

LIONESS

SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS

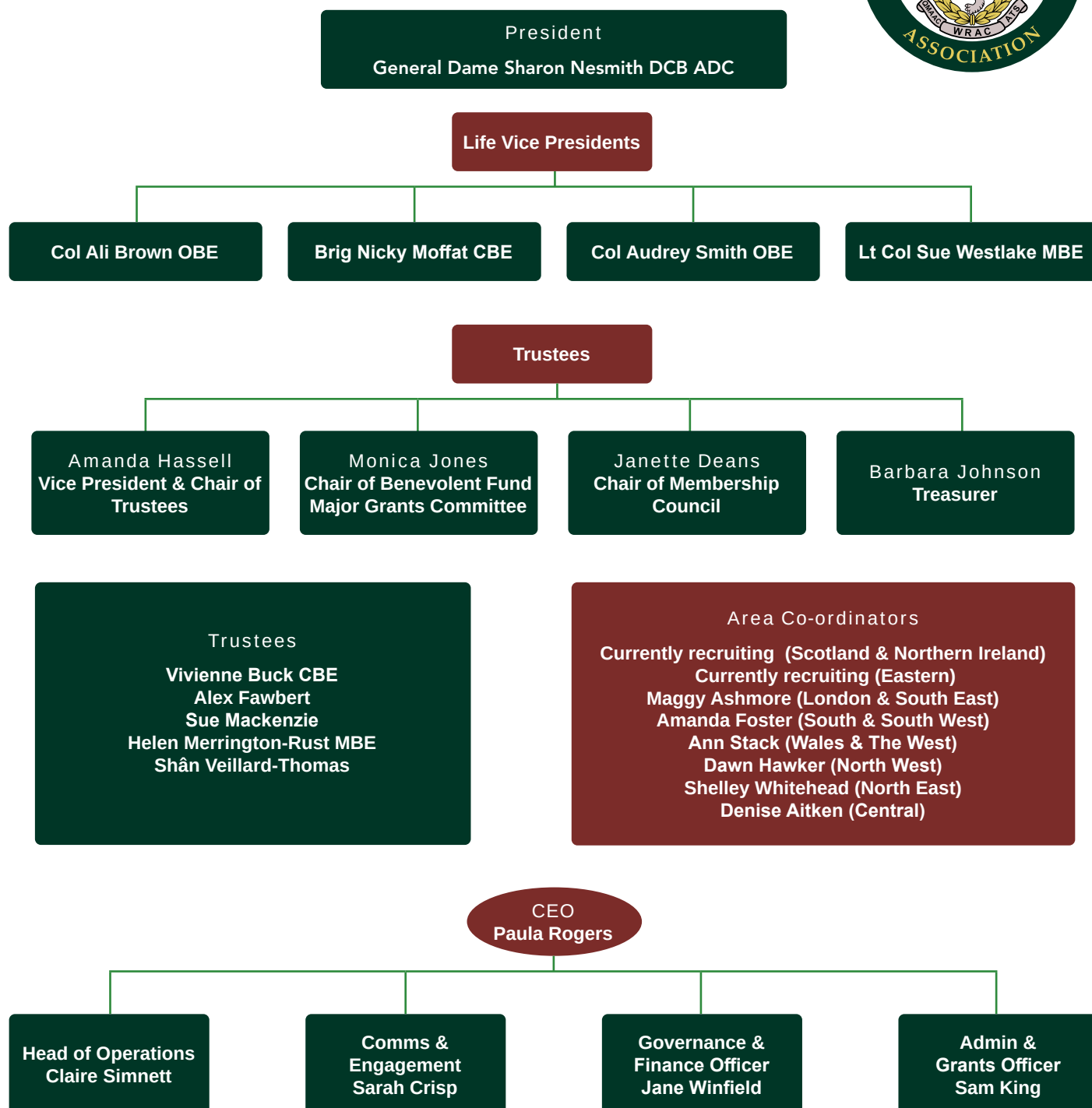
INTRODUCING OUR NEW PRESIDENT

General Dame Sharon Nesmith DCB ADC
Vice Chief of the Defence Staff



WOMEN'S ROYAL ARMY CORPS ASSOCIATION

THE SERVICEWOMEN'S CHARITY



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Foreword by General Dame Sharon Nesmith, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, President WRAC Association



It is a real privilege to be trusted to serve as President of the Women's Royal Army Corps Association. Thank you for the trust you have placed in me - I am proud to be part of a community defined by service, resilience, and a strong sense of sisterhood and friendship.

In taking on this role, I am very mindful that I follow an exceptional predecessor. Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Kent, gave decades of dedicated support to the WRAC. She made others feel recognised and valued, and through her warmth strengthened the sense of family that remains so important today.

The story of the WRAC is one of determination - of women who served with professionalism, often in the face of challenge, and who built something lasting. For many of us this is deeply personal, including for myself. Whilst my WRAC service was limited to my university days, it was huge in impact. I now serve as the Vice Chief, standing on the shoulders of my WRAC teammates.

Today, we see that same legacy - your legacy as members of the Association. For the first time in our Army's history, there is a woman at every rank - from recruit to four-star general. That progress is the direct result of decades of persistence, professionalism, and quiet determination. This photo represents your contribution:



It is nearly normal to see women in leadership, in command and succeeding across defence.

As President, my commitment is to honour that legacy in a way that feels real - to keep telling your stories, to recognise your contribution, and to sustain the strong sense of connection that defines this Association. It is also about looking ahead, ensuring that what has been built over decades continues to have meaning, and pride, for those who follow. We continue to support our serving and veteran women.

And perhaps that is the true legacy of the WRAC - not simply what it achieved, but what it made possible. Quietly, steadily, and with absolute conviction, you changed the shape of our Army. That progress endures - and so do you.



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Cover:
General Dame Sharon Nesmith,
Vice Chief of the Defence Staff

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*Thanks to your
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Babs Anderson, Barbara Johnson,
Maggie Purkis, Paula Rogers,
Claire Simnett, Vicki West,
Lt Col Sue Westlake MBE*

Chair of the Membership Council, Janette Deans



So far, 2026 has proved to be an interesting year for me. In March, Rowena Naile handed over the role of Chair of Membership Council to me and a couple of weeks later I retired from gainful employment after nearly 45 years of working. Taking over from someone with so much experience was not to be taken lightly, and losing the structure, challenge and social aspects of work has been interesting and not without adjustment, no longer does my day start at 0630!

So how have I avoided becoming a fan of daytime TV?

I was persuaded that going to Birmingham to walk 10km would be a good idea and fortunately this proved to be correct, not only to socialise but exercise and raise money for charity. Those who did not want to walk or run were present to provide support and encouragement, and you can read the full report on page 30.

Wales and West Area kindly invited me to join them at their Annual Meeting in the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum. It was good to meet members in this area and judging by their reports and chat they are keeping themselves busy. Returning to Gloucester brought back happy memories of my tour as a Women's Services Liaison Officer when I was responsible for promoting the Army in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Avon.

June brought our Summer Event, in Edinburgh, where a new National Standard was presented, and you can read more on page 26. This second standard was repurposed; originally it had been Weymouth and Portland Branch's standard and our CEO, Paula spent hours unpicking the branch name at the bottom of the standard. We are very grateful for your hard and painstaking work Paula.

Membership Council are working hard on your behalf. At July's meeting we spent time planning future events including next year's Summer Event, so stand by for an announcement. We have also formed a small working group to develop how we continue to promote branches – if you have practical, workable ideas on how to do this, please let us know!

Not all of my life is about the Association. I continue to support Edinburgh and Scotland Rugby; it is good that I am a strong character with the rollercoaster they present us with. Walking the John Muir Way is a project a friend and I do as and when we can. I also volunteer at St Columba's hospice shop; in Morningside no less. I haven't seen Miss Jean Brodie but if I do I will be sure to let her know that you are all in your prime! It is likely that I will also be a trustee for a local Scout group. I was a volunteer at the Commonwealth Games so had sight of the Tunnock's Teacake days in advance!

So you will gather that dust is not gathering under or around me as I make my way through this next chapter of my life. I feel very privileged to be trusted with such responsibility in the Association and continue to be inspired and grateful to those volunteers who make it work. Look forward to meeting up with you soon.



The View from HQ, Paula Rogers CEO

Choosing a front cover image for the *Lioness* is always a challenge as we have so much going on, but this edition was very simple. Our new president, General Dame Sharon Nesmith beaming from the WRAC Association rostrum at our AGM as she addressed a packed room full of our members was such a captivating image we couldn't wait to share it with you all. It stands beautifully alongside the previous edition where we featured our former president the late Duchess of Kent. Within that issue we carried an extended feature reflecting her life of service to our Corps and Association, and we received lovely emails from readers who enjoyed those happy memories. Two items of correspondence particularly touched us as we had posted copies of the magazine to the Duchess's family, an email, followed a few days later by a letter from Buckingham Palace.



Dear Ms Rogers,

*Thank you so much for sending me the copy of the *Lioness* with the piece about my mother - it is a lovely thing to have. We were touched that you should have taken so much trouble over it. I must say you found some wonderful photographs! I will remember how much my mother's long involvement with the WRAC meant to her. May I wish you all well with your work with the WRAC Association.*

*With best wishes,
George St Andrews
Earl of St Andrews.*

I am sure you will be as touched as we were to know that the Duchess' family were so appreciative of the high regard in which she was held by all those who served in the WRAC, and I know you will all join me in welcoming our new president and take a huge amount of pride in knowing that the most senior woman in the UK Armed Forces has honoured us in this way.

We made another splash with the serving community over the summer when West Surrey branch organiser Sgt Steph Kolvik and I attended the Army Servicewomen's Network conference in Cheltenham. We hosted a stall with many serving women popping by for a chat, and in the afternoon I delivered a couple of breakout sessions on the Female Veterans Toolkit. The highlight was when General Sir Roly Walker, Chief of the General Staff gave his keynote speech which included a shout out to the WRAC - you're still making waves ladies!



There's rarely a dull moment at HQ, but moving our offices at the end of July certainly added a huge amount of work to an already busy team. You can read more about the move on page 29 but rest assured that we marched out of Sir John Moore Barracks in white-glove-ready fashion, and unpacked at Worthy Down kettle first!

We had already made our mark at Worthy Down in May when I signed a Bond of Friendship with the AGC alongside two other antecedent corps - the RAPC and the RAEC. Through these bonds we intend to work together more in support, comradeship and the occasional rivalry as we plan sporting and social events to share. Let us know if you fancy thrashing them at shooting, golf or any number of sports where I am confident our Lionesses will outclass their veterans. Not that I'm taking this too seriously mind you but COME ON LADIES - we've got this!



Hail and Farewell

Hailing: Alex Fawbert Trustee



I am very proud to be joining the Board of Trustees of the WRAC Association and looking forward to working with my fellow trustees and our members across the country to help to deliver our aims, objectives and future plans. I joined the WRAC in 1986 and after serving with the Intelligence Corps, I commissioned in 1990, returning proudly to the WRAC. After my regular service, I served with The Staffordshire Regiment as their Intelligence Officer in their Territorial Army battalion and then later as a member of the Royal Marines Cadets, as a Commanding Officer, Troop Officer and the Quartermaster for the Eastern Area. So I have worn very many different uniforms in lots of different settings and organisations over a military career spanning 37 years.

Nowadays I volunteer with The Royal British Legion. I am a County Vice Chair and County Community Support Coordinator in Derbyshire. I recently received a Royal British Legion national award for my community support work, tackling social isolation and loneliness by training and professionalising a Branch Community Supporter volunteer team. These amazing volunteers are now fully qualified to visit former servicemen and women at home, or in care home or hospital settings. I have increased the grants and benevolence coming into Derbyshire and built community and camaraderie by opening new branches. I am focussed on bringing more support and resources to those who are in need and especially interested in increasing support to women beneficiaries, including the hardest to reach.

As a former parliamentary candidate, I also work nationally to lobby parliament, attending All Party Parliamentary Groups and events and campaigning to raise the profile of women who serve and have served. My work dovetails with the WRAC in very many ways. It is a real honour and privilege to return to the WRAC in this role.



Hailing: Denise Aitken Central Area Coordinator



My father was in the Royal Artillery and my mother left Tipperary at 18 to join the ATS. I followed in their footsteps and joined the WRAC in 1974 as a radar operator. I initially wanted to be a PTI, but as I was enjoying participating in so many different sports I continued as a radar operator serving six years at Lulworth. I met my ex-husband who was in the 17th/21st Lancers. So many WRAC married into the Regiment that we were able to be seconded to the Regiment in 1980 - you could say we were the forerunners for women to be amalgamated into the regular Army! I served another 18 months in Germany as the Colonel's PA. I became pregnant and left in 1981, coming to work in civvies as stayed in until I was 7½ months pregnant and there was no maternity uniform in those days!

After leaving the WRAC I became a typewriting tutor which led on to IT, and then the Curriculum Manager for IT and Multimedia for North Lincolnshire Adult Education. In 2008 I moved to a private company as their national trainer on the effects of alcohol and drugs, retiring in 2022. I still love participating in lots of sports, walking netball, padel, pickleball and walking, however my main sport is road cycling, and as I write this my husband, who I met in 2000, and I are getting ready to cycle France from the Channel to the Mediterranean. I volunteer at sporting events and have been lucky enough to go to the Olympics in London 2012, Rio de Janeiro 2016 and Paris 2024, as well as Commonwealth Games, World and European Athletics. I have two grandchildren and in my downtime I knit and crochet. I look forward to visiting the branches in the Central Area to introduce myself.



Hailing: Shelley Whitehead, North-East Area Coordinator



My involvement with the WRAC began when I attended Guildford on Officer Selection. As a young sixteen-year-old I was told to come back having got some experience and to further my education. I did, taking the path to becoming a PE teacher, studying at Birmingham University and on arriving home, joining the local TA unit.

