service. What a life!

JOAN DE-VALL

Editor: This article was published in The Guardian Weekend on 06 June 2015

I was a height-finder and predictor operator on an anti-aircraft battery. As the enemy planes flew in, I would check the height they were flying. It was up to us to get the guns into the right position to fire.

On our gun site, each woman had to go for monthly FFI inspections, which means "free from infection". The medical officer would say, "Have you been a good girl?" and you'd say, "Yes, sir," and they'd say, "Well, we'll soon find out." As for the men, they put bromide in their tea to keep them good. At breakfast there would be two queues, the men down one side, the ladies down the other, and you always knew when one of the fellows was going home on leave because he'd say, "Give us a cup of your tea." Because we didn't have bromide in ours.

After the war, I went into ladies' fashion. On the gun site, we were issued with three pairs of pants, three pairs of khaki directory knickers, a uniform and boots. The knickers were abominable because the elastic came down to our knees, so we used to cut the legs, making them into semi-French knickers, and just keep one pair for inspection. After we were demobbed and got married, we'd had so little for so long that we'd go home feeling like

won the pools just because we'd bought an ironing board or saucers.

By the time they declared victory, I was in Greenford, west London. I was in the Nissen hut, and a young woman came in and said, "It's all over!" We went to the West End and had a bit of fun – I don't think many people remember an awful lot about the rest of the day. People were dancing in the streets and having a drink; everybody was absolutely delighted.

The man who would later become my husband was on a minesweeper. We'd known one another since we were 16, and we met up again after the war. I lost him in 2002. We had 54 wonderful years together.



Photograph by Zed Nelson for the Guardian

BOURNEMOUTH MILITARY CEMETERY Col (Retd) Nan Robertson



Spring 2015

Returning from the Grand Reunion in Harrogate after an exhilarating and memorable weekend, I visited Bournemouth Military Cemetery. It was a beautiful Spring day and dozens of daffodils were in bloom. I have written before about the graves of LCpl Simpson (who died in March 1945) and Cpl Beazley (who died in May 1943), but I felt especially sad that these two, and so many others, could not have been with us to join in the fun! I hope and wish someone might recall these 'girls'! If so I would be glad to hear about them.



W/44292 LCpl Enid M Simpson 14 March 1945

CRYPTOGRAPHER - C6 TELS
Christina J Morrison nee Chisholm
mohara400@btinternet.com (daughter)



Hyde Park 1943 - Christina Chisholm, Joan Day, Shirley Hay

I am trying to find any former ATS colleagues (or families of same) or anyone who served with me at the War Office. I was a Cryptographer based at Main Building in London and our Division was called C6 TELS. At the end of the day shift on 15 June 1945 I asked all my colleagues on duty on that day to sign my book.

My colleagues (all female) were: Ronnie Applegate, Kath Poulson, Joan Rogers, M J Stainsby, Molly Walsh, Gin Kuypus, Jane Vale, Penny Gascoigne, Irene Cooper, Ivy R Seymour, Pod Boaler, P V Davies, P Joan Martin, Jean Dougan, Vera M Leech, Joan M Horner, Jackie Winn Jones, Nellie Peart, Doreen Thorne, Katinka Beston, Audrey M Shots, Sheila Dunkley, Valborg Mortensen and Coral Church.

As I am now 96 years old I know it is highly likely that many former colleagues may have sadly passed on. However it would be wonderful for me to hear from any of my colleagues listed above, or their family members.

MOVING HOUSE?

If you have moved recently, or are about to move **please** let us have your new address (and email address) as soon as possible. This will help us reduce the number of Lioness magazines which are returned undelivered.

Please email your change of address to office.manager@wracassociation.org.uk, phone us on 0300 400 1992 or post to

WRAC Association, Unit 39 Basepoint, Winnall Valley Road, Winchester SO23 0LD.

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR OLD POST CODE.

ARMED FORCES DAY NATIONAL EVENT GUILDFORD 27 JUNE 2015

There was a great turnout in Guildford on Saturday 27 June for the Armed Forces Day National event, with Association members travelling from across the UK (and beyond) to revisit old haunts. Tickets for the Cathedral service and Parade had been tightly rationed so we were fortunate that 13 members were able to attend the service, 30 (or was that 34!), plus the National Standard, marched proudly up the High Street. It was a hot day and a long march, which was particularly poignant for those who had taken part in the Freedom Parade in 1988. In addition 4 members were presented with their Veterans Badge; 2 by David Cameron and 2 by Lance Sergeant Johnson Beharry VC. Due to a logistical clash Jennifer Rimell received her Veterans Badge after the event. Many more came to support and visited the WRAC Association stand in the 'Veterans Village'.

Cathedral Service



Parade





Veterans Badge Presentation



David Cameron and Susan Jennings



Susan Jennings and Lesley Annable



*Lance Sergeant
Johnson Beharry VC
and Margaret Davies*



*Carolyn Painter and
Lance Sergeant
Johnson Beharry VC*

Veterans Village



GRAND REUNION 2015 HARROGATE

Three hundred and fifty members made the journey to Harrogate to attend the Grand Reunion. Everyone appeared to enjoy a fabulous weekend reuniting and enjoying all that Harrogate has to offer. A highlight for many was the Beating Retreat and Gala Dinner entertainment provided by The Yorkshire Band of The Royal British Legion and the Parade through the Valley Gardens.

VE Day Buffet Dinner



Beating Retreat



Gala Dinner





Drumhead Service



Reuning



Parade



FIRST GRAND REUNION Alice Masters (nee Hair)



This was our first Grand Reunion and we had a ball! I went with my mum Betty (who's 80) and my sister Pauline. We stayed at the Majestic in a fabulous "suite" overlooking the gardens. We arrived on the Friday afternoon, booked in, unpacked and retired to the Bar to wait for an old friend to arrive, the only friend I thought I would know at the Reunion. How wrong was!! I recognised so many faces from my first posting to the Selection Centre at the WRAC Centre in 1988, but it took me a while to remember their names! Tanya arrived and we must have hugged for at least 5 minutes, well it was over 27 years ago since we last saw each other. Tanya then went to find "Mum", more bear hugs and beer.

Time for the first night's do. We dressed up as American GI Ladies, all the costumes were fantastic and so much thought had gone into them. The ladies on our table were lovely, really friendly and a right good laugh. The food was great, Soul Mates were brilliant and we had a good time.

On Saturday morning Pauline and I took advantage of the pool facilities for a swim before breakfast. After breakfast we ventured in to the town centre, wandered around the shops, bought some clothes and finished at Betty's Tea Room for coffee and cake. We returned to the hotel all spent up and after a quick half, had a lazy afternoon reading (or sleeping in my sister's case!) before getting ready to watch the Beating of Retreat. The Yorkshire Band of the Royal British Legion were brilliant, loved watching them. Then it was upstairs to get ready for the Gala Dinner. With our finery on we ventured back downstairs to the champagne reception. I recognised a lot of faces across the room from my time at the Selection Centre and managed to speak to some of them! Then in to dinner, another fabulous meal and brilliant music from the Band. Great entertainment from some of the ladies, especially when they took over conducting the Band! Lots of chatting and laughing.

Thank you ladies for making us so welcome and helping us have great time, especially as it was touch and go whether Mum would have been able to go. She had a mild stroke a month before the Reunion, but thankfully she's fit enough and seems to have bounced back very well.

GRAND REUNION HARROGATE 2015 Carol Traynor

What a fabulous weekend at the Majestic Hotel it was, we were bowled over by this very grand and ornate hotel with its sweeping staircase and marble decor, our spacious room with balcony overlooking the gardens had views over the town was perfect. On arrival as always seeing familiar faces the chat and banter started flowing, and carried on in the same vein all weekend.



L-R: Carol Traynor, Rita Broomfield, Sandra Bremner, Irene Maclean, Anne Gurney, Jackie Folds (seated)

Friday evening VE Day theme was a sight to behold, the imagination and creativity that had gone into the costumes was amazing. On the dance floor was such fun with incredible routines from Kim and Jake, who once again kept us on our feet all night, their singing and enthusiasm is contagious. They love being with us and we love them entertaining us, their songs bring so many memories flooding back. We are those young girls once again, to generate such an atmosphere and put so much into their singing is really very magical and special, thank you so much Kim & Jake you are simply the best, we look forward seeing you again at the WRAC Dinner in October. The Saturday evening Gala Dinner was wonderful with the band nearly lifting the roof off, it was like the last night at the proms with everyone in full voice and the band putting their all into the music. The three course meal was delicious, the staff were lovely and coped so well getting the food out to us all very efficiently.