I enlisted in the WRAC in 1991 - one of the last TA soldiers to pass off on the famous Guildford Square. On the disbandment of the WRAC I was given the choice to be a clerk or a medic. I just wanted to "soldier" so I became the first female infantry soldier in The Queens Lancashire Regiment. In 1992 on Annual Camp to Gibraltar there was a drill competition for the Convent Guard selection. I made the team and was the first female to stand guard armed outside a residence.



I was mobilised as part of Telic 4 to Basra. As a female on the search teams it was tough - we were shot at, we worked hard, but we were a team and had some good times. Returning home I commissioned and moved to the ACF as an instructor, Detachment Commander and then Training Officer developing those supporting the cadet force. I led on events such as an honour guard of 250 tri-service cadets for a Queens Visit to East Lancashire.

Since 1992 I have organised the Accrington Pals Valedictory Service, remembering those who gave their lives from the Pals Battalion. I am an award-winning aquatics tutor and was presented with the Kings Coronation Award - strange to go to the Palace not in uniform. My new role as a veteran's mentor in a high school sees me supporting young people to develop life skills. I became a Trustee of the WRAC Association two years ago and working with the ladies of the North East means the road over the Pennines is going to be busy. So from the red rose county to the white rose one, I look forward to meeting ladies of the North East soon.



Hailing: Sam King Administration and Grants Officer



I am delighted to have been appointed as the Administration and Grants Officer at the WRAC Association. For the last three years, I have worked at SSAFA as a Regional Casework Coordinator, so I'm now looking at casework through a very different (but comfortingly familiar) lens.

After marrying into the Army, I retrained as a sports massage therapist, a career that gave me the flexibility to continue working while navigating frequent moves, deployments and

raising a family. Over the years, I've worked with anyone in need including athletes, office professionals, soldiers and the occasional celebrity, as well as providing massage support at a number of high-profile sporting events across the UK and occasionally further afield.

Whilst at University in Edinburgh, I thoroughly enjoyed four years in the OTC, where amongst other things I qualified as a TA PTI, and led the gun troop in taking the salute at Edinburgh Castle for the late Duke of Edinburgh's birthday. I

followed a number of my cohort to Sandhurst where I had some unforgettable experiences and made lifelong friends. Ultimately, I decided not to pursue a career in the Army, choosing instead to build a career in the charity sector, where I have since held a variety of fulfilling roles.

Outside of work, I volunteer with SSAFA's Serving Community Team, providing vital financial, practical, and emotional support to members of the serving community in the Salisbury Plain area. I'm a keen runner, and always on the look out for the next adventure - my husband and I regularly pair up for mountain marathon events which never fail to leave us completely humbled. I'm also kept busy by my two dogs and two sons, whose packed sporting schedules and boundless energy ensure there's never a dull moment.

Having grown up in a military family and married an infantryman, I am well-tuned in to the challenges faced by both the serving and veteran armed forces communities, and I hope to be able to put my lived and learnt experiences to good use in this role to best serve those veterans of the WRAC most in need.



Farewell to: Rowena Naile Trustee and Chair of Membership Council

I would like to thank the Association for the beautiful cap-badge brooch that I was presented with at the AGM when I stood down as a trustee after 18 years and Chair of the Membership Council for 5 years. I have been very privileged to be a trustee and help work towards all the progress we have made for female veterans and all the events that we have provided for our members. I am most proud of the reduction of the cost of subscriptions to zero, as it has increased our membership beyond anything we could have imagined, even though being in New Zealand for the AGM and having to propose it on zoom at 0300 hrs was interesting!

I have represented the Association on more occasions than I could mention, but I must mention meeting Queen Elizabeth II as part of the 100th Anniversary celebrations of women in the Navy and Army. HM explained to me the story of the picture in



our display of her and her father, he had not believed she had joined the ATS and was surprised to see her on his visit to the unit! I have been to No10, met various members of royalty at the Field of Remembrance but actually it was meeting so many of our members that remain important to me.

The Association will still be a big part of my life – whether it is attending the big events, branch meetings, the 10km or the cycling group and I look forward to meeting more of you wherever and whenever we gather as female veterans.

I know that Janette Deans will be a brilliant Chair of the Membership Council and I hope that she enjoys the role. Thank you all for your support in my tenure as a Trustee and Chair of Council.



Farewell to: Tim Savage Trustee and Treasurer



It's a very sad day for me as I say farewell to the Women's Royal Army Corps Association as your first ever male Non-Executive Director and then Trustee and Treasurer. It has been a huge honour to work alongside my fellow trustees and the brilliant team in HQ led so ably by Paula. What a fantastic organisation we have, that does so much to support and assist all our members and their families.

Looking back over the last 7 years, the thing that struck me most was the huge sense of pride that each and every member has for serving in the Women's Royal Army Corps. You and your predecessors in the Auxiliary Territorial Service blazed a trail for the current women who now serve across the Army in every rank and in almost every Regiment and Corps and this is increasingly recognised by those women who serve today as shown by the recent acceptance by General Dame Sharon Nesmith DCB ADC (Gen) of the appointment as your President.

I leave with the Association in rude health, both financially and spiritually, and I know that I will never forget the Grand Reunions and the sight of hundreds of women having the most amazing time together! It's been a privilege – thank you.



Farewell to: Lyn Hatch Eastern Area Coordinator

My time as the Eastern Area Coordinator has included many memorable events and visits. Just as I took over Covid restricted travel but Zoom meetings gave us the ability to stay connected and have fun.

As the lockdown rules were eased, allowing limited gatherings, I went to support Joan Rich as she completed her 82nd lap of Allenby Park in Felixstowe. Joan, who had served in the ATS with the RMP, had set herself the challenge of walking 102 laps of the park before her 102nd birthday, inspired by Capt. Tom Moore, who sent her a video message of support. Joan raised almost £35,000 for the NHS for whom she had worked as an auxiliary nurse; her courage, determination and the want to continue to help others, an inspiration.

On 15th May 2022 in Great Yarmouth, at the Imperial Hotel, the Association unveiled a new plaque remembering 26 women of the ATS killed when enemy Focke-Wulf fighter planes bombed their quarters. The plaque had, for the past 28 years, been on the wall of the adjoining hotel, before falling and breaking in two. A local historian, supported with photographic evidence, informed the Association that it had been placed on the wrong end of the two hotels.



It took some organising and with the date set for the rededication, my next task was by far the hardest. Armed with coffee and cakes I popped in to see Joan Awbery, Joan who was then 101 years old had been the driving force behind the first plaque, fundraising, finding the relatives and organising the whole event. I wasn't looking forward to telling her it was the wrong hotel, but she was fine and delighted to have the honour of unveiling the new plaque.



The following year on the 80th Anniversary, the Association led the "We will Remember Her" campaign - a massive undertaking. Each one of these women being remembered in their own hometowns

or at their Commonwealth Grave. The main service was held at Great Yarmouth, and once again I was back at the Imperial Hotel, so proud to have been part of this wonderful day. For me, the everlasting memory was meeting the nephew of Sgt Viola Wells, who had only recently found whilst clearing his father's house, documents and photos of Viola - an aunt he knew nothing about. He shared with us a photo taken on her wedding day, sadly a week later she lost her life when the accommodation block was bombed.

In December 2024, I along with three other members of the Benevolent Fund Major Grants Committee visited The Royal Hospital Chelsea, for Christmas lunch with our in-pensioners. We started off in the bar; Rowena handed out the Christmas gifts then it was off to lunch, it was a fabulous day. Lovely to listen to their stories of their time spent in the WRAC.

In 2025 I was proud to receive an award from the President of the RBL in Norfolk, Lt Gen Jonathan Page CB, OBE, in recognition and appreciation of the outstanding contribution to fundraising for the RBL Norfolk as the Poppy Appeal Organiser for Norwich over the last 10 years.



I have had some great times meeting up with the branches in my area, Colchester's Seaside Havoc, lunches with Herts and Beds, garden parties and lunches with Norfolk and the Lionesses of Suffolk. I would like to thank those that organised and welcomed me at these events, it is great to see that our esprit de corps is still so strong.



Features

A Grand Moment at the AGM

On Saturday 20 March, 100 of our members gathered at the Victory Services Club in London for the WRAC Association's Annual General Meeting, followed by a delicious afternoon tea, and a very special surprise.

General Dame Sharon Nesmith, Vice Chief of Defence Staff joined us as our guest speaker and to present restorative measures to six more women affected by the pre-2000 gay-ban. The warm welcome offered by our members to Gen Dame Sharon most certainly greased the wheels when we then asked whether she would become our new President - it was an immediate and emphatic "Yes!".

You can read more from General Dame Sharon overleaf and on page 3, and hear from the restoration recipients on page 37. Next year's AGM will be held in Birmingham and ticket information will be released later this year.





Very moving speech from Gen Dame Sharon Nesmith. It was an excellent AGM and afternoon, thank you.
Rose Green



Thank you for every moment spent with the beautiful company of WRACA ladies. Amazing presentations and touching speeches, followed by an afternoon tea with comrades which will be remembered. It is always a privilege to attend. Huge thank yous.
Roxanne Macaulay



Can I say a big "thank you" for a great AGM -our high tea was delicious. I know you guys put a lot of hard work into such events every year, once again, thank you. Pip Flegel



My first AGM, a wonderful day meeting old friends and making new ones too. An enjoyable and thought provoking day. Karen Gonella



Congratulations on such a successful AGM on Saturday. I love all the pictures on Facebook. Look forward to seeing and hearing more about it in the Lioness.
Marian Lamberton



Thank you I had a fabulous time as always. Just not enough hours - we were shattered, we didn't even make going out in the evening! It was a great AGM - very well organised and such a bonus that General Dame Sharon Nesmith was present.
Wendy Hooton

What a wonderful afternoon, a privilege to be able to attend. Jemma Rose

Cap Badge and Beret Presentations

General Dame Sharon Nesmith, Vice Chief of Defence Staff presided over the beret and cap badge presentation ceremony. Her moving address touched everyone in the room, and you can read the thoughts of our recipients on page 37. Here we share some of General Dame Sharon's words.

Ladies, gentlemen, veterans, friends and family,

It's genuinely really wonderful to be with you this afternoon. And I mean that. Days like today bring me joy - a reminder of who we are when we choose to show up for one another. I count myself fortunate to be in rooms like this, surrounded by people of courage and integrity. But today that feeling is amplified. You top up my resolve and my resilience and remind me why I am still here after all these years.

And to the women at the centre of today, thank you for inviting me to be here with you. Thank you for walking back into a space that didn't treat you with dignity. Thank you for your patience, your grace, your quiet strength, and your willingness to let us put right, even in a small way, what was so wrong.

I am the Vice Chief of Defence Staff. I have served for 34 years. I have seen our Armed Forces at their very best, and I have seen them at their worst. What happened to you - and to so many like you - was one of the worst.

For years, our institution failed to see you for who you were: talented, committed, capable soldiers who wanted nothing more than to serve your country.

I stand here with a heavy heart because at the core of everything I have tried to do in Defence - everything I have loved about service - sits one central truth: that people matter.

What we did to you, as an institution, failed that basic truth.

The ban did not simply end careers. It cut people adrift from their purpose, community and pride. It cast shadows that stretched through decades. It left wounds that were borne in silence - often alone, in shame that never belonged to you. You were forced out for being you. And that is a moral injury.

So, before anything else, let me say clearly and personally: sorry.

We failed to see you, to value you, to protect you. And we robbed you of something that was yours by right: your place in our family.

When we look at the symbols in front of us today - the beret, the cap badge, and the apology - they may appear small. But these items carry the weight of belonging; they represent identity, pride, and the deep sense of purpose that comes from serving alongside others. They hold memories of friendships forged, challenges endured, and moments of meaning that only those who have served truly understand.

When these items were taken from you, it was not merely a uniform that was removed. It was the severing of a community that once embraced you. It was the erasure of a future that you had earned, and were denied.

Today, we continue to restore what should always have been yours. And I am hoping we restore you to us - not as guests, or visitors, but as veterans, as sisters-in-arms, and as members of our military family. Your service has always counted. Your stories have always mattered. And today, I hope we begin to put that right.

The Etherton Review illuminated truths that had been hidden for too long. As you know, the Review set out forty-nine recommendations, and Defence has committed to every one of them - not as a tick-box exercise, but as part of a genuine moral and cultural shift. Yet we all know that implementing recommendations is only the beginning.

The true challenge - and our opportunity - lies in reshaping our culture. This is the responsibility shared by every single one of us, in every rank, in every cap badge and every corner of Defence.

Together, we choose a future marked not by fear or silence, but by dignity, respect, and the unwavering assurance that every person who serves is valued for who they are.

There is something profoundly important that you may not yet fully realise: but your return makes us better, in Defence, in ways that reach far beyond today's ceremony. By standing here, you will offer us perspective - the kind that only comes from those who have endured, reflected, and chosen to step back into a space that once caused you harm. You offer us truth-telling, a gift not everyone is brave enough to give, and one that institutions need if they are to grow. And you offer us humility - a leadership virtue we can never have too much of, because humility keeps us grounded, accountable, and open to change.

You also give hope to those who are still uncertain about coming forward. Your courage makes the path less intimidating and far less lonely. You show, through your presence and your honesty, what courage looks like after the storm - the courage not only to survive what happened, but to reclaim your story on your terms.

That is leadership. And leadership has never been defined by rank or appointment. It is defined by impact - the kind of impact you are having today. You have shaped more in us than you may yet know. I proudly serve you, alongside you, as a woman in Defence and the Vice Chief.