Photo includes Anne Gurney, Joyce Nichols, Lesley Annable, Carol Traynor, Jan Ford

The Friday evening buffet was also delicious, breakfasts were excellent, we were very well looked after at the Majestic Hotel.

We missed a few of our comrades who couldn't be with us this time including Kath Hughes and Agnes Diog. It was the first Grand Reunion they have missed and we missed seeing them, but we look forward to seeing them at WRAC Dinner in October. These occasions are wonderful, because we see friends we have made over the years, this year it was very special to see Norma Kinson again, who we first met at the Coventry Grand Reunion in 2006 when she sat at our table, then again at Blackpool in 2009. We didn't see her at Bristol in 2012 so it was such a lovely surprise to see her there this year, meeting friends over the years is wonderful and there is a certain bond that we have that is hard to put into words, a bond from our service days that is kept alive thanks the reunions.

The Sunday morning Parade in the sunshine through the park was really good, afternoon tea at Betty's was wonderful, Harrogate was a great choice for the weekend what a beautiful town it is. Many thanks to the Majestic Hotel for a comfortable stay in grand surroundings with lovely food and helpful staff. Most of all, thank you so much to the Grand Reunion Committee for all your hard work for our truly magical weekend

WRAC PROVOST REUNION **Olga (Paddy) Hill**



Our Reunion this year took place on 6th - 8th March 2015 at the Grand Hotel in Tynemouth. It was organised by Sandie Buglass (nee Whitehouse) and was a wonderful weekend. Each year a different person volunteers to organise the event and it is always well attended. It also means that the event moves around the country.

The Reunions began in 1997 and this allows us to catch up with old friends and colleagues. Many make a long weekend of it with people being free to explore the area before we get together on the Saturday evening for our Reunion dinner, husbands and partners are welcome to come and join the fun.

WRAC PROVOST REUNION **05 MARCH 2016**

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The WRAC Provost Reunion 2016 will be held on Saturday 05 March 2016 at the Pia Bella Hotel (www.piabella.com), Kyrenia in the wonderful Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Eileen Cox (nee Fenn) and Sue Steel (nee Johnson) will be your hosts and have put together a full information sheet of costs, flights and details of a London based travel agent if you wish to be part of a group booking.

**For further details email Sue Steel
suesteel@hotmail.com**

Please note this event is not organised by the WRAC Association

National Standard Bearer
Sharon Joyce

Deputy National Standard Bearer
Tammy Kirkwood



Refurbishment of Tenby Memorial Gates 13 April 2015



09 May Tammy Kirkwood representing the WRAC Association in the VE70 Parade



Armed Forces Day Guildford 27 June 2015



*08 May 2015 VE70 Service of Remembrance, Cenotaph
© Sam Churchill Photography*



*Adjutant General's Corps annual Remembrance event
at the NMA 01 July 2015*

Mentioned In Dispatches

Editor: 'Mentioned in Dispatches' is a new feature for Lioness and serves to replace the long standing system of considering regional Branch members for the award of a Certificate of Appreciation. This new process will allow all Association members to be eligible for nomination, and enable everyone to read about the contribution an individual has made, either to their Branch or to the Association. The method of nomination for an individual remains via Branch Secretaries to Area Chairman for regional Branch members, or direct to Association HQ for those who are HQ Branch members (i.e. not a member of a geographic Branch). All nominations are submitted for approval at a meeting of the Council of the WRAC Association (held twice per year).

IRENE HALL

**Wales & West Area Secretary and
Treasurer 2002 - 2015
Phoenix Branch Secretary**



Irene, a Life Member of the WRAC Association and longstanding member of Shropshire Branch, was elected to the post of Wales and the West Area Secretary (and Treasurer) in September 2002.

In October 2004, the first of 10 Area Reunions at The Lord Hill Hotel, Shrewsbury was held. Irene was a key player in the planning and running of the functions, liaising with Branch Secretaries and the hotel to arrange accommodation where necessary, and organising what became the traditional birthday party at The Dragon King on the Friday evening before the reunion.

At the Area Reunion in October 2010, it became apparent that Crewe, Stafford and Wolverhampton Branches faced the probability of closure. The membership numbers were declining, ex-ATS members were finding more difficulty filling the posts of their committees and ex-WRAC members were still in full-time employment and/or having families to support. After a brief discussion, Irene agreed to resign from Shropshire Branch and to stand as the Secretary of the newly formed Phoenix Branch; originally available to members of Wales and the West

Area without a local Branch, but latterly available to any and all members of the WRAC Association in a similar situation.

Irene resigned as Area Secretary at the Area Reunion in 2013, and agreed to stay on as Area Treasurer for a further 18 months, but in March, just 2 months after her 80th birthday, Irene sadly tendered her resignation. Happily, Irene remains Secretary of The Phoenix Branch, and will continue as an active member of the Association. Wales and the West Area held their annual Reunion in Crewe in May 2015, and for the first time in 13 years, Irene did not take her place on the Committee table.

Maggie Purkis

Area Chairman Wales & West

EVON ROBERTS

Plymouth Branch Treasurer



Evon served in the WRAC from 1971 to 1974 and spent time in Northern Ireland and Egypt, on leaving the Regular Army she joined the TA. She joined Plymouth Branch of the WRAC Association in 2001 and got fully involved whenever she could, despite working full time self employed, having family commitments and suffering from MS.

During this time she has been Standard Bearer, escort to the Standard, part time chauffeur, shaken many charity collection tins, helped on the Veteran's Day stand and made time in her busy day to visit Branch members in hospital. When Mary Davies, our Treasurer of 13 years, suffered a stroke Evon stepped in to keep our accounts in order. Something that she is still doing to this day.

Ruth Jennings

Plymouth Branch Secretary

PAYMENT SLIP

In the centre pullout of this Lioness you will find three Payment Slips. If you are sending a cheque to the WRAC Association it would be helpful if you could complete and return one of the Payment Slips with your cheque.

NORTH WEST AREA CHAIRMAN

Editor: Anna Orlinski has taken over the post of North West Area Chairman from Hazel Edwards.



My name is Anna Lucia Orlinski and I enlisted in the WRAC in Stoke-on-Trent in 1970. After basic training at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford I went on to the Duchess of Kent Barracks in Aldershot where I completed my B3 Driver training. I was then posted to Western Command and was based at Saughton Camp as a Pool Driver. After completing my B2 Driver Training I became a Staff Car Driver allocated to the Chief of Staff Western Command, Brigadier Dennis Ballantine. In 1972 Western Command disbanded and I was posted to Bovington Camp in Dorset as a Pool Driver with the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment.

I left the WRAC in 1973 and following the completion of Social Work Training went on to have a long career as a Social Worker, employed by Cumbria County Council for 13 yrs. My employment in Social Work has mainly been with Local Authority Social Services and also Social Work Private Agencies. I have worked in short term assessment teams and also long term Children and Families teams, where I was responsible for undertaking assessments following the National Assessment Framework.

During my career I have worked with young vulnerable persons who have engaged in risk taking behaviour and with vulnerable asylum seeking young persons. This required a multi agency approach and on occasions I worked with the Home Office, The Red Cross and International Agencies.

I have been involved with Committees for Charitable Organisations and managed their funding and accounts and on occasions chaired their meetings. I have also been a Volunteer Case Worker for SSAFA and when I lived and worked in Cumbria I was also involved with a women's group as part of their committee and also a rape crisis volunteer.

I now live in Liverpool and am Chairman of the Liverpool Branch of the WRAC Association.

GUIDANCE ON DRESS CODE FOR FORMAL PARADES Ali Brown

At formal parades the dress of the members of the WRAC Association should be a true representation of our long held values and standards, both as a tribute to the ATS and WRAC but also as a tribute to all those who have served.