So let me close with this. To you here today and to everyone whose lives were shaped by that unjust policy; we see you. We value you. We are profoundly proud of you.

And above all, we welcome you home. We are better for you.



Boots on the ground in London Town

The WRAC Association Sole Sisters group has been growing on Facebook and now they've had their first group walk, organised by Debbie Walker MBE. A guided walk through London to retrace the steps of over 30 women who have influenced our capital city in some way. Belinda Matthewman joined the walk.



Our guide was Barbara, a local, who researched these women during the COVID pandemic for 'something to pass the time'. She turned her research into a walk that took in statues, memorials, sculptures, buildings and the life histories of women who have made their mark since AD 60 to the present day: including suffragettes, SOE agents, women during the Battle of Britain, nurses during WWI, businesswomen and philanthropists. I don't want to give too much away so as not to spoil it for the next one (which is organised and you can find out more about it below!).

We met at the statue of Suffragette Millicent Fawcett, near Westminster Station. The route was achievable to everyone, I can't remember going up or down any steps, so it was all wheelchair friendly and Barbara's pace was as fast as the slowest person. She was extremely knowledgeable and answered lots of questions.

We finished at The Foundling Museum in Brunswick Square and went to a café for refreshments then had a meal near the end point of the walk at the Museum Tavern - opposite The British Museum.

The whole day was interesting and educational. Debbie has already planned another one for September 2026 and has shared the details below. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet other female veterans and have an adventure around London.



Want to join the next walk?

Following on from the success of the first London Women's History Walk, I have planned another for 7th September 2026. We start at 10:30 in Parliament Square. The walk is about 6 miles in total which is walked at a slow pace, but as it's London there are plenty of opportunities if you want to keep the walk shorter.

The cost is £20 which is paid to the guide Barbara, but ask for an optional donation to the WRAC Association.

We had really good feedback about the first walk, so if you enjoyed reading about it above, why not come along and learn about all those brave women.

Contact me at walker_d22@sky.com or 07946 733932 for further information.

Woolly Jumpers by Lumpy Jumpers

Across the country female veterans have banded together to knit jumpers for lambs which are orphaned or in need of a little extra warmth. Led by Christin Make the community of knitters continues to grow, giving those involved a rewarding sense of purpose.

WRAC veterans are nothing if not adaptable and resourceful. Five years ago, WRAC veteran Christin Make, who is now in farming, was trying hard to save lambs in the coldest wettest March we had experienced in years. As farmers all over the UK struggled, she turned to a friend's leg warmers to save a lamb. This sparked an idea, which has led to a movement throughout our membership. Having seen Australians knitting jumpers for lambs, Christin got permission to bring the concept to the UK, and started work drafting volunteers.

The call went out on Facebook and the WRAC Crafters group responded. Thus, was born Woolly Jumpers for Woolly Jumpers (lambs) - WRAC veterans coming together to support our farmers and created a pattern for the jumpers which is now subject to copyright. As the word spread, more veterans joined, including WRAF.

Christin runs a very well organised system; keeping farmers and crafters up to date from the start of the season and continues throughout lambing despite being hugely busy with her own sheep and lambs. Thanks to Christin's hard work and dedication, many needy woolly jumpers get a veteran-issue woolly jumper each lambing season. The initiative continues to grow, giving all involved a sense of purpose and saving the lives of as many lambs as possible.



Elaine Frampton: "I enjoy so much that such a simple thing to make should make a difference to a poorly or orphaned lamb. It's lovely when the recipient farmers send me photographs of their lambs wearing my 'designer outfits'!"

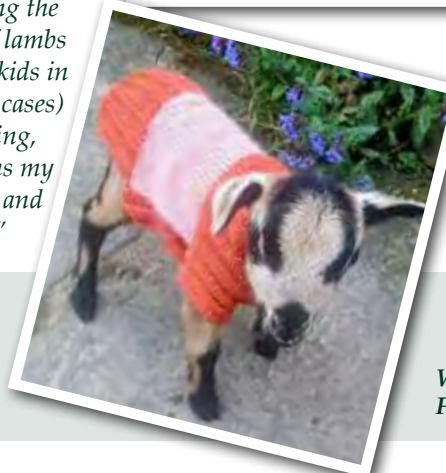


Nicola Roberts: "At a WRAF reunion a few years ago, I was asked if I could knit a lamb jumper. I thought this meant knitting a jumper with a lamb on it - which was beyond knitting limits! When it was explained that it was to knit jumpers for lambs, I was sure I could manage and started

knitting a stockpile ready for next year's needy lambs. I told my Mum (Carole), who is also ex WRAF, about Christin's group and Mum decided to join in too. We have been knitting up a storm ever since!"



Alison Sayell: "It gives me great satisfaction to think that I am supporting our farmers across this nation and helping in some small way. Seeing the photos of lambs (and kids in some cases) thriving, warms my heart and soul."



Want to join the crafting group?
Find out more on page 77.

Armed Forces Day

The weekend of the 27th and 28th of June saw veterans, serving personnel and the wider Armed Forces community come together in Aldershot to celebrate Armed Forces Day. The general public were there in their thousands too, to show their support and enjoy all that was on offer.

The WRAC was well represented by our parade contingent and the gazebo which was situated in the heart of the display field alongside many of our charity partners. Visitors old and young were welcomed into our tent with the opportunity to win our giant stuffed bear by giving him or her a name, or to try on WRAC uniform from throughout the years for a photo opportunity. On hand with her extensive collection of uniform pieces was Felicity Jackson, a cold war reenactor who focuses on the WRAC. She was delighted to answer questions about her collection and even received offers of some pieces she was missing. Felicity's cot and kit collection certainly drew a lot of interest and we are thrilled that Felicity will be able to join us for more events in the future.



Air demos came from the RAF Parachute Display Team, the Army's Red Devils and the Army's drones, and on the ground, attractions included Apache and Chinook helicopters, the Army Airsoft range and a climbing wall. Music was provided by the Royal Corps of Army Music, the Military Wives Choir and the Army Cadet Force Band in which Felicity was playing.



The weather was sweltering with temperatures headed into the thirties, but this didn't put off the crowds who were plied with free water and very happy to pop into the gazebos in search of shade. 17 new members joined us on the day, including Jayne Whittam who not only discovered the benefits of free membership of the WRAC Association, but also met Tracy Hook for the first time since they completed basic training together - the perfect place for a reunion!



Maria Jobson was one of the fifteen WRAC veterans marching in the parade on Saturday morning

There was something quietly powerful about returning to Aldershot for the Armed Forces Day National Event, as I was posted to 10 Coy WRAC. For many veterans it isn't just another date in the calendar, it's a moment where past, present and future meet. The town, long known as the home of the British Army, feels different on a day like this—livelier, warmer, more reflective.

As I took my place in the parade, I felt not only a connection to those alongside me, but also to the generations of women who served before us. As we marched, we did so proudly, our presence a reminder of the WRAC's contribution and legacy. It was inspiring to see such strong public support and appreciation for our Armed Forces. The day was filled with highlights, from impressive marching bands to engaging military displays.

A big thank you to the organisers for delivering such a well-run and memorable event. A truly special experience and a reminder of the pride and respect shared across our community. The day was made even more memorable by the opportunity to meet, chat with, and take a photo with honorary Royal Auxiliary Air Force Officer Bruce Dickinson from Iron Maiden!



We had scores of entries into the competition to win out plush bear, from young toddlers to old soldiers, and with all the entries submitted, we drew the winning name and the teddy bear was dispatched to four-year old Finn Sleath who was delighted when we telephoned to let him know he was a winner. He chose the name 'Captain', and after we posted the cuddly toy to him, his mummy sent us this note.

Thank you so so much for our son's lovely teddy bear - he is over the moon with it. We attended our first Armed Forces Day as a family because we wanted our boys to experience a little more of the world their daddy is part of. Their daddy joined the army at 16 and is now in the Grenadier Guards, and although the boys love watching the Changing of the Guard at Windsor, this was the first time our eldest, Finn (4), had the chance to get up close to military equipment. From standing inside a Chinook helicopter to holding the guns, every new experience was met with excitement.

Days like Armed Forces Day are a wonderful opportunity for children from military families to understand and feel proud of what their parents do. Winning Captain Butterscotch was the perfect end to a lovely day. Finn named his new teddy 'Captain' because he thought it was the perfect military name, and Captain Butterscotch has already become part of the family. Thank you WRAC Association!



It was certainly our pleasure. It was lovely to meet you all and we hope that Finn and Captain will be firm friends.

Adjutant General's Corps Annual Commemoration Service

The National Memorial Arboretum was once again the focus of the Adjutant General's Corps' commemoration service in July, and following the signing of the Bond of Friendship it proved to be especially meaningful for WRAC and AGC veteran Betty Gash.

I was honoured to represent the WRAC Association and lay a wreath. Fellow Association members Nicky Okopskyj and Heather Bradbury were also in attendance. National Standard Bearer Heather and I completed 13 years in the Adjutant General's Corps.

As the service began, families and guests were seated on the right side of the monument and the padre Rev Gary Watt, speakers and wreath layers on the left side. A parade including four Standard Bearers marched from the Aspects building to the memorial site and stood near to the monument. There was a welcome by Major General Richard Allen, Director Army Legal Services, and wreaths were laid by representatives from the AGC Corps, its branches, their associations, families and friends. It was an emotional moment for the families and others.

A lovely afternoon tea followed what was an excellent commemoration in memory of the eight service personnel who have died in the last 12 months. We took this time to reflect on all AGC lives lost, and the loved ones they leave behind, remembering members of the Corps and its antecedent branches.



NMA LGBT unveiling

When His Majesty the King unveiled the new LGBT+ Community Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in November of last year, we covered the event in the Lioness magazine. Whilst several of our members were delighted to attend, many more missed out because of the tight restrictions on tickets and so a second event took place over the summer which allowed many more people to attend.

The WRAC Association was one of 5 charities to set up a gazebo and welcome attendees to talk about the ongoing work to ensure all those who were lost to the British Armed Forces as a result of the pre-2000 'gay-ban' are welcomed back.

Trustee Alex Fawbert and CEO Paula Rogers attended in an official capacity, with Paula laying the WRAC flowers at the foot of the memorial. Following the rededication, a community picnic gave everyone the chance to chat and enjoy another successful event in glorious sunshine.



Was someone you know affected by the ban? December 12th is the last day for applications for reparations, both financial and non-financial (e.g. beret restoration ceremony). Don't miss out. Find out more at gov.uk/government/publications/lgbt-veterans-apply-for-restorative-measures

A Dolly Good Show

She's had her head shaved, been locked up in gaol and driven her EPV from Coventry to Guildford all to raise money for good causes, and in July Pip dressed up as Dolly to go after your lolly.

Working longer than 9 to 5, and dressed in more than a Coat of Many Colours, Pip Flegel dressed up as 'Dolly Parton' for an ambitious 24 hour sing-a-thon in Garstang, backed up by 'The Mixtures'. Raising funds for the WRAC Association and CancerHelp Preston, Pip sang for 24 hours in Cherestanc Square, donning a luscious blonde wig throughout, despite the warm weather.

The Mayor of Garstang, Cllr Sandra Perkins help Pip to kick it all off with a duet of 'Jolene', whilst Cat Smith, MP for Lancashire and Wyre popped in to say hello and give a donation. As always, fellow Lionesses provided great support, with several WRAC Association Manchester members adding their own dulcet tones or collecting money.



'Sweet Caroline' and Suzi Quatro were firm favourites with the crowd who joined in for a good singalong whilst Pip's favourite to sing was the rather more southerly classic 'Streets of London'.

Local groups and businesses got behind the fundraiser too. A ukulele group joined in for an hour, whilst a local school brought a pop mix to the show. Booths, Garstang Fish and Chips, and Well Pharmacy supported with storage, sausage and chips, and a First Aid Officer (who thankfully wasn't called upon).



With the "shut up" bucket proving the quickest to fill, Pip raised over £2000 to be split evenly between her two chosen charities.

Good Golly Miss Dolly - that's great work!

Biking the length of the UK?

You need to be Hard as Nailes

How many of us consider doing crazy challenges for a few seconds before dismissing the idea as being ludicrous? Not Rowena Naile MBE (Must Bike Endlessly), who tells us all about her recent cycling mission.

I try not to challenge myself too often but when my friend Alasdair suggested we cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats it was one of the things on my bucket list to do, so of course I agreed! Totally and utterly bonkers. I think my husband thought after I did the Test Way Ultra Marathon that I would not be doing any more endurance challenges – he was mistaken! After a few months planning, training and deciding to raise funds for charity on our way, we set off on 11 May from Land's End with the hope of raising money for the WRAC Association and Dementia UK (both my choices) as well as MacMillan Cancer Support (Alasdair's choice). We succeeded on both accounts – reaching John O'Groats, as planned, 14 days after we started and raising over £5000.

There are many things that I learnt on the 14 days in the saddle – and surprisingly none about being on a bike – the absolute beauty of the British countryside and the smell of wild garlic on the way being two, but overwhelmingly we learnt that the support that we received from friends, family and members of the WRAC Association in person and on Facebook was such a huge morale boost. As we cycled through England, into Wales, back into England and then on to Scotland we encountered stunning scenery, loads of hills, great people and generally drivers who were respectful of cyclists. Eating has never been a problem for me but burning off between 2500 – 3000 kcal each day just cycling meant I had to use my knowledge from my Dietetics degree (and having done a Sports Nutrition Diploma during my time in Norway) to make sure I did eat enough carbohydrates and protein. Of course, I just had to have a sweet treat each day when I finished cycling!