Whilst not wanting to discourage anyone from marching or attending any formal events, whether at regional or national level, an appropriate standard of dress is to be maintained.

In line with other Regimental Associations and the Royal British Legion, parade dress is to be smart and appropriate; the norm is for dark colours. Within the WRAC Association the tradition has arisen to wear a green WRAC Association fleece or a bottle green blazer (often with a white shirt and green tie) along with black trousers or skirt, or a green skirt. This form of dress is **not mandatory** and those who do not possess it are still very welcome to parade, as long as they are dressed smartly and appropriately.

We will continue to sell the WRAC Association fleece, however if you wish to purchase any other items we have provided details of some suggested suppliers below. These are not preferred or recommended suppliers, the WRAC Association has no links with the companies listed. A quick internet search will reveal a large selection of suppliers. Any purchase is a private transaction between the supplier and the individual.

It is emphasised that **all** are welcome to parade and attend any regional or national events as they wish and it is really great to see the ATS and WRAC cap badges in so many locations throughout the year. This guidance is offered to preserve the traditions of our Service and to clear up the many queries received recently.

Blazer with Embroidered WRAC Association Badge.

www.bs-embroidery.com, up to size 30 (52") click through to ebay page or Tel 01579 345562

Blazer and Badge Purchased Separately

Blazer. There are numerous suppliers of bottle green school blazers sold in adult sizes, for example:

www.schooluniform247.co.uk, up to size 52" Tel 020 8677 7500

www.johnlewis.com sell a bottle green blazer in their school wear department up to size 24 (46") Tel 03456 049 049

Blazer Badge. There are ATS, WRAC and WRAC Association blazer badges available from various suppliers, for example:

www.militaryfigures.co.uk Tel 01792 421513 or

www.awardmedals.com Tel 01952 510053

Beret (or ATS Side Hat). Various ebay shops or www.riflesdirect.com Tel 01962 828523 (for a 'Rifles green' beret)

Cap Badge. Numerous online suppliers including

www.awardmedals.com Tel 01952 510053 or www.militarybadges.co.uk Tel 01325 489820. A Flame (Tear Drop) can

made from felt.

Medals and Badges Etiquette. Etiquette rules for wearing medals only allow the wearing of official awards. Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed. The medals awarded to a deceased Service/ex-Service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative (no more than one group should be worn by any individual). The WRAC Association badge and the Veterans badge may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole. Unofficial medals, or badges other than the WRAC Association badge/pin and Veterans badge, should not be worn when representing the WRAC Association.

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE MAJESTIC HOTEL, HARROGATE SATURDAY 21 MARCH 2015

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks. The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all those attending. She thanked everyone for making the effort to make the journey to Harrogate, she continued by introducing her support team:

Rowena Griffiths MBE	Chairman of the Executive & Finance Committee
Isabel McCord	Honorary Treasurer
Audrey Smith	Chairman of the Grants Committee
Sue Hatton	Association Secretary & Editor Lioness
Gabi Shanahan	Benevolent Fund Secretary & Finance Officer

The Chairman thanked several members who had raised significant funds since the 2014 AGM; in April 2014 Jeanette Cowie and CJ Johnston arranged a weekend in Fort William which raised over £1500 for the WRAC Association, in June 2014 Marg Davies walked the Heart of England Way to raise £3000 split between the WRAC Association and Cancer Research UK, on 13 July 2014 Wendy Hooton and a team of 'Lionesses' ran the British 10K London Run and raised £8000 split between the WRAC Association and Help for Heroes, in December 2014 Karen Radford and a Facebook team raised over £1400 split between the WRAC Association and the Defense Medical Welfare Service with an online Festive Fitness Challenge.

The Chairman then paid tribute to all the Branch Secretaries and thanked them for their hard work and support, appreciated not just by Association HQ but by each one of their members. Every Secretary was part of a significant team which included their Chairman and Treasurer and together they underpinned the Branch network.

Since assuming the role of Vice President and Chairman of Council & Trustees of the WRAC Association in July 2014 the Chairman had visited branches in Wales and the West, the Royal Hospital Chelsea and the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA). The visit to the NMA was for the unveiling of a WRAC pavois in the new Heroes Square. The Chairman thanked the WRAC Dinner Club for raising the funds for the pavois. The Chairman also reported that the Association squad at the Cenotaph in November was the largest yet with 120 'on Parade' under the direction of new Parade Commander, Rowena Griffiths MBE.

The Chairman read a message from the Patron of the Association thanking all members for their loyal greetings and support. She also read a message from the President of the Association thanking all members for their loyal greetings to mark her 82nd birthday on 22 February 2015.

2. Apologies for Absence. Apologies had been received from a number of individuals, several Branch Secretaries and the following Life Vice Presidents, Trustees and members of Council: Brig (Retd) Nicky Moffat CBE, Frankie Cook, Eileen Carter, Hazel Edwards and Kate McGregor.

3. Confirmation of Minutes. The Minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated in Lioness 2013/2, no comments had been received.

Proposal: It was proposed that the Chairman sign the minutes of the 2014 AGM as a true record.

Proposed: Chris Corker **Seconded:** Jo Young
Unanimously agreed

4. Business Arising from the Previous Minutes.

There was no business arising that would not be covered by other Agenda items.

5. Chairman of Trustees & Council Report. Trustee and Council meetings had been separated with effect from July 2014 and an Area Chairman's Forum had been formed, which sat prior to meetings of Council. Both committees had met twice since the 2014 AGM; The main items of interest were:

a. Retirement of Trustees. Frances West was elected as a Trustee in July 2014 but had stood down in January 2015 due to work and family commitments.

b. Area Chairmen. Hazel Edwards took over as North West Area Chairman from Carole Montessori-Gorman in January 2015. She subsequently had to stand down due to unforeseen family commitments and a replacement would be sought.

c. Vice President. Vice President and Chairman of Trustees & Council. Alison Brown took over from Sue Westlake MBE as Vice President and Chairman of Trustees & Council effective 09 July 2015.

d. Appointment of Auditors. Rothmans LLP were re-appointed as auditors on 15 January 2015.

e. HQ Update. The Association no longer received MOD funding and had been accommodated in Worthy Down on an encroachment basis (at no charge). In October 2014, due to the redevelopment of Worthy Down under Project Wellesley, HQ WRAC Association moved out of Worthy Down into a serviced office in Winchester. The office would be funded by the WRAC Association. The Chairman thanked the staff for conducting a seamless move.

Version 3 of the Association website had been launched enabling members to conduct more processes online. The WRAC Association Facebook continued to thrive.

f. Branches. Salisbury and Bexhill-on-Sea Branches were now meeting informally. A new informal Branch had been set up in New Milton. The Mediterranean Branch was moving from Informal to full branch status and a new Peterborough & District Branch had been launched.

g. NMA. The Chairman outlined plans to refresh the planting in the WRAC Association plot and install a stone path to allow wheelchair access to the memorial.

h. Mentioned in Dispatches. A new system of 'Mentioned in Dispatches' had replaced the Certificate of Appreciation, full details had been published in Lioness.

i. Armed Forces Day (AFD) 2015 National Event. The Chairman reminded members that the AFD National Event would be held in Guildford on 27 June 2015. Members were encouraged to attend and take part in the parade in order to exercise the WRAC Freedom of the Borough of Guildford (granted on 22 June 1988).

j. National Standard. The Chairman thanked the National Standard Bearer, Sharon Joyce, for representing the WRAC Association at several events throughout the year.

6. Financial Report. The Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ending 31 October 2014 had been published in Lioness edition 2015/1. The Honorary Treasurer presented the Financial Report and explained that the total value of the funds (Association and Benevolent Fund combined) as at 31 October 2014 was £6,068,746, a reduction of £50,382 on FY12/13, the fall reflected a spike in FY12/13 due to the receipt of a large legacy. It was explained that the funds were divided between 'Restricted Funds' (Benevolent funds), 'Unrestricted Funds' (Association Funds) and 'Designated Funds' (Life Subscription Funds). The value of the Benevolent funds was £5,372,199 and the combined Unrestricted and Designated (Association) funds was £696,547. The Honorary Treasurer thanked the Finance Officer for her continued hard work in managing the accounts in an efficient manner.

Proposal: That the financial statements be accepted and that the audited accounts be ratified.

Proposed: The Rev Susan Wing **Seconded:** Barbara Davies Agreed

7. Report of the Editor of the Association Journal.

The Editor reported that Lioness would continue to evolve, she reminded members that it was 'their' magazine and encouraged readers to submit articles and photos. She explained that HQ WRAC Association did not have a photo library or a stock of course intake photos. Members were reminded that photos previously held in the WRAC Museum, Guildford were now in the archives of the National Army Museum.

8. Reports of Committees.

a. Executive & Finance Committee. The Executive & Finance Committee (EFC) had sat 4 times since the 2014 AGM. The Chairman EFC explained that as she was still serving she had conducted the meetings by Skype from Norway. She thanked members for returning completed questionnaires (Lioness 2014/2) which formed part of the Strategic Review, regrettably only 8% of members had submitted replies. The Chairman EFC thanked the Vice President for taking on the organisation of the Grand Reunion, a role normally undertaken by the Chairman EFC.

b. Benevolent Fund Grants Committee. The Chairman of the Grants Committee gave an update of the work of the Benevolent Fund in the financial year 2013/14.

The maximum level of contribution towards Nursing Home Fees top ups was raised to £40 a week by the Trustees in January 2014 and the responsibility for paying continues to rest with the Benevolent Fund.

The Trustees agreed in January 2014 to increase the annuity paid by the Princess Royal's Memorial Fund to £1,568 (£29 per week and a £60 Christmas bonus). Those who receive help from the PRMF are reviewed on an annual basis to assess if they still require assistance. The Trustees will withdraw the assistance if there is no longer any financial need.

The Trustees authorised a budget for 2014 of £200,000 for one-off and nursing home fee top-up grants and a further £31,500 for PRMF maintenance grants. The Benevolent funds received 336 applications for assistance on behalf of ex-servicewomen of the ATS and WRAC in 2014, a decrease of 20% on 2013. In all, 113 applications were on behalf of ex-ATS servicewomen and 223 applications on behalf of ex-WRAC. Of the 336 applications received, 301 met the criteria for assistance. A total of 17 former servicewomen were assisted with Nursing Home Fees top-ups and 24 ex-servicewomen received annuities from the PRMF. The total amount of money distributed by the Benevolent Funds, including in-year refunds and returned grants, amounted to £182,920 an increase of £5,886 (3.3%) on 2013. Of this, £30,142 was disbursed on Nursing Home Fees though £5,544 was subsequently refunded. Grants were awarded in 25 categories, the most costly of which

were assistance with debt, nursing home fee top-ups, funeral expenses, general needs, electrically powered vehicles and house repairs and/or adaptations.

As well as making grants from its own funds, the Benevolent Fund received support from many other Service and civilian charities, the Trustees thanked the external organisations for their support. The Chairman concluded by reading some thank you letters that had been received, she then thanked the Benevolent Fund Grants Secretary for her continued hard work in administering the grants process.

The Vice President thanked the Chairman of the Benevolent Fund Grants Committee for the time and effort that she puts into her role.

9. Resolutions.

a. Trustee Resolutions. There was one Resolution presented by the Trustees of the WRAC Association.

Subscriptions. The Chairman outlined the supporting facts:

- With effect from October 2014 the Association had begun paying for all office costs and overheads.
- Of approx 3000 members 1000 were annual members and 2000 life members.
- Life Membership, at £50, only covered the equivalent of 10 years annual membership, whereas many had held Life Membership for 20-30 years. In addition relatives often did not inform the Association of the death of a Life Member meaning that Lioness costs continued to be incurred.
- The annual subscription had remained at £5 since 1996. Lioness costs alone were £5.58 per year, therefore the annual subscription covered none of the running costs of administering the membership.
- The meeting of Trustees on 15 Jan 15 proposed that the following amendments be made to the membership subscriptions, subject to ratification at the 2015 AGM:
 - Raise the Annual Membership subscription from £5 to £10
 - Cease Life Membership for any new members (existing Life Members could be encouraged to swap to annual membership)

Following a question and answer session from the members the following proposals were put to a vote:

Proposal: To cease Life Membership for new applications with effect from 21 March 2015 (existing Life Membership status to remain unchanged)

Proposed: Chris Corker **Seconded:** Joyce Nichol Agreed

Proposal: To increase the annual membership subscription from £5 to £10 with effect from 21 March 2015 for new members (existing members would pay the new rate when their subscription becomes due for renewal on 01 October 2015).

Proposed: Barbara Davies **Seconded:** Nicky Murdoch Agreed

b. Branch Proposals. There were no Branch proposals.

c. Election of Honorary Treasurer. The AGM is required to ratify the appointment of Honorary Treasurer on an annual basis.

Proposal: To ratify Isabel McCord in her appointment as Honorary Treasurer.

Proposed: The Rev Susan Wing **Seconded:** Sue Taylor Agreed

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting. The 2016 AGM would be held at 14.30 on Saturday 12 March 2016 at the Victory Services Club, London.

Signed as a true record.

Chairman:

Date:

Obituaries - Their Final Salute

Lt Col (Retd) MARY W SOAMES OBE
nee Hickson
14 June 1916 - 22 November 2014



Mary was born on 14 June 1916 in Finchley, London and was the only child of Holly Berry and Harold Hickson. She adored her parents but rather lived in fear of her strict, domineering father whose tremendous influence carved out how Mary lived her future life. She enjoyed an idyllic childhood during the 1920's and attended St Ronan's School, Hadley Wood in Hertfordshire where she attained her school certificate in 6 subjects. She went on to Clark's Secretarial College in Chancery Lane for a 9 month Shorthand and Typing course – so impressed was the Vice Principal with Mary that he took her on immediately as his assistant secretary. She stayed there for 2 years before moving on in 1935 to do more secretarial work for William Richards & Son, a firm of Adjusters, where she stayed until enlisting into the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY).

Mary was encouraged to join the FANY by her cousin with whom she was very close. Her Aunt and Uncle lived in Hanover Square and Mary spent a lot of her time there so it was not surprising that the two cousins decided to join up together in November 1938. They trained at the Duke of York's HQ off the King's Road and Mary's first posting was as an Ambulance Driver based at the Royal Albert Docks attached to 19 Field Regt RA.

From there Mary was posted to the Motor Transport Company at the Tower of London. Many of you will remember Mary regaling her story of driving a brand new requisitioned Red Ford V8 Bakers van with the words 'Luxury Super Loaf – Sliced and Wrapped' engraved in gold lettering on the side and Mary leaning out of the drivers window shouting to the guard at the gate 'Sliced and Wrapped' as she swept past them with a flourish of her hand. That was her favourite story and we heard it so many times in recent years as her memory began to fail her but she never forgot 'sliced and wrapped'! On one occasion Mary reported to a male officer and said 'your car is waiting outside sir' to which he replied 'where's the driver?' Mary very indignantly replied 'I am the driver!' She also spent some time based at FANY HQ as an orderly and as a driver with No 2 Driver Training Company in Wrexham, North Wales. She rose through the ranks very rapidly and after a mere 3 years she was promoted to Warrant Officer Class 2. Knowing Mary as we all do, it won't come as a surprise that throughout the war she enjoyed a great social life in London, partying and dancing through the night at the Berkeley and Savoy Hotels; in one particular restaurant she and her colleagues were known as 'the pretty soldiers' and were always treated to free drinks!

The FANY Motorised Transport Companies came directly under the control of the ATS, so it was not surprising that Mary was soon singled out as a potential ATS officer. She passed her Officer Training interview with flying colours and attended her ATS Officer Cadet training Unit in Windsor from where she was commissioned on 6 th November 1942, winning the coveted Sash of Honour (the award for best overall officer cadet) and became Subaltern Mary Hickson ATS.