In all we cycled 1016 miles or 1634 km, with ascents of 64563 ft or 19678 metres over 77 hours. I only fell off three times – all my own silly fault on hills and luckily no serious injuries. I had no punctures, although Alasdair had 2, but my presta valve did shear off one morning resulting in having to change my tubeless tyre into one with an inner tube (messy to say the least). I only got driven off the road once, in the Highlands by a very clean and shiny burgundy Landrover, and as I was cleated in and trying not to fall off I did not get the number plate.

I met various members of the Association on the way, from Fiona Bristow in Cornwall through to Kate Bell at John O'Groats – thank you all so much for being there for me. It still feels surreal that I cycled the length of Britain on a bicycle – but it just goes to show all things are possible. Once a Lioness always a Lioness.



Meanwhile, over in Ypres, Radders took to the road...

Over Armed Forces weekend, I set off with 32 other cyclists, raising funds for Royal British Veterans Enterprises (formerly RBLI). What a couple of days! From the RBVE village in Maidstone to the Menin Gate, Ypres 150 miles away, we cycled through torrential storms and extreme heat.

This was my second year at this event with the honour of proudly wearing our WRAC cap badge, laying a wreath at the Last Post Ceremony. This year was even more special as I was honoured to share the experience with a fellow Medic Vicky McLaren. Vicky joined the RAMC in 2000 and served for 19 years including on patrol with front line units in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Due to ill health she was discharged and found herself with no home, no job and traumas to overcome. The RBVE gave her hope by giving her a home and a place to belong. Her story is a stark reminder of how the roles of women in the military have changed since the days of the formation of the ATS and the WRAC.

As a team we have now raised £102,000 towards providing accommodation for veterans in need and their families, and practical support to help people move into work, training or volunteering. It's wonderful to know that charities are massively supportive of female veterans, alongside the WRAC Association, and with all of the amazing work that goes on at headquarters, we are at last being acknowledged. Incredible eh?!



... and back in Blighty, Wendy Jones reports from Kent

British Cycling arranges free routes for groups of female-only cyclists, so a group of Invicta Branch ladies joined a 35 mile cycling adventure in June. We met in Tankerton near Whitstable, and rode to The Veterans Association Cafe in Birchington for a bite to eat. Alongside Karen "Radders" Radford, Kate Smith, Sally Howson and other local cyclists we split into two groups, whilst one of our number took advantage of a local Park Run, and cycled her own way to Tankerton post run.

Following our pre-planned route, we cycled along quiet country lanes and through the quaint villages of Chestfield, Herne, Chislet, Grove Ferry, Preston, Monkton and Acol. Unfortunately Kate's tyre blew out 5 miles from Birchington. We changed the inner tube and got the wheel back on, but the nasty slit in the tyre wall needed more attention. Off came the wheel again, inner tube out and tyre off completely, to place a patch on the inside. However, after a very short distance there was another blow out on the same tyre. Nowhere near a town, I made a call to my brother, who kindly collected Kate and her bike, and drove her to the cafe. By the time the rest of us arrived, our Park Runner had not only completed the run but also cycled her solo route and greeted us.

The Veterans Association Cafe was lovely; a pleasant garden space selling coffee, tea, soft drinks, bacon or sausage sandwiches and a variety of cakes. From the cafe, we cycled into a headwind, along the sea front back to Tankerton. All in all a fabulous cycling adventure.



Would you like to get on your bike?

Last year, a dozen WRAC veterans took part in the 50km and 100km routes of the Women v Cancer "Ride the Night" in London. The event will be returning on 8-9 May 2027... as they say 'Never say Never'

Tea for Twenty

We were delighted to be able to offer 20 of our members, and their guests, an invitation to attend the Garden Party at Buckingham Palace hosted by HRH Princess Anne on Tuesday 19th May. It was a wonderful occasion and a very memorable day, with our members enjoying catching up, making new friends and plenty of celebrity spotting, and Marjorie Booker BEM was presented to The Princess Royal.



©Jeff Gilbert



If you would like to be considered for a place when we receive invitations to similar events, please email events@wraca.org.uk.

Mess-y Dress

In late 2024, the Soldiers of Shropshire Museum was thrilled to acquire a WRAC officers' mess dress and purse, and with the dress now on display, Robert MacKinnon and Richard Gough share the story behind the acquisition, conservation, and display of Major Joan Crooke's rather messy 1960's WRAC mess dress.

We had previously acquired an archive relating to Joan, and so ran online appeals to learn more about her. We discovered that Joan had begun her army service in the Second World War. By her retirement in 1972 she had supported and led assignments all over the UK, mainly focused on education and training.

In response to one of our appeals, a distant relative of Joan's got in touch, offering additional information and personal items. These items included the dress and purse, which we initially knew only as 'her uniform' until unboxed alongside an expectant and grinning donor! On opening the box and seeing the dress and a framed photograph of Joan wearing it, bafflement and amazement were the order of the day - this was unlike any historic military uniform we had encountered before.

Joan's dress is an early example of the mess uniform for officers, introduced in 1962 and designed by Owen Hyde-Clark, of the London fashion house Worth. The design reflects particular ideals of femininity expected of WRAC officers by army authorities. However, a foodstuff, very likely soup, was ingrained in the rayon fabric leaving behind reddish-orange stains.

Thanks to an Association of Independent Museums project grant, both the dress and purse were able to undergo conservation work in 2025, before being displayed at the museum. The dress presented two conservation issues that our chosen textile conservator, Michelle Harper, addressed:

Foodstuff stains – While part of the object's history, there was concern that the stains on the dress would distract museum viewers from the dress's overall presentation. Michelle could not reduce or remove the marks, due to the nature and age of the rayon fabric. As an alternative, cream nylon nets were placed over the stains to visually soften them.

Sharp creasing – Where the dress had been flattened for storage, sharp creases had developed along the sides and back of the rayon fabric. Through humidification treatment, Michelle was able to remove the creasing and restore the dress' rounded shape.

The purse was more straightforward to conserve, although its lining, beads, and threads were loose and required stabilisation.

Joan's dress, along with her purse and its contents, have been given a prominent position along the visitor route. A dark green fabric backdrop was selected to help the dress stand out, while also reflecting the colour associated with the Women's Royal Army Corps.

In interpreting the dress in the context of its conservation, we have drawn attention to the still-visible stains. By highlighting these imperfections and listening to visitor responses, it has become clear that they help to humanise the dress, making it more relatable. Even a haute couture officer's mess dress can be disrupted by something as ordinary as spilling tomato soup!

The museum team wishes to express its sincere thanks to AIM, the Pilgrim Trust, the Julia Rausing Trust, and Michelle Harper for enabling this project to come to fruition.



Remembering the Iraq war 15 years on

National Memorial Arboretum Friday 22 May 2026

Operation TELIC ended officially on 22 May 2011, and exactly 15 years to the day, WRAC Association Vice President Col Amanda Hassell attended a ceremony to honour the extraordinary contribution of the armed forces community during the Iraq war. Lincolnshire Wolds and Coast branch organiser Betty Gash was also in the audience at the National Memorial Arboretum and shares her feelings about the day and the role of families, after Col Amanda reflects on her time serving in Iraq.

In the decade and a half since the end of Op TELIC, much has been written about the conflict, the motivations behind the invasion of Iraq, the work to stabilise the country and the war's legacy. In all of this, what is not in dispute is the professionalism and dedication of the British Armed Forces. After the invasion, coalition forces began stabilisation operations, but a growing insurgency spread violence that would claim tens of thousands of lives. Military and civilian coalition personnel, and the Iraqis working with them, were targets, conducting operations whilst facing IEDs, snipers, mortars and rocket attacks on patrols and bases. Amid this, British forces and partners provided essential humanitarian aid, our troops laid electrical cables, repaired water mains and rebuilt schools. Duty in Iraq came at a high cost as 179 British Armed Forces personnel lost their lives. Thousands more were wounded, many with life changing physical injuries. Others experience emotional or mental ill-health as a result of their service.

During the ceremony the Padre shared his reflections of Iraq and Basrah, the jargon we used and the once familiar place names. When I got home, I dug out the memorabilia I had hidden away in a box in 2007. I'd kept a diary at the time which I'd not looked at for nearly 20 years and have extracted a few excerpts below which may strike a chord with those of you who served there:

In Al Udeid waiting for our C130 Herc to fly into Basra, visited American canteen as a treat to pass the time - burgers, donuts, Ben & Jerry ice cream. A full flight, soldiers sat on the floor and filling every space. It's always warm and noisy, the taxi is so long it's hard to know when you've actually taken off or are we driving all the way to Iraq! We all try to sleep but it's not exactly comfy. With 20 minutes left, we don CBA, and helmets. Lights go out as we go tactical into Basra. It is a bit surreal as there are no windows and you are disorientated from the real world but alerted as the pilot fires some flares.



Found my Corimec (tin can shed that we sleep in). Put on noisy air con only to wake up at 3am freezing. RSM later briefed us on the restricted use of air con (or electricity will go down), ship and shower routine (Navy method).



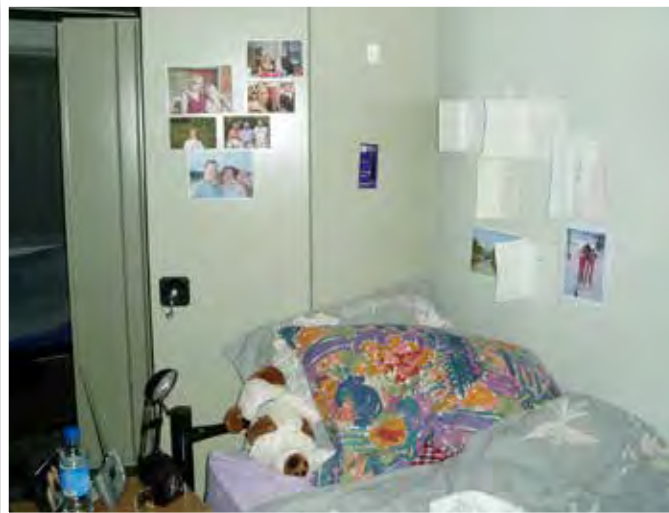
Was about to go to the gym for the first time but interrupted as I was getting changed by the mortar alarm. Last night a mortar narrowly missed the gym in another barracks where a WO2 was on the running machine - he got quite a fright! We had two attacks last night, 1030 then at 1am - no casualties.

CSE show tomorrow with Katherine Jenkins, Gary Rhodes and Joe Pasquale. I hope the force protection works as IDF has been heavy over the weekend in the COB after arrests in a big op last Friday. We are very vulnerable now with so many people in a small area. A rocket hit outside of Waterloo camp yesterday which gave everyone a fright. I hope it all goes well as 500 soldiers at a time are watching the show.



PM Tony Blair visited yesterday, he addressed everyone outside and again in the Airport entrance hall, all the staff crowded in to listen. He was only here for a very short time - couldn't go into the city as it was too dangerous. Dress category raised today as they've arrested someone, so expecting some retaliation.

It's 0130 on Christmas morning. We've had a carol service, then midnight mass by candlelight - a great turn out in the HQ foyer with BBC News 24 filming. Glühwein served which was a lovely treat. It's a strange backdrop because they are planning a very big op for tonight and there is a high likelihood of casualties on Christmas Day.



Just had Christmas dinner, all a bit rushed as several sittings, I sat with Kate Silverton from BBC Breakfast - lads all wanted pictures, she obliged, seems very down to earth. I went into work, lots of silly presents and food being passed around but then a big bang - a rocket landed 200 metres from HQ so we all crawled under desks and tables, a balloon went 'pop' and we all jumped again. All clear sounded an hour later, back to work!

The event was fabulous - organisation, attendance, and the format which included speakers, singers, and some veterans' individual experiences shown on a big screen. The lunch was delicious too!

What I especially liked about this event is there was a big focus on mentioning the support from families and friends back home for those on the Op tour. My husband Mick was at home looking after our two children aged 11 and 2 whilst I was on Op Telic 2 July-December 2003. I worked at Basrah Airport in main HQ with Engineer Branch. I was pleased Mick was with me at the NMA to be part of a special event which he enjoyed. It also brought it home to me how hard it must have been for him as a house-husband, his priorities with the children and thoughts of me in Iraq.



Let's all meet below Arthur's Seat

This year's WRAC Association Summer Event was held in the beautiful city of Edinburgh, and we could not have picked a better location for Edinburgh resident and new Chair of Membership Council Janette Deans to welcome members at her inaugural gathering.

The location was stunning as the Virgin Hotel is situated within the historic India Buildings on Victoria Street in the Old Town which is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Designed by architect David Cousins in 1864 in the Scots Baronial style, it was reopened in 2022 following more than a year of archaeological excavation which uncovered over 1,000 years of history including parts of the original city walls, garden plots, wells, and a ceramic Virgin and Child figurine as well as the remains of 10th century medieval buildings which predate Edinburgh Castle. Many of the historical features are preserved, including an original domed Oculus rotunda and a 19th-century church repurposed as the Greyfriars Hall event space. And it was into this stunning hall that we stepped for our afternoon tea.

Eighty members had signed up to attend for the tea, unaware of the few surprises that lay in store. Firstly, at every place setting Janette had left a gift of WRAC Association branded tablet - a Scottish favourite. The amount of time and love poured into these wonderful gifts only outdone by the volume of sugar! Next a quiz, again devised by Janette to get brains working and tables conferring. This was particularly appreciated by the newcomers in the room who were immediately able to chat with those on their table and share in the challenge. Congratulations to Table 4 who won the chocolates and earned the applause, thanks in no small part to the collective brains of Moira Thom and Sylvia Connachan.



The big surprise of the day came when Vice President Amanda Hassell joined Janette on the microphone as they announced that the WRAC Association now has a second National Standard. Repurposed from the old Weymouth and Portland Branch Standard, the new addition will be stored in Ayrshire and paraded by Arlene Reid who is delighted to have become a National Standard Bearer.