Mary's postings as a commissioned officer took her all over UK and to Bad Oeynhausen, Rheindahlen and Berlin in Germany. In 1949 the ATS was disbanded and the Women's Royal Army Corps was formed and women officers took on the same ranks as their male counterparts. Mary enjoyed all her postings but especially Berlin where she was responsible for 35 female clerks and where she had a wonderful flat, 2 hausfraus to look after her every need, and a driver. She had Army HQ appointments in Scotland and Shrewsbury and a variety of Quartering and Staff appointments at Bicester, The War Office and later on in the MOD. She was an extremely popular Officers' Mess member, sometimes being the only woman in the Mess which, of course, pleased Mary! She always volunteered to look after other mess members' dogs when they were away and her love of dogs remained with her throughout her life. Her devotion to her widowed mother knew no bounds and wherever she was serving, Mary drove home in all weathers to Finchley at weekends to visit her. When she was stationed in Scotland, Mary took her mother to live with her in her flat in Kelvinside. Her penultimate posting was to the WRAC Directorate working for the Director of the WRAC. During this tour, Mary who was by now a senior Major, was awarded the MBE in June 1961. Her final posting was on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and was to the Army HQ in Aldershot as Assistant Director WRAC. Living in Government House Officers' Mess at the same time as Mary was one Lt Col Arthur Soames of the Gloucestershire Regt and the rest, as they say, is history! Mary and Arthur were married on 7 November 1964 at Aldershot Garrison Church and Mary retired from the WRAC on 24 February 1965. Thus began the second chapter of her life as she took up residence at Highlands, Upper Old Park Lane, Farnham and which was to last for the next 50 years.

Mary's transition to civilian life was met with the same drive, commitment and devotion that she had given to her military career. She literally hit the ground running and took on the responsibilities of running Highlands with its extensive garden, looking after Arthur, Jessica and Tristan, not to mention her beloved mother and Arthur's mother, cooking and entertaining, and finally still finding time to undertake various charitable works not least the Chairmanship of the ATS and WRAC Benevolent Fund Grants Committee. Mary chaired this committee for 25 years during which time she presided over the disbursement of £2.2 million to 18,000 beneficiaries. She was also instrumental in obtaining a National Lottery award of £200,000 to supplement the Benevolent Fund; her commanding performance for the Lottery Assessment Board was so compassionate and convincing that there was no chance that the charity's request would be turned down. Generations of WRAC Officers and Warrant Officers will remember Mary as Chairman of Grants where she always showed great perception, compassion and understanding in considering the diverse and needy circumstances presented in the casework; they would also clamour to be at the December meeting to enjoy her famous mince pies and sherry! Mary was awarded the OBE in 1999 for her significant contribution to the ATS/WRAC Benevolent Fund. After she retired as chairman of the Benevolent Fund, Mary became a very active Life Vice President of the WRAC Association, never missing Council meetings or Association functions. She was a stalwart of the Aldershot Branch of the Association holding various offices within the Branch.

Mary also worked tirelessly for the Camphill Village Trust, a UK wide based charity which provides a home within a supportive community environment for the disabled. She supported two Camphill centres both based in Gloucestershire and raised thousands of pounds through her annual plant, pottery and home cookery sales at Highlands and by having a stall at the Alton show. Not only did Mary raise money for the Camphill Trust but she also gave its disabled and handicapped adults Respite stays at Highlands teaching them cookery and gardening skills.

Everyone here today will have their own particular memories of Mary. She epitomised the phrase a bon viveur; she was a marvellous hostess and a wonderful cook who was never happier than when she was sat at the head of the dining table at Highlands dishing out generous helpings of her home cooked fare. She enjoyed her wine and was guaranteed to be great company at any social gathering where her mischievous sense of humour always came to the fore. She loved her beautifully established garden and tending to her plants in the greenhouse and enjoyed sitting outside on the patio soaking up the sun with one of her many beloved dogs nearby. She was a seasoned traveller having holidayed abroad with Arthur extensively and she particularly enjoyed visiting Gilly and family on the continent. She was an outstanding neighbour and friend to many in Upper Old Park Lane and they all enjoyed reciprocal meals and Drinks Parties over the years; it was therefore particularly fitting that her special friend and neighbour of 40 years, Anne Tweed, was with Mary when she passed away. As well as Annie, Barry and Margaret were loyal friends and constants in Mary's life, and because of them she was able to remain living independently at Highlands in her latter years.

Mary was a remarkable woman and a great contributor who dedicated her life to the service of others. She was non judgemental, constantly seeing the good side of people and was a shining example to so many of us. She loved life, enjoyed parties, flirted outrageously and adored dogs. She had enormous energy and warmth and her kindness,

thoughtfulness and generosity knew no bounds. Gracious, compassionate and loving, Mary lived life to the full and in doing so touched so many lives along the way. Mary's legacy and memory will live on within the WRAC Association and our Corps motto, 'Gentle in manner, Resolute in deed' is so fitting an epitaph to Mary. It is such a privilege to have known such a special person, and we will certainly be the poorer without her. She will be remembered with the greatest of respect, love and affection. Mary, we salute you!

Sue Westlake MBE

W0276527 EDITH BELL nee Bufton 28 May 1925 - 28 May 2015

Edith was born in Llanmadoc, Radnorshire where her father was a farmer. In 1940 they moved to Llangarron, which became the family home. She went into Domestic Service before joining the ATS in 1943 1947 (it is believed that she served with AckAck). Edith left the ATS in 1947 and went back into Domestic Service.

Edith joined the Police force in the 1960's, after 2 years service she contracted Polio and spent some time in hospital. After her spell in hospital she spent some time in Billericay learning switchboard skills, and then went to work at Hereford GPO where she met her husband to be, Brian, who was a Telephone Engineer. They married and went to live in Fayre Oaks in Hereford. Sometime later they moved to Birmingham and Edith joined Birmingham Branch of the WRAC Association. When Edith was 70 her husband died so she moved to Palmerstone Court, Ross on Wye, to be nearer to her sister who lives in Hereford.

Edith had a full life travelling, crossing the equator many times as she flew around the world to 20 different countries. When Edith couldn't travel far she had lots of local holidays with family and friends.

Joyce Nicholls

W/318864 Corporal NORAH GWYNNETH BEYNON-JONES nee Jones 10 October 1920 – 13 January 2015



Norah enlisted in London on 13th February 1945. Prior to enlistment she was a computer operator working for The Commercial Calculating Company. She served with 1 Company South Western Group ATS as Clerk RAPC Class 3. Norah trained at the Driving Centre in Camberley at the same time as Princess Elizabeth, now HRH The Queen.

Norah was posted to Ilfracombe where she later met her husband Jack when many men returned from Burma. They married in Tenby in June 1946 and Norah was demobbed in September 1946. Norah kept in touch with friends she made whilst in the ATS and attended the reunion in Harrogate in 1986.

Jack returned to Swansea University to complete his studies and they remained in Swansea where they raised their two children. Sadly Jack died in 1973 and their son, Stephen, died in 1992. Norah continued to work in accounts departments, including the local House of Fraser store. She was an active member of her local church, the Mothers' Union and the Trefoil Guild. She remained in Swansea until the end of 2012 and then moved to a care home in Cheshire to be closer to her family. She leaves behind her daughter Yvonne, her son-in-law Ian, her daughter-in-law Maggie, six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. She will be sadly missed by her family and her many friends

Yvonne Beynon Gibson

BLODWEN (Bobbie) M BREWSTER
09 January 1928 - 27 May 2015

Bobbie and I met in Germany in the early 1960's, she was PA to the Director Ordnance Services and I was an Ammunitions Clerk. We kept in touch and after leaving the service we both became Carers until in the 1990's Bobbie arrived at my doorstep whilst on holiday in Babbacombe, Torquay. We subsequently went on holidays together and I visited her at her home in North Featherstone.

Bobbie was very proud of her Army career and served in many places as a PA, including Singapore. Many people will no doubt remember her. Her last years were spent in a Care Home in North Featherstone.

Jean Gray

W/209675 CORPORAL SYLVIA (Sue)
CROOK, nee Woolston
23 May 1920 – 10 April 2015



Sue served in the ATS from September 1942 until June 1945, operating a predictor with 606 Battery Mixed Heavy Ack-Ack (MHAA). This took her to several sites around England, including to Whitby where she met her future husband Bill, then a Lieutenant. With the help of a sympathetic ATS officer who passed notes between them, they were engaged within six weeks and married two months later.