Since 1864 the building has accommodated many functions including serving as the the British Linen Bank, the Scottish Chamber of Agriculture, and housing the Geological Survey of Scotland and the city's registry office, but the day the WRAC Association marched through their doors and brought together more female veterans in cake and comradeship we added something special to their history and our own.





(That's WRAC in maritime alphabet flags)

On an adventure of a lifetime around the British coast, Jean Reeve bonded with her fellow sailors and helped raise awareness of wounded, injured and sick Armed Forces veterans.



For three weeks in March, I joined 80 other veterans to crew two, traditionally rigged, tall ships, carrying the Invictus Birmingham Flag on a 2000 mile journey around Britain. Organised by the charity Turn to Starboard the journey was split into five legs, with crews made up of veterans aged 27 and upwards. Each vessel carried ten or more strangers cramped in and expected to pull together as a team. We did better; we became a family.

I joined leg two in Chatham with fellow WRAC Clare Gibson, Gwen Gooder and Sue Johnson, as well as WRNS Jan Riddell. A shore crew supported us, led by Sarah Marshall (WRAC). The first stop was Ipswich, however, when we arrived the lock gates refused to open, so we headed north again. This made our journey over forty hours of sailing - a baptism of fire for novice sailors. We sailed through the night wet and cold, swaying back and forth as the sails cracked, the wires whistled, and the howling wind plastered icy, salty sea into our faces. After the night of white knuckles and gritted teeth, fighting the tiller or wheel, we fell into our beds shivering until sleep swallowed us. Groaning as one, we woke for the next shift to damp clothes and dripping walls. Late the next day we docked in Great Yarmouth. Locals gathered and cheered, and we invited fellow veterans aboard to cheer us on.

The next stop was Hull where hundreds appeared, queuing along the quayside walks to the strains of bagpipes. We then turned towards Newcastle and another storm hit us. We rocked and rolled; water flooded in through the gunwales, soaking our feet. Hailstones shattered like glass on the deck and forced themselves down our necks as our frozen fingers hung onto any solid surface. The wind danced and swung, playing with our craft, yet our surefooted captain appeared juggling cups of hot drinks! At the end of our watch we collapsed into our beds, too exhausted and cold to fully undress or worry about the turbulent motion.



All was not bad; we spent many nights gliding blissfully over gentle swells. The sails, ghostly white, reflecting the light of the myriad of stars overhead. Dotted with satellites, the occasional comet flashing past, the Milky Way stretched beyond the horizon. During the days, water fights erupted as we hosed and swept the decks, then polished brass to the off key songs. Jokes, teasing, and laughter kept us going.

The crowded estuary of the Tyne was intimidating but, undaunted, we reached the Millenium Bridge. Again, crowds flocked to watch our arrival and cheered as we docked, and we taught visiting sea, army and air cadets rope handling skills. Refreshed, we sailed towards Edinburgh. The weather was kind, and in the sheltered waters of the Forth estuary we dropped anchor and relaxed after our duties. The next morning we entered the locks of Leith Harbour and berthed next to the HMS Britannia as members of the local Navy and Army Reserve, and crew from Britannia welcomed us. In this shared experience, many who had never spoken about their troubles allowed themselves to recount their stories to others who had experienced similar things. Several had been told they would achieve nothing following their injuries. Yet here, they discovered they could do this, and straightening their shoulders many reset their goals. Now they have a future where before there was a void.



13 - Unlucky for some, plucky for one

*Marg Davies has been on another adventure - her 13th to be precise!
This time she's walked 100 miles around Rutland and shares her escapades.*



I was unprepared mentally for this year's walk and struggled to kick-start my usual motivation. In the end my toddle around Rutland, England's smallest county (albeit ceremonial), was one of the nicest I have done. I chose it because the walks were contained in a small geographical area, one that I'd never been to before and knew nothing about.

I'd hoped for a forgiving walk for my aging knees and only had one really punishing day, when Belinda Matthewman was walking with me. Sorry Belinda but your knees are well over 10 years younger than mine! I had also hoped for better weather than the last two years, and not a drop of rain fell - my lily-white legs that had frightened the natives at the start had browned considerably by the end.

It was lovely to walk accompanied for two days, the first was with friends I'd met through the WRAC Association: Belinda Matthewman, Lesley Louth, her partner Gill and spaniel Margo (also sometimes known as Margie). We had a wonderful undulating walk from Empingham back to our hotel in Morcott.

The highlights were the abundance of kites riding the thermals, the sight and smell of rapeseed, a beautiful lunchtime stop by the river Welland; the marvel of honey-coloured strata laid bare by the ravages of quarrying and the welcome sight of Denise by the hotel at the end of that walk. I don't know who reacted quicker to the command "Margie! Sit" me or Margo the dog!



The following day Belinda and I had an equally glorious walk but much more strenuous: less undulating, more roller-coaster! On day 4 I was back to solo walking - a mostly downhill "skip" from the northern boundary back to the cottage we'd rented in Oakham. Day 5 turned into a bit of a slog, being re-routed round a busy quarry and having to 'cross' the A1 twice.

My final three days were spent close to my preferred element: water, namely Rutland Water. The drowning of the twin valleys of the River Gwash involved the destruction of two villages and the construction of a dam between 1971 and 1975. It's a beautiful place with so much to offer walkers, cyclists, wildlife enthusiasts, and just those who like to sit and watch the world go by. The long trek around the perimeter of the reservoir offered fabulous vistas, bluebell carpeted woods, lambs, wildfowl, an impressive dam, converted estate mansions turned into swanky hotels, the half-sunken ex-chapel jutting out into the lake, wildlife nature reserves and the quaint, picturesque villages.

On the penultimate day around Hambleton peninsula, where the two arms of the Gwash joined, I was lucky enough to hear and then finally see an osprey. My final day, surprisingly, turned out to be the best final day's walk I have ever had. I wanted to spend a bit of time in the Nature Reserve at Egleton and I managed to visit nearly every one of the 16 hides and, in so doing, clocked up over 11 miles of walking without even noticing, so that made just over 100 miles in total.

Once again my supporters amaze me with their generosity. Thank you all so much for donating to the WRAC Association and the VC Gallery. You can read more about my walk at: margdaviesswalks.blogspot.co.uk



Welcomed Home!

After more than a decade away, the WRAC Association has returned to Worthy Down Camp.

The Association moved into Worthy Down in April 1995, having been at 8 Map Depot, Guildford since shortly after the disbandment of the Corps. We remained in Block 10 of the AGC Centre in Worthy Down until October 2014 when the redevelopment of the camp (Project Wellesley) meant that we were required to leave, so we moved into rented office space at Basepoint, Winchester. This began at charitable rates, however when the building was sold to commercial property holdings the costs began to climb year on year, using valuable funds on housing our staff, money we would rather use supporting our veteran community.

In 2023 we began the process of negotiating a return behind the wire with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation within MOD. Meetings with Brig Nick Doyle, Head Arms and Services were extremely positive and showed a real understanding of the value of supporting our veteran community by the modern Army. In 2024 we moved into our temporary home when we were generously hosted by the Army Training Regiment at Sir John Moore Barracks as they wound down to closure this autumn. We are delighted to now be hosted at Worthy Down and particularly grateful for the warm welcome which has been extended by the AG Corps Col Stu Allen. Thank you Worthy Down - It really feels good to be back home.



Our new postal address is:

WRAC Association, Worthy Down Camp, Worthy Down, Winchester, Hampshire, SO21 2RG

Our offices are not open to visitors without prior arrangement, and we do not have a physical shop. If you need to visit the Association, please enquire in advance in writing or by calling 0300 400 1992.

Green Chamber Maids

On 20th April 2026, Association trustee Alex Fawbert arranged for a group of 12 women veterans to visit the Houses of Parliament at the invitation of Louise Sandher- Jones MP, the now Minister for The Armed Forces. Alex tells us about their day.

Our group was made up of WRAC and WRAF women veterans of all eras of service who travelled down from the East Midlands. We were ably hosted by the Minister's staff team who took us on a tour of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and we were able to sit in the gallery and watch and listen to MPs debate.

The tour enabled us to see some of both the oldest and newest parts of the Houses of Parliament including the statue of Viscount Falkland, located in St. Stephen's Hall inside the Palace of Westminster to which suffragette Marjorie Hume chained and handcuffed herself on April 27 1909. We also saw one of the newest features, the new contemporary light sculpture called New Dawn, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the 1866 women's suffrage petition.

This was a wonderful event bringing military women together from all over the East Midlands creating new friendships for us all.



Brum Run



May took our 10k runners, pushers and walkers to very hilly Birmingham, as Diane Walsh reported after she got her puff back!

Birmingham was an uphill challenge for everyone, so to achieve this run was a personal best for all. We met some characters on the way, including drag queens who sang on the Karaoke Kiosk. The rhythmic drumming helped to keep us in pace and encouraged us all. The

whole atmosphere was buzzing and the supporters on the side of the route were lovely - we even had our own little cubs supporting and cheering. The weather was kind to us all, and was not as hot as we had experienced in the past years, which really helped.

The ladies who achieved new personal best times, starting with the fastest time are:

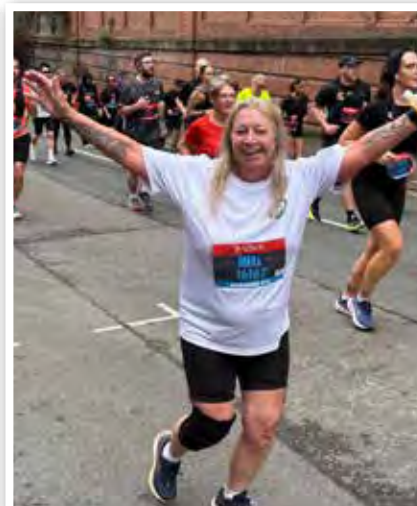
Rowena Naile F60 1st, 44.46,
Helen Davies F70 1st, 59.17,
Pauline Marr F70 3rd, 1.08.30,
Sandy Cawley F80 1st, 1.44.37.

I buddied up with Sandy Cawley and ended up with my own PB of 1.44.38.

We had a lot of local media interest this year, as they marvelled at the stamina of 85 year old Sandy Cawley! Thank you to Wendy Hooton and the lovely ladies who worked alongside her on the fundraising. Our other inspiration is Mo Bear, who has now become a full colonel having been carried across the finish line by Col Ali Brown OBE - I am sure Mo Deeley was looking down and cheering us on. Roll on Manchester 2027, when Mo Bear is set to become a brigadier; the highest rank an officer in the WRAC was able to reach.

The post run dinner was very tasty and, with the raffle, helped make it a great weekend.





*The next WRAC Lionesses 10k run will be in Manchester Sunday 23rd May 2027
Let's make it the best one yet and try to beat York 2019, when we had 142 runners!*



Wendy thanks...

Helen Davies, my recce buddy and 2 I/C; Pat "Budgie" Rosewell the Main Raffle Queen; Anne Patterson, Champagne Raffle Queen and I/C Supporters; Jennie Thomas for her 2 I/C T-shirt distribution; Jan TC Rees fundraising card; Rosie Garrison for being our photographer extraordinaire; and Nell Frary my long suffering, T-shirt labelling friend.

To date we have raised £6316.14 which includes £700 from the raffles. £2341.82 of this total went to Fighting With Pride.

Triple Trouble

In May the AGC hosted their annual Triple Crown event which for the first time welcomed veterans from antecedent corps to come and support the teams. It was a great opportunity for WRAC Association members to revisit Worthy Down and have a fun day out.

Attending veterans were treated to a trip down memory lane with a guided heritage tour around the camp and lots of time to explore the various stands and interactive exhibits. The AGC and RMP museums displayed items from their collections: artefacts, vehicles and equipment, including a vintage Rolls Royce which gave a few guests a ride around the barracks.

Whilst many veterans watched the Military Skills competition, others visited the AGC sports team stands, took part in cricket challenges and hockey games, and hopped on a table for a quick massage. They even had the opportunity to try and pull a Land Rover as part of the Army Strongman & Strongwoman challenge!

Following a delicious curry lunch, our CEO Paula Rogers signed a Bond of Friendship agreement with AG Corps Colonel Stu Allen. The Bond acknowledges the shared goals, common values and interests which exist between the two Associations and recognises a relationship which is underpinned by mutual respect, cooperation and a commitment to support one another. Our opposite number at the RAPC and RAEC Associations also signed a Bond, bringing us all closer together in our shared goals.

It was a wonderful day out and a really lovely opportunity to strengthen our bonds with the AGC and serving community.



From Richmond Hill to Chelsea Hospital

In 1992, Annette Wright attended the Royal Hospital for the Tricentenary Anniversary of the arrival of the first in-pensioners, marked during the Founder's Day Celebration. This summer she returned as part of a group of WRAC veterans invited to attend the Governor's Review. Annette shares her memories of her first visit and most recent experience.

In 1992 His Majesty King Charles III, then HRH Prince of Wales, inspected the parade accompanied by Princess Diana. It was a momentous day, and I have kept the programme ever since. At the time, my role as a young Captain with 12 MOD Platoon was to escort dignitaries to their seats. I remember the deep respect shown by those on parade for our future King, who recognised every campaign medal and spoke with such ease to those wearing them. Meanwhile Princess Diana delighted the veterans in the ward by warmly sitting alongside those unable to join the parade. Faces lit up as she asked how they were.



1992 photos supplied courtesy of Royal Hospital Chelsea

Thirty-four years later, I could see that same spirit of compassion and care continuing; the officers on parade were clearly attentive to how the soldiers were coping on what was a hideously wet summer day. It was also wonderful to see female in-pensioners on parade: Mara Andrews had served at Bletchley Park, while Mary Johnston had served in the ATS during the 1940s.