After the war, Sue and Bill lived in Portslade, Woking, Nottingham, Ferndown and then Woking again. They worked voluntarily for several organisations, including ToCH. After Bill's death in 1990, Sue set up her Battery-linking project, making contact with hundreds of "girls" from MHAA batteries and putting them in contact with their former colleagues. This involved huge files of letters and a substantial postage bill. Despite failing health she was also very keen on attending reunions.

Sue's last six years were marred by dementia but she continued to greet everyone with a smile and was still able to recall and greatly enjoy her memories from the ATS. She died in Frome, Somerset, aged 94.

Ian Crook

MARY EVAN-JONES nee Oakley
14 May 1920 - 03 February 2015



Mary was brought up in Darjeeling, India and returned to the UK aged 16. Following secretarial training she joined the ATS in 1941 and was posted to the government Codes & Cypher School at Bletchley Park. She served there in Major Ralph Tester's department as a Teleprinter Operator until 1944 when she left to raise her family.

Betty Webb

MAJOR (Retired) JOAN EVANS MBE
09 April 1924 - 27 April 2015

Editor: Joan Evans MBE passed away on 27 April 2015, shortly after her 91st birthday. She had a long and distinguished career, serving as WO1 RSM at Guildford and subsequently, on Commissioning, at the WO & NCO Wing Camberley. If you served with Jean and would like to share some memories (and a photo) I will publish them in the the next edition of Lioness. Please email editor@wracassociation.org.uk.

DOROTHY G FOSTER nee Court
26 August 1917 - 28 January 2015



Dorothy was born in Petworth, Sussex and brought up Brighton. During World War II she joined the ATS and served for a number of years in the Gun Operations Room at Sutton Coldfield. Later she was posted to the King David Hotel, Jerusalem as a Supervisor on the Switchboard, returning to the UK for demob just prior to the terrorist bomb blast at the King David. Dorothy achieved the rank of Corporal.

Dorothy met John in Palestine in 1944 and they both returned to the UK in 1946, married that same year and lived in Oxford. In 1947 their son, Norman, was born. Over the years Dorothy had various jobs including being a Sales Assistant and a Telephonist at the Oxford Exchange and at Culham, part of the Harwell Atomic Research Complex. She also managed the telephone exchange at New College Oxford during a Commonwealth Conference in the 1960's.

In the mid 1960s they moved to North London where Dorothy became involved in the Townswomen's Guild, for which in 2004 she received a Long Service Award in recognition of 25 years unbroken service. It was while living in London that Dorothy also became involved with the London Branch of the WRAC Association, which included the former ATS. Later she became a Life Member of the Association. She marched for many years in the Cenotaph Parade, proudly wearing her beret and medals and in 1988 she represented the WRAC Association in the televised Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.

Dorothy supported John in his role as Secretary of the Palestine Police Old Comrades Association, where her personal knowledge of Palestine was very useful. She really loved to dance and enjoyed the Dinner Dances immensely, especially the

South Midlands Branch Annual Dinner Dance at Blunsden House Hotel. She had some wonderful stories of Palestine in the mid 1940s and the PPOCA of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90's! In the early 1990s they travelled the world visiting Old Comrades all the way round, a trip that lasted 6 months.

In the mid 2000s they moved to Radcliffe on Trent, Nottinghamshire to live near to family and soon became involved in local matters, quickly creating a new circle of friends. They continued to enjoy holidays at Warners, particularly in North Wales.

Dorothy leaves her husband John, her son Norman, three grandchildren; Simon, Jennifer and Derek; and three great grandchildren Emily, Anna and Jamie.

John Foster

W/101920 MILLICENT E GOSLING
nee Simmons
31 October 1920 - 21 June 2015



Millie was born in Shropshire on 31 October 1920. She joined the ATS in the early years of the war and did her basic training in Wrexham, later to serve in 503 Battery of 144 (Mixed) Anti Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery. Seven of her brothers also served during the war. One of the brothers, Ron, was in the Merchant Navy and one day brought a sailor friend home with him, Millie married that sailor in 1945. They were subsequently posted to Plymouth and had five children.

Millie was a very keen member of the Plymouth Branch of the WRAC Association. She did not hold any official office but was a regular attendee at the monthly meetings until age slowed her down. She spent her later years in a nursing home in Plympton St Maurice.

Ruth Jennings

WO2 MARIE HEMMINGS MBE 19 October 1928 – 21 February 2015

Marie enlisted into the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) in 1951 as a trainee nurse and posted to BMH Hannover. It was while stationed here that she met John Hemmings who was completing his 2 years National Service in the RAMC. They married and, after he was “de-mobbed”, they returned to live in Preston. In 1954, they became the proud parents of a son who they named Johnnie. After a couple of years in “Civvie Street” John decided to re-enlist, and was posted to Chester as a Theatre Tech. In 1957 Marie also decided to re-enlist but this time she “saw the light” and joined the Women’s Royal Army Corps as a Staff Clerk.

Early service life saw them stationed in hospitals and units in London and the Aldershot area. In the late Sixties they were posted to Singapore, a posting that they often spoke fondly of and really enjoyed as a family and where they met many lifelong friends. From Singapore they returned to London, Marie as Chief Clerk at 12 Coy WRAC, and John to Millbank. It was while stationed in London in 1971 that they lost their beloved son Johnnie, aged 17, in a road traffic accident.

Marie was awarded an MBE in the 1978 New Years Honours List. Both she and John were extremely proud and honoured when Marie was presented with the award just as she was about to leave the Army. It was while on her resettlement leave that she decided on her new career and bought a small café in Aldershot. Years later she would relay stories of the items on her Menu – I can only add that Delia Smith would not have had any cause for concern! I met them during John’s last tour in 1980 in BMH Rinteln, through the late Dorothy McFall. At the time I was serving in Rheindahlen, Dorothy in Dusseldorf and we spent many happy and enjoyable weekends with them in Rinteln.

It was obvious to most that Marie had kissed the Blarney Stone before she left Dublin in 1940 because boy oh boy could she talk! She would tell stories by the bucket load, some true, some slightly exaggerated and some very much exaggerated. Nevertheless, what a character she was; she was naughty, feisty and fun loving and had a real zest and passion for life. She loved nothing more than having parties or a “Hooley” as she called them. Friends and family would go and visit her and John in Blackpool with the intention of staying for a cup of tea and an hour’s chat; inevitably, they would end up leaving hours or days later having had a great “Hooley”. She packed a hell of a lot of fun and laughter into her 86 years and if I had to describe her by one word in today’s language then that would have to be that she was a “hooligan” albeit a lovable one and a term that she often described herself as.

She could cajole people into being naughty too. Take one of her dear friends, Agnes Doig. Now many people reading this will agree with me that Agnes is one of the nicest and kindest ladies that you could ever wish to meet, yet a half hour in Marie’s company and Agnes would be behaving like a hooligan too.

Marie loved children and children loved Marie, she would teach them naughty words and little Irish ditties. When hearing that the children had repeated these in the classroom in front of teachers, or cursing in the playground after falling over, she would howl with laughter. She would open her front door dressed as a witch on Halloween night and frighten the children so much that they ended up giving her sweets!



Marie was a stalwart member of the WRAC Association, a former Chairman of the Blackpool and Area Chairman North West. She was an avid attendee at the annual WRAC Dinner Club and the WRAC Association Grand Reunions, with her friends Agnes Doig, Kath Hughes and Robbie Emerson they would sit in the hotel reception area and watch everyone arriving. In later years Marie’s eyesight was failing so she needed her friends to tell her who had arrived so she did not miss out on who was there. She was then able to recall all the details of the weekend to her sister Frances who must know the names of half the WRAC although she has never served. It was at the Grand Reunion in Bristol that Marie surpassed even her well known sense of mischief. The first night, as is custom, was fancy dress with the theme being “Women in Uniform”. We went to collect Marie from her room to escort her downstairs. She opened the door dressed as a “Bunny Girl” we could not stop laughing but she looked fabulous. We got into the lift where a number of young men who were staying in the hotel for a stag weekend joined us – they looked at Marie and said, “can we come to your party it looks as if it will be more fun than ours”. With a twinkle in her eye, she replied, “of course you can” but when the lift stopped, the doors opened and the young men noticed that there were in excess of 300 women aged 40 – 90 years young stood around chatting – they turned to Marie and said “maybe next time”. Her bunny outfit had the whole place buzzing, and if she had one photograph taken then she must have had 100. She even had comments made on Facebook and she thought this to be a great accolade!



Grand Reunion 2012

I and many others who knew Marie always thought that she would live forever – well she will - in the hearts and minds of those who loved her. She enjoyed a great life on God's Earth; she is now at peace and reunited with her beloved husband and son. May they all Requiescat in Pace

Kath Kay

W/296567 MARY PARKINS nee Platt 07 June 2014



Mary Parkins back row fourth from right in 1945. ATS Platoon 578 Coy RASC, Reed Hall Barracks, Colchester

Mary Parkins enlisted in the ATS in 1943 at age 17 as a Driver (Ambulances and Staff cars). She trained in Dalkeith and Camberley and served in East Anglia and the South East. At one stage she was deployed driving German POWs with TB to a hospital camp in Wales. It was a formative time in her life and she had many adventure and made many friends. Mary left the ATS on marriage in 1946 after which she travelled widely with my father who was serving in the Army.

Along with her grandchildren and great grandchildren I am proud to say my mum 'did her bit' to help the war effort. She was finally taken ill on the 70th anniversary of D Day;

she had been so looking forward to watching the commemoration services on TV, memories of a momentous event of which she had such clear memories. She died peacefully the following day.

Caroline Braybrook

WO2 EDITH M RHODIE 05 November 1938 - 23 March 2015



Edith (Paddy) Rhodie died of a heart attack whilst shopping in Salisbury on 23 May 2015, she was age 76. Paddy served for 25 years as a Clerk and travelled to many countries. On leaving the Army she settled in Barford St Martin where she kept the corner shop with her long time friend Joan.

She took up golf and was still playing two or three times a week when she died. Almost the whole Ladies section, and a good number of the male members, attended her funeral. Paddy was a fun lover and will always be remembered for singing "The County of Armagh" (which was played as the mourners left her funeral service). Her ashes have been taken to Armagh where she was interned in the family grave. May she rest in peace and join her many good friend who went before her.

Joan Ford

W/4 JOAN G SANDERS 19 January 2015



Joan Sanders, who passed away at the age of 98, was the oldest and longest serving member of the ATS. She joined the ATS at Lowestoft on the first day of its formation, on 18 October 1938, and was allocated service number W4. Another Lowestoft resident, Constance Sylvia Carlyon, had been allocated service number W3 but was released from service in 1942. Joan Sanders was called to colours on 01 September 1939, promoted to Corporal in March 1940 at AckAck HQ and shortly afterwards to Sergeant.

Joan was a founding member of 10th Suffolk Company ATS and began her wartime service at Landguard Point, Felixstowe working with 409 AckAck Battery. She had trained at Canterbury and then served in Marham, Hoo, Hadleigh, Lawford, Harlow and Wakefield. In 1938 Joan was one of only 25 women in the Company, by 1942 some 250 women had enlisted. 1942 saw a rapid expansion of the ATS as many thousands of women joined the ranks. Joan played an important role in this expansion, participating in ATS recruiting broadcasts on the BBC.

At the end of hostilities Joan resumed her job as Office manager of W E Wiggs Agricultural Engineers of Barnaby, where her father Horace Sanders was a Partner. In recent years she was able to continue to live independently due to the work of the Royal British Legion Beccles Branch and their Welfare Officer Mrs S Bearne.

Nick Sanders

Four members from the Norwich Branch, Beryl Manthorp, Marjorie Spears, Lorna Lansdowne and I attended Joan's funeral on 11th February 2015. We were most warmly greeted, our presence appreciated as representing the ATS and the WRAC Association. Present in the church of St Botolph in North Cove were her nephew, Nick Sanders, and his wife from Australia, many friends from the village, members of the Royal British Legion and their Standards from Beccles, Bungay, Lowestoft and Halesworth. The RBL had been of great support in her later years. Joan had been active in the life of the village. She had no relatives in this country but nephews and nieces in Australia and New Zealand. The burial was in the churchyard, the church isolated some distance from the village, the ground was covered in snowdrops, a lovely setting.

Joan Awbery

WO2 PEGGY ROSE 13 July 1924 - 31 May 2015

Peggy was born in London on 13 July 1924, she left school at the age of 14 and had a variety of jobs before trying to join the Land Army at age 15. Unfortunately she was too young however a second attempt at 16 and a half was successful, Peggy became London's youngest Land Army girl and even featured on a cigarette card of which she was extremely proud. She served in various locations in the London area and loved working with animals, especially milking the cows and working with the pigs.

Peggy enlisted into the WRAC on 2nd January 1950, as a clerk, serving in a variety of locations both in the UK, BAOR and overseas including Cyprus, Egypt and Singapore. She attained the rank of WO2 in 1965. Her last posting was as Chief Clerk at the WRAC Staff College, Camberley where she had to deal with a constant changing young clerical staff. She gave them guidance, sympathy and understanding, all with a sense of humour.

Peggy was an active member of the Sergeants Mess and her influence was felt throughout the Staff College in the cheerful and efficient way in which she performed her duties.

In 1979, after 29 years service, Peggy left the WRAC and learnt how to drive as part of her resettlement programme. Retirement didn't last long, she enjoyed keeping busy and after a number of jobs locally she turned her hand to gardening, house and dog sitting and made many new friends. Peggy moved to Gloucester in 1987 into an over 55's development. She had a wonderful sense of humour and loved telling stories of what she got up to her her life, a life she lived to the full, almost to the end.

On the 20th March 2015 Peggy travelled to Harrogate to attend the Grand Reunion, she had a wonderful time at the Friday night buffet and the Gala Dinner on the Saturday evening. Unfortunately on the Saturday night Peggy had a fall which resulted in a broken hip, she was admitted to Harrogate Hospital and had a hip replacement. Initially she made good progress but after a few weeks her condition deteriorated and she was transferred to Saint Michael's Hospice in Harrogate. Whilst there her condition, amazingly, improved enough for a transfer back to a nursing home in Gloucester where she spent just under 3 weeks before passing away on 31st May 2015.

Peggy was an active member of the Hereford Branch of the WRAC Association and will be sadly missed by her family, friends and association members. Peggy's funeral was well attended and people travelled from far and wide to give thanks for a life well lived, a cheerful, cheeky and outgoing personality.

Norma Heath and Heather Bradbury

ANNIE SMART nee Chalmers
10 March 1924 - 21 June 2015

Annie, sometimes known as 'Nan' by her friends and colleagues, was born Annie Chalmers on 10 March 1924 to her family in Blairgowrie, where her Dad worked on the farm, and her mother looked after the family and worked in domestic service in some of the 'big houses'. The family moved to Milnathort where Annie and her sister Margaret attended school, walking three miles to and from the school each day.



Annie's life changed when she joined the ATS in 1942, serving in an AckAck station in Belgium and with the Military Police at the War Crimes Tribunals in Hamburg in 1946. She was working from Ravensbrück, a former Nazi concentration camp nearby.

She remained loyal to her colleagues, past and present, in the ATS and later in the Fife and Tayside branch of the WRAC Association. After the Second World War, and her marriage to Jim Smart in 1953, she worked for 12 years in shoe shops, on the buses and for General Accident. On retirement Annie took up bowling and voluntary work, and regularly attended the Royal British Legion parades at the Cenotaph, the Festival of Remembrance and WRAC Association Branch meetings and parades in Perth. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II noticed her ATS Medal when visiting Perth in 2005, and spoke to her at length.

As a person Annie had many of the attributes which we are proud to remind ourselves of. She was private in character, but public in spirit, putting love for county and others above all self interest. The Standard of the ATS Members of AckAck Command was laid up in York Minster on 21 June 2015, on the day that she died. Annie would have liked to have been there, and in a way she and her colleagues were.

Tim Fletcher



Acting as escort at the Hamburg Ravensbrück war crimes trials 1946

CORPORAL RITA A THURMAN
10 April 1945 - 17 February 2015



*Gentle in Manner
 Resolute in Deed*

Sadly Rita passed away suddenly on 17 February 2015, a total shock to all who knew her.