The Governor's Review precedes Founder's Day, and the Reviewing Officer was General Sir Adrian Bradshaw KCB OBE DL, accompanied by Lady Bradshaw. The fanfare was performed by trumpeters from the Band of the Irish Guards, who had also played at the Tricentenary, and the music from the Welsh Guards was fantastic. It is always deeply moving for me to see the pride these veterans carry as they march past.

Immediately after the parade, we gathered as a group and were shown to the bar, where we enjoyed a curry. I had missed both the food and the conversation. One of the female in-pensioners spoke about how life-changing it had been to become part of the community as it had lifted a great weight from her shoulders not to have to worry about utilities or loneliness. I twisted her arm to have a half pint of Guinness, and it was a pleasure to meet members of the Association and the female in-pensioners.



OP GRANBY – 35 years on



In March we marked 35 years since the end of the first Gulf War and invited our members to share their memories with us. In the first of a two-part series we publish several of these as Col Ali Brown OBE begins by recalling her part in Op Granby.

"Do you consent to having vaccinations prior to deployment?" This is the one event that really sticks in my mind about those hectic days before 1st (UK) Armoured Division left for Al Jubail in Saudi Arabia. In just one year, the Division had gone from being part of HQ 1 (BR) Corps facing the threat of the Warsaw Pact, to being warned to move as part of the Coalition Force authorised by UN Resolution 678 as a reaction against the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi forces. I remember at the time the feeling of huge excitement that we were going to be involved and that I was given the role of Artillery Logistics Watchkeeper.

There was so much to do and the weeks blurred as the activity levels increased. Training prior to deployment was intensive with endless days of NBC training, days on the ranges, signals training, basic language lessons and a physical training programme that meant less sleep than I had been used to. Desert kit was issued and vehicles repaired and re-painted in desert cam. One of the last things to complete was lining up to receive vaccinations of bubonic plague and anthrax; thought to be the highest threat once we were in Iraq and Kuwait.



Lynne Saunders

"I deployed from Paderborn Germany with 52 Ordnance Coy in September 1990 for about 9 months. Two females in total, we were the last of the WRAC to be involved in the war. Once we loaded in Saudi Arabia and were put on buses, in a convoy, to our grid reference. I remember being told by an Officer that we may be shot at - it was then when it really hit that we were going to a war zone.

We arrived at a USA CAMP and stayed there until our equipment arrived. It was heaven staying with the USA. They had nicer stuff and food than we did. We then took a two day convoy to our grid ref where we had to make a camp that was to be our home for the next 8 months. JCB trucks pushed sand walls up with sangers on each corner for stag duties. We had to set up and make our own girls toilet: digging a deep hole with a pickaxe. We also dug an air raid shelter with the same pickaxe, in often 42 degree heat.

About 5km from the frontline, we were to be the main supply and ammunition depot to the frontline. We had the job of taking 155 shells out of the pods and putting live fuses in them, then arming the tanks that came to us on their way to the frontline.

War started in Jan 1991. In the early hours, there were loud sounds of tins smashing together outside our tents. The time had come to practice our air raid drills, time and time again. On with the NBC suits gas mask; hold on to the girl in front; no lights allowed; walk out of the tent, all 12 of us; turn right; walk a little and then down under the air raid shelter. The bangs would be so loud the ground was almost shaking. The real fear of a bomb dropping on us. I remember thinking "Oh my God! I ain't ever going to see my family again". I had to go to that shelter so many times; in the end I didn't care if I blew up as I was so tired. When the war was done, we were all ok, and got to go home and get our medals."

With all the posts in the HQ filled by people from across Germany, I realised that I was to be one of the only women deploying in the HQ and to do so, I had to get the permission of Comd WRAC BAOR. Sadly, this was not forthcoming (at this time WRAC could not deploy). Very luckily, the Brigadier I worked for persuaded Comd WRAC that he had a solid role for me and so permission was given. Hence, I found myself, one very early morning in late November at Hannover Airport on my way to Al Jubail with mixed levels of excitement and nervousness. Also mixed in with this was sadness as my father had died on 16th November and so putting my mother in the position of having her daughter going into danger rested heavily with me. The fact that we had no return date was a very new feeling for me and one that sat very uncomfortably.

Some 20 hours later I entered another world with all my possessions carried on my back and a pistol at my waist. Landing at Al Jubail, the first thing to hit me was the heat and the second thing was the vastness of the warehouse we were all to sleep in. Rows and rows of bunk beds had been placed in the space, enough for 250 people and right in the middle were 4 bunk beds with a partition around. That was for the women. The noise and the heat (no air conditioning) was intense along with the queue in the morning for the two toilets and the four showers. We were to stay in this warehouse for three weeks as the preparations were completed for us to make the move through into Iraq and on to Kuwait. We set up the HQ Artillery offices, and by day liaised with the Artillery Regiments as they came into Theatre and worked out their ammunition allocations and where the shells needed to be dumped in the advance. Briefings were every two hours, day and night with the various commanders working their staffs hard to be ready by the date given for the start of the ground attack, which was 24th February 1991. All I really remember is the tiredness and the constant flow of information due to the intelligence picture constantly evolving. I contacted our American allies and, for the first time, met women from the US Marine Corps – the American forces had disbanded their single sex Armed Forces some years before. At this point in the deployment, my role was to consolidate all the ammunition requirements and plot where the ammunition needed to be for the ground war.

Christmas came and went as did Santa Claus on a camel and cabin fever was starting to set in. With the cramped living conditions, I know that I was looking forward to getting into the desert and beginning the journey to the Line of Departure for the advance to Kuwait. At last, the day arrived and I boarded a packed chinook for the airlift into the desert.



Sharon O'Connor

"Newly married, I joined 3RRF and found myself in the Gulf as the only woman in an infantry battalion on Op Granby – years before women were fully integrated. It was a mix of fear, anticipation, and occasional excitement at being part of something significant. Despite standing out, I was accepted fully and treated as one of the boys. It was a privilege to have served with them and under the command of Lt Col Andrew Larpent.

Based at A2 Echelon, not all was serious - like the MK4 toilet, complete with modesty screen, seat and toilet paper. Then, the night of the storm, blowing away my tent, leaving me drenched in the dark, before finding OC HQ and his driver holding theirs down. Later, back at my newly dug in by 9, I was handed my bra, found heading towards the mess tent!

Looking back, it was a defining time—challenging, surreal, and full of camaraderie; that remains to this day, but marked by sadness, 3RRF having lost eleven men to a blue-on-blue."





Gillian Frazer

"I deployed in October 1990 with the task of being Coy Clk of Admin Coy. At my pre-deployment training in Bielefeld, I discovered I was to be the only female in the company and unfortunately the OC was of the opinion that females didn't belong in the Army. He certainly didn't appear to relish the thought of one deploying to the Gulf with him and made his attitude very clear to me. At Sennelager for further training I was again the only female and forced to live away from the rest of the HQ staff - a strange decision considering I would have no option but to live with them once deployed.

On 16th October, I deployed to Al Jubail, known as Baldrick Lines. I was accommodated in a 9x9 in the Officer's section of the camp along with 5 other WRAC who arrived a few days later. Accommodation was basic and some of their male counterparts found it embarrassing to see females doing their washing alongside them, and put in a complaint to Camp QM - as a result we were instructed to do our washing behind wooden screens. The presence of females caused a stir, not only amongst our fellow soldiers, but also the local population. The Coy RQMS did try to modify our uniforms, but their suggestions did not prove ideal.

After deployment, it became apparent that the OC's attitude towards WRAC was rapidly reaching the stage where it was becoming impossible for me to work effectively in the post I was filling. Fortunately for all concerned it was decided that I would be better employed elsewhere and I was moved to the main HQ building where I worked with the remainder of the Headquarter Clerks. My fellow Clerks didn't have any problem working with me and we soon built up a good working relationship. This naturally made life more bearable and I actually began to enjoy my tour of duty.

In early December the HQ moved to Old Port Barracks, with larger rooms, running water and flushing toilets. However, once again a distinction was made between the male and female soldiers. As we female soldiers were only 6 in number it would have meant us sharing an accommodation block and ablutions with the men. Two senior officers objected to this fact, insisting that separate facilities be constructed for the females to use. We were therefore left to live in Baldrick Lines and commute to work. After hearing about our predicament the Brigadier intervened and we were given permission to move into the Old Port Barracks accommodation. The separate facilities never materialised, but there were never any problems between us and the senior ranks who lived in the same block.

Despite being on the receiving end of both positive and negative attitudes towards the deployment of WRAC personnel, I thoroughly enjoyed my tour."



You can read the second part of Ali's story in the next edition of the Lioness, and if you served in Op Granby and would like to send us your story, please email editor@wraca.org.uk

In their own words - Beret and Cap Badge Recipients

After the moving speech of General Dame Sharon Nesmith, Vice Chief of Defence Staff at our AGM, five veterans and one serving woman received their presentations, bringing to forty the total number of women to whom we have publicly apologised and welcomed back to the corps. Five of those coming forward had served in the WRAC and one, Brig Clare Phillips CBE received her Etherton pin ahead of her retirement from the British Army, and they shared their feelings about the day.

Julie Holvey-Williams

When I heard that General Sharon was going to be presenting my beret back to me, I thought it gave the occasion real gravitas. Listening to the General speak with such emotion had such an impact on me, her words resonated and meant so much to me - she spoke with such authenticity. The WRAC Association gave the occasion such respect and made me feel that I really was being welcomed back.

Brig Clare Phillips CBE

Receiving my Etherton pin from General Sharon in the company of so many beret recipients and other fabulous WRAC Association members was an incredible honour. I feel incredibly privileged to have served both during and since the ban was lifted, and to have seen such monumental positive change in our Armed Forces. What a fabulous day for my last formal 'parade' of my Regular service! Thank you.

Dina Williams

I would like to thank you for all your efforts in organising the presentation on 21st March. It was an honour to attend and to meet you all and General Dame Sharon Nesmith on the day. It was a great experience, thank you for taking care of those arrangements.

Felicity Rabbitte

In an atmosphere alive with celebration and genuine connection, the event radiated support and unity. Diversity wasn't just visible; it was wholeheartedly embraced, making each attendee feel seen and valued. The sense of solidarity was palpable, transforming moments into meaningful memories. Being welcomed back into such an inclusive fold was truly moving—a testament to the power of shared experience.

Anne Patterson

What happened to me in the 70's has been firmly buried without words until very recently, so to be presented with Beret, Cap Badge and Lord Etherton Badge was an experience I never truly expected, especially from Dame General Sharon Nesmith. That moment on Saturday was incredible, her speech was amazing which really touched me. It was respectful, emotional, meaningful and sincere, everything that has helped on that journey to restore dignity and help shake off my buried shame of guilt.



The last issue of the Lioness magazine featured our ceremony at the NMA, however regrettably the words written by Joanna Watkins were omitted in error. We apologise for this and are pleased to print Joanna's words here.

I was still a child, only just 18, when I joined up. I had dreams of working my way up in the Army and making it my lifelong career. With no inkling of my sexuality, I had no reason to fear as I knew I was up to the job. Discovering your true self should be elating but, because of the ban, it was tinged with apprehension. When the time came to choose between love and my career, with no chance of having both, I chose love and a life free from hiding. Receiving my beret, surrounded by acceptance and with real accountability from the Army was liberating and brought the two parts of my life together.



Cricket's the ticket

With the competition standing at one win apiece from the previous two annual meetings, this year's cricket match between Chatsworth Ladies and the WRAC Lionesses was always going to be keenly contested, as our Lionesses team captain Elaine Smith reports.



As well as celebrating Armed Forces weekend, the Chatsworth Ladies are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year, so it was a double celebration. The Lionesses came together on a very hot Friday evening at the Chatsworth Cricket Club for a practice session and afterwards a catch up and a few refreshments at the campsite.

On Saturday morning players and supporters gathered bright and early. We were blessed with good weather, albeit very hot, for a third year running. Chatsworth House offered the most idyllic, quintessentially English backdrop. The scene was set for a perfect day's cricket.

The Chatsworth Ladies won the toss and decided to field first. The customary shot of port was offered to each batter before walking out to the tune of The Lass of Richmond Hill. We got off to a slow, but steady start with Andie Cole and Wendy Summerell and avoided losing any early wickets. Mary Woollard batted at no.3 and played some great shots before having to retire due to the heat. Thankfully she resumed her innings for the 30th over, once everyone else had batted. The pace picked up once Kym Lofthouse and Debbie Sutton came to the crease and the run rate started climbing. Both played brilliantly and retired on the pre-agreed maximum 25 runs. Maxine McQue and Phyl Mattinson continued the progress and together with Kaz Smith and Julie White pushed the scoreboard past 100. Jackie Walton, Lynn Doubtfire and I batted and took the team total to 145 off 30 overs - leaving us feeling we may be just 20-30 runs short of a competitive total.

Following a lunch interval, we commenced the second innings with the Lionesses taking to the field. The fielding was excellent with catches held and the bowling sublime - a definite improvement on last year! The standout bowlers were Julie White with 2-18, Phyl Mattinson with 2-24 and I managed to pick up 3-19. Chatsworth Ladies were all out for 91; a win for the Lionesses by 54 runs and only 20 of the 30 overs played.

Chatsworth were amazing hosts and we appreciate the hard work that goes into organising the event. At the prize giving, every player together with the umpires, scorer and lunch-preparers were presented with a commemorative mug. I was very proud to accept the winners trophy from the opposing captain on behalf of the Lionesses.

Thanks to everyone who came to support the team - it is a true spectacle to see you all enjoying your picnics in the sunshine. Special thanks to Sandy Saxton-Warne for providing water and to Wendy Hooton, Helen Meades-Davies, Mary Blake and Anne Patterson who raised £578 for the WRAC Association on the day in the raffle.

The Saturday evening is when friendly rivalries are put aside, and to celebrate their 25th Anniversary, Chatsworth Ladies invited some past players to the party. There was more cricket on Sunday with a round robin competition of softball. A special mention to Beryl Sidebotham, an original Lioness cricketer, now 79 years young, who joined the competition.

Thank you Chatsworth Ladies - enjoy the rest of your 25th Anniversary year!





Hobson's Voice

Our chaplain the Rev'd Trudy Hobson is currently deployed with her regiment, and sends us her thought on boots, bras and battle boxes.

Hello from sunny Europe! I recently found myself reflecting on a powerful verse: "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). It struck me deeply as I looked around during one of the services I led, there are surprisingly few women around. Honestly, in day-to-day life, it's easy not to notice, but here, women really are few and far between.

Curious, I did a bit of digging. The latest UK Armed Forces diversity stats from April 2025 show women making up 11.9% of total personnel—about 16,300 strong. The RAF leads with the highest female representation, while the Army has the lowest at 10.4%. Why so few women in the Army? I don't have a simple answer. In my experience serving as a chaplain, I've been fortunate never to have faced gender discrimination. Military life is tough for everyone, and for women, I imagine this is often complicated by lingering stereotypes and limited support.

But here's the good news: the Armed Forces are making real progress. We're seeing female-specific body armour, all roles now open to women, uniforms tailored for women's shapes, improved maternity provisions, financial help for professionally fitted sports bras, and even 'period boxes'—battle-ready kits for managing menstruation in the field, on ships, submarines, or austere environments. Practical, thoughtful, and frankly, long overdue!

So, here's to progress, to the future female leaders stepping up, and to an Armed Forces that truly reflects the strength and diversity of all its people. And if nothing else, at least we're finally getting the kit right!

With my prayers and blessings
Padre Trudy Hobson CF



Going the extra mile

February saw the Combat Stress Extra Mile Awards, held in London where Karen Cookson was recognised for her company's corporate fundraising efforts, and told us all about her night of much deserved recognition.

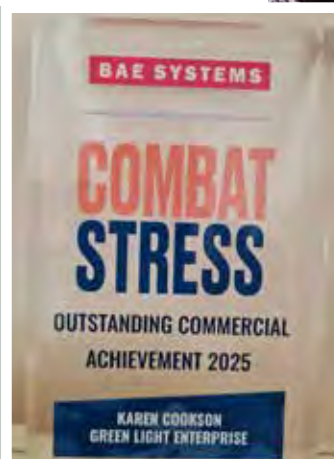
I have been running my own shoes and clothing recycling company, Green Light Enterprise, for over 16 years. During this time we have been a corporate fundraiser for Combat Stress, raising in excess of £94,000 for the charity.

The awards ceremony was a wonderful, memorable and proud experience; as I listened to the various stories of bravery, generosity and comradeship and watched each deserving individual or group move forward to accept their award. I was taken aback as I was also called from the crowd to accept the Outstanding Commercial Achievement Award!

The award was presented to me by Admiral Sir Philip Jones and it was such a huge pleasure to have met and spoken with him along with so many veterans, serving personnel and all of those supporting them, not to mention the super wonderful Combat Stress Team - I just love them to bits.

Phoebe Banham from Combat Stress told us –

"We were so proud to present Karen with the Outstanding Commercial Achievement Award for Green Light Enterprise's fundraising efforts over the last 15 years. Green Light's clothing banks have raised a staggering amount of money to support veterans with PTSD and their families. It has been an honour working with Karen, and we're thrilled that they have continued to support Combat Stress via their clothing banks".



**Huge Congratulations
Karen!**

**The Combat Stress
Helpline number is
open 24/7,
365 days a year for
veterans and their
families.
0800 138 1619**

Lionesses having a roaring good time

Here are some other exciting things our members have been up to in the last few months.

When Birmingham branch member Benita Davies moved house, she certainly did not expect to be embarking on a romantic journey in her new apartment complex! She has had plenty of encouragement from her fellow Brum members, as her relationship developed with Richard Horton and a few were invited to join in on the happiness when she said, "Oh go on then!" to the Registrar's question. The wedding was a joyous occasion and there was lots of laughter as Richard turned out to be a proper comic. Congratulations Benita and Richard.



When the opportunity came for Plymouth Armed Forces Breakfast Club members to have a coach holiday, four members of Plymouth WRAC Branch jumped at the chance. The itinerary included the National Memorial Arboretum, Warwick Castle, Leicester or The National Space Centre and Cadbury's World.

36 Army, Navy and RAF veterans and family set off, driven by Clinton who was also a veteran. During the journey we connected with Richard Hatch of BFBS radio and played a game of "ask the bus"! Richard asked "is a hotdog a sandwich?" and we answered "NO!" and we all sang a rowdy version of 'What shall we do with a drunken sailor?!'.

We had a wonderful time; I had not been to any of these places before and was thankful that someone else had organised it. The food at the hotel was very good and we laughed so much we cried. Hundreds of photos were taken. The organisational skills of Natasha Mason ex WREN are amazing and grateful thanks to her for getting this off the ground and making it fly.



Dorset branch member Diane Pratt made a big decision the day before her 65th birthday - at home and not feeling great she decided that she had to go on an adventure! She purchased a small rucksack, 11 pairs of paper knickers, (apparently you can wash them twice - the things you learn at 65, she told us!)

Diane travelled to Cherbourg, France and travelled around the Normandy region and onto Nantes by train - while Diane was exploring the city, she heard her name being called. Thinking it couldn't be for her as she knows no one there, she kept walking. She felt a tap on her back and turned around to see Karen - a WRAF veteran friend from Southampton! Such a happy coincidence!

Diane says her motto is keep having fun and look out for a crazy lady with a rollator!



Col Nan Robertson MBE with Cllr Roberto Rocca, Mayor of Bournemouth at a fundraiser for the Bournemouth foodbank.



The event included carers from the local nursing home performing dances from the Philippines in costumes from their homeland.



Serving at a Cost:

Marriage, Motherhood and Military Service

Military service has always demanded sacrifice. For generations of ATS and WRAC women, however, some of the greatest sacrifices were not made on operations or exercises, but in their personal lives. Long before women could realistically combine a military career with family life, they were expected to make a difficult choice, often finding themselves having to choose between career and family, when practices that would be unthinkable today were accepted as simply part of military life.

The Second World War transformed the role of women in Britain. Around 670,000 women served across the Armed Forces, while millions more kept essential industries, hospitals, farms and public services running. Women proved themselves in every conceivable role: operating anti-aircraft batteries, managing balloon barrages, running complex operations rooms, carrying out vital clerical and communications work, and, in some extraordinary cases, parachuting into occupied France to support the Resistance. Yet when peace returned, so too did familiar expectations. Britain was eager to ensure returning servicemen had employment, while women were encouraged to resume their "traditional" role within the home. During the war, women's contribution had been celebrated as essential. In peacetime, many were expected to step aside.

This thinking was reflected in a marriage bar, first introduced in parts of the Civil Service during the nineteenth century and gradually adopted across many professions. Although never applied universally, it required many women in professional occupations to resign once they married. Women in teaching, banking and science, the NHS, BBC and similar careers were particularly affected, while women working in factories or domestic service were generally exempt because their employment was viewed as an economic necessity rather than a career. Within the British Armed Forces however, there was no marriage bar written into a policy and women were never officially required to leave on marriage.

We know from our conversations, social media and from correspondence received that many WRAC did leave on marriage, or shortly thereafter, believing that this was required of them. Research shows that this was often due to misunderstandings around the rules, particularly one which allowed women to leave on marriage. Prior to 1975 women *could* leave on marriage. In other words, whilst there was no requirement to do so, it was permissible to end time in service before the agreed period/designated break-point. This entitlement was not afforded to men and was always meant to be voluntary, however some women have told us that they believed they were required to leave. Others have reported that issues accessing married quarters if they married a civilian, or being posted far from each other if they married a serving man also contributed to them leaving their chosen career.

For many serving women, however, marriage was only one hurdle. Pregnancy presented another, and often a more painful one. Until 1992, servicewomen who became pregnant were routinely discharged regardless of their experience, ability or wishes. For many, years spent building a military career ended with a single administrative decision. Although re-enlistment was technically possible after the birth of a child, there was no automatic right to return, and those who did rejoin often forfeited their previous rank, seniority and pay. Many members recall colleagues quietly leaving their units after announcing a pregnancy. At the time, few questioned the policy because it had always existed. It was simply accepted as one of the many rules that governed women's service. Anecdotally, some women recall rules being bent, blurred or quietly worked around, pregnancies managed discreetly and postings adjusted informally.

The introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 might have been expected to transform opportunities for servicewomen. Instead, the Armed Forces secured an exemption, arguing that the uncertain and demanding nature of military service justified different treatment. Yet countless women were already proving every day that they could shoulder responsibilities and operational commitments far beyond those publicly acknowledged. The exemption protected existing policy but also reflected wider social attitudes that continued to view women primarily through the lens of marriage and motherhood rather than professional capability.



A European Community Directive introduced in 1978 removed the Armed Forces' exemption from sex discrimination law. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence continued dismissing pregnant servicewomen, believing that its long-standing policy remained lawful. Although military service operated under its own regulations, it was still subject to civil employment law. Everything changed in 1990 when two Army nurses, Julie Lane and Leslie Leale, challenged their dismissal after becoming pregnant. Faced with legal proceedings, the Ministry of Defence accepted that its policy could no longer be defended. Maternity leave was introduced in August that year, and both women received compensation before their cases reached the High Court.

In theory, the change allowed around 5,700 women dismissed between 1978 and 1990 to pursue claims for lost careers and opportunities. In practice, far fewer did so. Many were unaware that they had legal grounds to claim, while others simply wanted to move on with their lives. Between 1,000 and 2,000 women are thought to have submitted claims, with only several hundred eventually reaching settlement. Initial compensation awards were modest, capped at £11,000 with average settlements of around £4,000 to £5,000. That changed when former military nurse Helen Marshall successfully challenged the cap before the European Court of Justice. The ruling removed the upper limit on compensation, allowing tribunals to assess each case on its individual merits. Some awards subsequently rose significantly, reflecting not only lost earnings but also interrupted careers, missed promotions and diminished pension rights. The window for claims closed in 1994.

Compensation itself became deeply controversial. Newspaper headlines such as "The £100 Million Babies" and "Jackpot for Pregnant Privates" portrayed successful claimants as opportunists rather than women whose careers had been unlawfully interrupted, and comparisons were drawn with payments made to the families of personnel killed or seriously injured in service. Among servicewomen themselves, feelings were often mixed. Some welcomed the opportunity to seek justice for careers they had unwillingly lost. Others felt uncomfortable claiming compensation because the rules had always been openly stated. For those who had made the difficult decision to terminate a pregnancy, or had sacrificed the opportunity to have any children, the issue could be particularly difficult, highlighting the impossible choices many military women of that generation had faced.

"In 1982, during my final year in service in the WRAC after serving 6 years I became pregnant, which, under the strict Army rules at the time, meant instant dismissal, loss of home, income, stability and the life I had built over 6 years. Faced with that reality, and with my discharge date only a few months away, I made the heartbreaking decision to end my pregnancy. I had an abortion, a decision made under pressure, fear, and the certainty that I would be cast out with nothing."

"By sharing my experience now, I want the WRAC to hear my story to finally include the truth of what these strict rules and regulations cost us." Linda Lambourne nee Collins

The publication of Lord Etherton's 2023 review into the treatment of LGBT veterans has prompted long-overdue recognition of these historic injustices within the Armed Forces, and at the same time given all those who served cause to reflect on the unfairness that has long underpinned women's serving careers. Many women who served in the WRAC were affected by the pre-2000 'gay-ban' including those who lost their careers, and ever since women began serving in uniform we have been negotiating barriers that limited not only how we served, but whether we could continue serving at all. The WRAC Association, has played an important role in helping restore berets and cap badges to veterans whose service had been overlooked, and to raise awareness of the December 12th 2026 deadline to apply for both financial and non-financial reparations. Several women whose careers ended through marriage and pregnancy, or who terminated a pregnancy have asked why the WRAC Association is not able to support these women in the same way.

The Women's Royal Army Corps Association, unlike many in our sector, is not a campaigning charity and has not been directly involved in any of the campaigns regarding historic terms of service. We continue to operate as a regimental association, providing camaraderie, offering assistance through our Benevolent Fund and signposting members for services we are not able to offer. We are proud to have a diverse membership and to support those of our members who have elements of their service careers which have had a lasting negative effect. We are rightly proud that the majority of women reflect on their career in the Armed Forces with satisfaction and pride, and carry the benefits of their experience to this day. Through our recently published Female Veterans Toolkit we have highlighted the difference in women's service and engaged with organisations to ensure that the disadvantages women faced in the British Armed Forces are recognised and taken into consideration alongside celebrating the amazing contributions of the ATS and WRAC.

The stories of women who left on marriage or pregnancy, and those who chose to forgo marriage and motherhood or to have a termination, are about far more than changing employment law. They are a reminder that generations of women gave loyal service despite policies and practices that asked them to choose between military careers and family life - choices our male colleagues were never expected to make. What they lost was not simply a salary, but years of professional development, financial independence, pension entitlement, identity and purpose, and for those who chose to keep their careers over family life, many have found themselves lonely and struggling for support in later years. Today's Armed Forces are very different, thanks in no small part to those women who quietly accepted extraordinary sacrifices and those who later challenged policies that had long been regarded as unchangeable. As recent efforts to recognise other historic injustices have shown, acknowledging the past is not about judging previous generations by modern standards. It is about ensuring that the experiences of those who served with dedication, professionalism and courage are remembered in full, and that their contribution to military history receives the recognition it has always deserved.