Rita was a talented musician, she played trombone in the WRAC Staff Band from 1963 to 1968. On discharge she continued to play, taught others, and formed the Coxgrove Brass Band.

Rita trained as a nursery nurse and worked in a private nursery until made redundant. In 1987 she and a fellow worker opened their first nursery in Bingham, starting from scratch, and going on to open two more in Adbolton Nottingham.

Two very hard working successful people, their next project, still operating, was setting up Manor Farm Park and Woodlands. Being great animal lovers the Park, set in 85 acres and employing 160 staff, has many animals (some rescued), a large nursery, catering and play activities for children.

Rita's funeral was held at the farm on 5th March 2015, attended by many friends, colleagues and two local bands. Her ashes were scattered in the woodlands she planned and planted, at rest in the place she loved.

WO2 Carol Holland

ALICE WALTON TD
02 July 1920 - 01 May 2015



Alice Walton TD served in the ATS and the WRAC (TA) and worked for LNER and British Rail. She was a staunch supporter of St George's Church, Doncaster and a long standing member of the Sheffield Branch of the WRAC Association.

ATS & WRAC ASSOCIATION BENEVOLENT FUND

**Do you need assistance or know of
someone who might benefit?**

**If so your first port of call is your local branch of
SSAFA or regional Royal British Legion office.**

**SSAFA or the RBL will arrange for a trained
caseworker to interview you in your home to
establish the full range of assistance that you
need.**

**SSAFA Forcesline 0800 731 4880
Royal British Legion 0808 802 8080**

**The caseworker will complete a report that
includes details of your household income. This is
called means-testing and ensures that the ATS &
WRAC Benevolent Fund's charitable money goes
to those in real need.**

**When the report is complete SSAFA or the RBL will
send it to the ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent
Fund Secretary. Applications are then considered
at the appropriate grants committee meeting and a
decision is taken.**

See page 20 for more details

WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2016

The 2016 AGM of the WRAC Association will be held will be held at the Victory Services Club, London at 14:30 on Saturday 12 March 2016. It is planned to serve Afternoon Tea on completion of the meeting.

Full details of the meeting, including Agenda and attendance application form, will be published in the next edition of Lioness (early 2016).

LAST POST

AGNEW, Mrs Robina K Agnew, nee Pettigrew, of County Down, on 15 April 2015, ATS.

BAILEY, Mrs Victoria M, nee Wood, of Upton Lovell on 14 June 2015, WRAC.

BARTLETT, Mrs June A, nee Kincombe, of Harlow on 23 April 2015, WRAC.

BAZETT, Mrs Mary, nee Marsden, of Dursley on 31 March 2015, ATS.

BELL, Mrs Edith H, nee Bufton, of Ross on Wye on 28 May 2015, ATS.

BENYON-JONES, Mrs Norah G, nee Jones, of Swansea on 13 January 2015, ATS.

BOTTERILL, Mrs Jane, of Farnborough on 23 January 2015, ATS.

BREWSTER, Miss Blodwen (Bobbie) M, of North Featherstone on 27 May 2015, ATS/WRAC.

BRUTNELL MBE, Mrs Marjorie, nee Briggs, of Melton Mowbray on 08 May 2015, ATS.

BRYAN, Mrs Sheila, nee Clark, of Chingford on 02 September 2014, ATS.

CAMERON, Mrs Barbara, nee Coulson, of Bottesford on 18 March 2015, ATS.

COLLYER MBE, Mrs Jean B, nee MacDowall, of Broughton-under-Blean on 18 July 2015, ATS/WRAC.

COPLEY, Mrs Irene, nee Owers, of Thornton-Cleveleys on 30 March 2015, ATS.

CROOK, Mrs Sylvia A, nee Woolston, of Frome on 10 April 2015, ATS.

DAVIDSON, Miss Doris, of Hastings on 01 December 2014, ATS.

EDMUND, Mrs Jean H, nee Wadsworth, of Bexhill-on-Sea on 18 September 2014, ATS.

EVANS MBE, Mrs Joan, of Bracknell on 27 April 2015, ATS/WRAC.

FAIRHEAD, Mrs Margaret, of Alvechurch in June 2015, ATS.

FARRAND MBE, Miss Elaine, of Lower Earley on 20 April 2015, WRAC.

FOSTER, Mrs Dorothy G, of Radcliffe-on-Trent on 28 January 2015, ATS.

GOFF, Mrs Florence T, nee Holmes, of Newport, Shropshire on 02 January 2015, ATS.

GOODCHILD, Mrs Kathleen M, of Liverpool on 21 May 2015, ATS.

GREAVES, Mrs Joyce, nee Broome, of Eccles on 11 February 2015, ATS.

HEMMINGS MBE, Mrs Marie, of Blackpool on 21 February 2015, WRAC.

HUXHAM, Mrs Margaret, nee Phillips, of Grayshott in 2014, ATS.

LITTEN, Mrs Veronica, nee Wood, of Chartham on 05 April 2015, ATS.

MARSHALL, Mrs Joyce, nee Kelsey, of Frinton on 03 April 2015, ATS.

McCREERY, Mrs Esther E F, nee Jarrett, of Llanelli on 23 February 2015, ATS.

MILLARD, Mrs Mary E, of Bath in March 2015, ATS.

MITCHELL, Mrs Annette J, nee May, of Normanton on 10 November 2014, ATS.

OSTROWSKI, Mrs Vera, nee Williams, of Wellington on 20 January 2015, ATS.

PARKINS, Mrs Mary, nee Platt, of Thorpe Bay on 07 June 2014, ATS.

PINCHBECK, Mrs Lilian, nee Marshall, of Hull on 23 January 2015.

QUAR, Miss Gillian, of West Croydon on 02 August 2014, ATS.

RANGECROFT, Mrs Christine, nee Mustarde, of Wellington on 29 March 2015, WRAC.

RHODIE, Miss Edith M, of Barford St Martin on 23 May 2015, WRAC.

ROSE, Miss Louise Peggy, of Quedgeley on 31 May 2015, ATS.

ROSE, Mrs Vera F M, nee Hall, of Maidstone in 2015, ATS.

SANDERS, Miss Joan G, of Beccles on 19 January 2015, ATS.

SCHOFIELD, Mrs Sylvia M, nee Jones, of Market Harborough on 27 February 2015, ATS.

SIMPSON, Mrs Maureen W, nee Shepherd, of Salford on 20 March 2015, ATS.

SOAMES OBE, Mrs Mary W, nee Hickson, of Farnham on 22 November 2014, FANY/ATS/WRAC.

SPEARPOINT, Mrs Eileen M, of Chipping Sodbury on 02 February 2015, ATS.

STUBBS, Mrs Mary D, nee Cutler, of Poulton-le-Fylde on 17 May 2015, ATS.

THURMAN, Miss Rita A, of East Leake, on 17 February 2015, WRAC.

TURNER, Mrs Dorothy M, nee Chapman, of Chelmsford on 02 January 2015, ATS.

WALTON, Miss Alice, of Doncaster on 01 May 2015, ATS/WRAC

WESTWOOD MBE, Miss Mary S, of Crowborough on 18 March 2015, ATS.

WHITE, Mrs Dorothy V, nee Hague, of Hull on 28 May 2015, ATS.

WINDEATT, Mrs Debbie, of Cirencester on 27 May 2015, WRAC.

WINNETT, Mrs Florence A, of Wythall on 29 March 2015, ATS.

YOUNG, Mrs Phyllis E Young, nee Ridge, of Pwllheli on 10 June 2015, ATS.



WRAC Association

Women's Royal Army Corps Association

Esprit de Corps

Comradeship

Benevolence

Preserving Traditions

*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re
Gentle in manner, resolute in deed*

wracassociation.org.uk



WRAC Association, Unit 39, Basepoint Business Centre, 1 Winnall Valley Road, Winchester, SO23 0LD
Tel: 0300 400 1992 (local rate call, including mobiles) Email: office.manager@wracassociation.org.uk
Benevolence: benfund@wracassociation.org.uk Lioness: editor@wracassociation.org.uk
Website: www.wracassociation.org.uk