We are grateful to women's military history researcher Kathleen Sherit for her help in understanding the conditions of women's service. If you would like to find out more, her book *Women on the Front Line: British Servicewomen's Path to Combat* is available now.

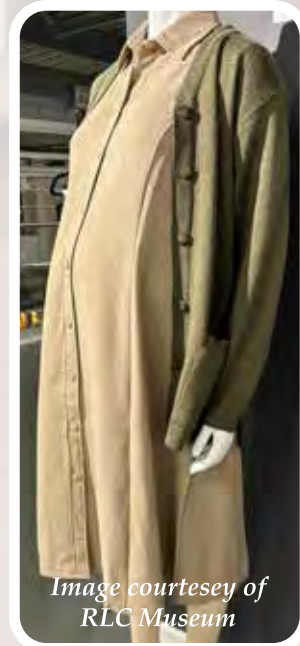


Image courtesy of
RLC Museum

ATS & WRAC Association Benevolent Fund



Sam King

Helping when it matters most

As Grants Officer for the WRAC Association, I have the privilege of seeing first-hand the difference that timely support can make to former servicewomen and their families. Whether helping someone maintain their independence, meeting the cost of an unexpected funeral, or replacing essential household items, our aim is to be there to offer a hand up when it is needed most.

Key Facts from the last 6 months (Jan 1 - Jun 30 2026)

70 applications were considered by grant committees

64 awards granted to beneficiaries

The total spend for this period totalled £74,494.19

Top Five Categories



**Mobility aids
including
scooters**
£14,176



**Household
goods e.g.
furniture**
£11,480



**Relocation
costs**
£7,187



**Housing
repairs and
adaptations**
£4,188



**Spent on
funerals**
£3,405

Debbie's story

'I served as a WRAC Provost from 1987 to 1999 in various locations, before joining the Prison Service, where I worked from 1999 until the present day.

Life has not been kind, especially since 2019. In February that year, my beloved West Highland Terrier and my partner died within four days of each other. Since then, I have been transient, and this year I was facing the threat of homelessness.

From April 2022 to July 2025, I was living in a very controlling and coercive situation with friends of more than 20 years. It was an awful experience, and my entire Army and Prison Service pension savings were gone.

Having finally secured retired living accommodation, the WRAC Association helped me with a voucher for a cooker, for which I am so grateful. I have also been supported by a local charity, who kindly provided all my furniture.

I cannot thank the WRAC Association enough. Without your help, I would not have a cooker to prepare my meals with. Thank you so very much for helping me in my time of need. I will be forever grateful.'



Benevolent Fund FAQs

• Who is eligible for help?

If you are a veteran of the ATS or WRAC, Regular or TA, with at least one day's paid service, then you are eligible for assistance. Support is means tested, and savings and household income will be taken into consideration before grants are awarded.

• How do you apply for help?

Both SSAFA and the Royal British Legion can help you get a case started. You will be assigned a caseworker who will work with you to understand your circumstances and put together your case, which will then be forwarded to us for consideration. The WRAC Association does not employ caseworkers, so be sure to head to one of these two first.



SSAFA: 0800 260 6767
ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline



The RBL: 0808 802 8080
britishlegion.org.uk

• What can the WRAC Association help with?

Our fund has helped with a wide range of one-off grants from fridges to furniture, stairlifts to scooters - if you're not sure please get in touch and ask us - we are always happy to chat.

• What can you not help with?

We do ask that statutory support is always explored first - are there grants available to you from the council? Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs), Funeral Expenses Payments and Boiler Upgrades may be something you are eligible for. If you're not sure how to find out, visit Turn 2 Us: turn2us.org.uk/get-support

• Can I get help quickly?

We recognise that there are times when support is required urgently - perhaps for food or energy - and waiting for a case isn't practical. Through our partnership with Lightning Reach, we can now offer rapid, short-term support to help meet an immediate need without the requirement for casework. Applications can be made online through the Lightning Reach portal: lightningreach.org/application-portal

Verification and Proof of Service

Before making any award, we need to see evidence of your service. If you no longer have your red book or any service documentation, SSAFA and the RBL can apply for verification of service on your behalf, as can we if applying through Lightning Reach. However, waiting times can vary and you may wish to apply for a Veterans ID Card if you don't already have one. In addition to helping prove service more quickly, the card can assist with access to healthcare, housing and employment support, travel discounts and other veteran benefits. You can apply online: gov.uk/veteran-card/apply



'Hello Sam, Just wanted to thank you so much for your help in getting me a washing machine. It is making my life so much easier.'

(Lightning Reach beneficiary)

Want to know more?

Contact Sam King on 0300 400 1992
or
email: benfund@wraca.org.uk

DATE:
Sunday
23rd May 2027

WRAC LIONESSES 15th 10k Run 2027

COME AND JOIN US
FOR A DAY OR WEEKEND OF FUN AND LAUGHTER

START TIME:
1145hrs

START: Portman Street, Manchester - FINISH: Deansgate, Manchester

Walkers must complete the 10k within 2 hours.
Proceeds all to the WRAC Association.



To enter - greatrun.org/events/great-manchester-run

Please let Wendy know if you have entered or need any more information.

FACEBOOK:
WRAC LIONESSES FUNDRAISING GROUP
CONTACT WENDY :
07775 505326
wendyhootonski@aol.com

Your support means everything

Membership of the WRAC Association is free, but we still need funds to continue to operate our HQ and maintain our strong provision of Benevolent Fund grants. Just one edition of the Lioness costs over £5 per member to produce

If you are thinking of making a donation to us, then you can visit wraca.org.uk/donate, or call the office on 0300 400 1992, where you can choose to make a one-off donation, or give on a monthly or yearly basis.

It is also possible to donate your shares to us, which could help make your affairs more tax efficient. Unlike selling shares, donating them means no capital gains tax is due and it may also create income tax relief for you.

The process of transferring donated shares to a charity is usually very straightforward, and if you would like more information on the benefits and how to do this, please call our finance officer Jane or email finance.officer@wraca.org.uk.



If you would like to leave a legacy to the WRAC association, please contact your legal representative and let your family know your wishes. We publish all legacies received in the Lioness, and are always touched by the generosity of those who have left financial support behind for those who remain.

Every donation we receive, no matter how big or small, reminds us that our work is valuable and appreciated. If you think you are already paying on a regular basis, please check your account to make sure the direct debit or standing order is still in place.

Legacies and donations to WRAC Association enable us to continue supporting female veterans, increase camaraderie and provide benevolent support for former ATS and WRAC servicewomen. Thank you for supporting us to support you.

CALL TO ACTION

Dress on Parade

In line with the Royal British Legion and other Regimental Associations, parade dress is to be smart and appropriate; the norm is for dark colours.

WRAC Association clothing including a scarf and pin are available from our Association shop.

There is no need to wear Association clothing but please dress smartly and appropriately. (See Medals & Badges etiquette below for further information).

Since the Association is no longer an active corps stable belts and forage caps should **not** be worn.

Medals and Badges Etiquette

Etiquette rules for wearing medals only allow the wearing of official awards.

- The WRAC Association brooch, Veterans badge and Etherton pin may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole.
- The medals awarded to a deceased service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative who is not wearing their own medals (no more than one group should be worn by any individual).
- Unofficial medals, or badges, other than the WRAC Association brooch, Veterans badge, and Etherton pin should **not** be worn when representing the WRAC Association.
- Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are **not** allowed.

Wreaths

Only one Association wreath is permitted to be laid at The Cenotaph. We are happy to provide one wreath per area to be laid locally, please speak to your Area Coordinator about this.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2026-2027

WRAC Dinner Club	Saturday 10 October 2026
Field of Remembrance Opening Ceremony	Thursday 5 November 2026
Remembrance Sunday Cenotaph Parade Remembrance Sunday Guildford Parade	Sunday 8 November 2026
Officers' Dining Club	Saturday 21 November 2026
AGM - in person only	Saturday 20 March Birmingham 2027
Summer Event	TBC
Manchester 10k	Sunday 23 May 2027
RHC Founders Day Governor's Review	Early June - Date TBC

If you would like to be put on the list of applicants for any of the above events please email events@wraca.org.uk

We often have plenty of spaces and it is always good to see new faces.

BRANCH NEWS

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Tracey MacPherson

Branches across Scotland and Northern Ireland have continued to strengthen their local connections through a busy programme of visits, commemorative events and forward planning,

Visits have taken place across the region, offering opportunities to meet members in person, share updates and experience the strong sense of fellowship within branches.

The programme began with a visit to Stirling, where members met at the 1314 Inn for lunch. This was followed by a visit to Fife and Tayside at the Ex Servicemen's Club in Perth. Further visits included Moray and Highlands at the Erskine Veterans Activity Centre in Forres, and Aberdeen, where members gathered at Ma Cameron's for coffee, conversation and lunch.

The period also included several significant events, beginning with the AGM in London.

The Aberdeenshire Veterans Meeting brought together a range of organisations under the coordination of the Armed Forces Champion for Aberdeenshire Council. Main speakers included Veterans Scotland, Forces Children Scotland and the Defence Garden Scheme, with other organisations such as Erskine, Bravehound and Horseback UK also represented.

And to round off the significant events, there was the summer event in Edinburgh. What a lovely afternoon in beautiful surroundings, filled with lots of chat and making new acquaintances and catching up with pals.

Due to other commitments I am sad to say that I am now having to step down from the role of Area Coordinator. I have really enjoyed getting to know so many branches and members and to have made many new friends. If you would be interested in finding out more about the role please contact info@wraca.org.uk



Aberdeen - Moira Thom

Six of our ladies are 80 years and older, including branch organiser Sandra Lemmon. They attend meetings regularly, contributing to the banter, hilarity and crazy wit that make the monthly meet ups so enjoyable.

Our area co-ordinator, Tracey MacPherson visited the branch to meet our merry band and pass on information from the Membership Council. We were all impressed how 'down to earth' Tracey was.

For our summer outing, eight of our ladies had a lovely lunch in a restaurant overlooking the former Marshall College, Aberdeen, an amazing granite building, constructed between 1837 and 1844 by architect Archibald Simpson.

Margaret Irvine and Moira Thom travelled to Edinburgh for the Lothian Veterans Networking Event and Afternoon Tea. With women veterans from the three services, it was a noisy gathering, the loudest table – WRNS!!! Also represented were many charities that do excellent work in helping, not only the veterans but current serving personnel too. It was a very informative afternoon.

Moira from Aberdeen branch and Ann Sinclair from Moray and Highland branch meet up regularly for coffee that extends to lunch until the café's closing time. Sandra communicates via social media with some of the ladies from Moray and Highland and other branches throughout Scotland and beyond. Distance is not a problem, we are there for each other.



Ayrshire - Arlene Reid



For such a small branch, Ayrshire has been quite busy.

Early in June, Susan Preece, Val Brown, Marion Lamberton and Arlene Reid took themselves off to Lady Haig's Poppy Factory in Edinburgh, where they had a very interesting time exploring the evolution of the poppy over the past 100 years, meeting the makers and hearing about the life-changing support it provides to this day.

Also, in June we joined other Scottish football fans at Willie Wastles Sports Bar in Ayr to watch Scotland's first game in the group stages of the 2026 World Cup against Haiti in Boston. It was an exciting start to the tournament with a 1 – 0 win. Susan, Val, and Arlene probably shouted the loudest and therefore contributed to the win. The rest of the Scotland games might not have produced another win, but they certainly did not disgrace themselves. In fact,

it is generally accepted that Scotland won the 'fans having the best time' award. Cue bagpipes music!

On 1st July, Arlene and Susan met Jack the Clydesdale horse in Wellington Square, South Ayrshire at the Commemoration of the 110th Battle of the Somme



at the Field of Heroes which was created by the 'Standing with Giants' people and tours the country. Moyra Turner, Arlene, and Susan were also there on dismantle day, assisting with the removal and packing up of the silhouettes. Meanwhile, Lexi the Branch mascot was making sure the animal silhouettes were not forgotten.

Edinburgh - Robbie Knox

This year got off to a great start with a few of our members attending an Edinburgh Women's rugby match. Although Edinburgh managed to lose every one of their matches in January, it was still a good day out.

In February, members of the Branch attended a Female Veterans' Networking Event and Afternoon Tea at The Royal Scots Club. Everyone had a lovely time meeting other female veterans from all the services, enjoying the camaraderie and banter.



Although we had only had our regular meeting at The Royal Scots Club in March, we stepped it up in April by having a lovely brunch with Janette Deans to wish her good luck in her new role of Chair of Membership Council. It was an ideal time to thank her for all her hard work with the Scotland and Northern Ireland Area over the past 3 years or so.

Early in May, a whole bunch of Edinburgh Branch members headed for the Hive Stadium, which is right next to Murrayfield, to watch the Women's Six Nations rugby match between Scotland and France. It's fair to say that Scotland were a little overwhelmed and were soundly beaten 69-28 by a far superior and clinical French side. We weren't downhearted though, because we had been treated to a scrummy lunch before the match at Janette's house, which is within shouting distance of Murrayfield.

Edinburgh Branch members were pleased to welcome other WRAC Association members to Auld Reekie for the annual Summer Event. What a braw time we all had!

Fife and Tayside - Debbie Coupland

It seems like no time at all since I was submitting news for this year's first edition. Spookily, in preparation for the branch's next meeting, I despatched a 'warning order' about our 2026 Christmas event.

So, where has the time gone and what have we been doing?

Individually, members have been remarkably busy with their own everyday lives, sometimes enjoying holidays abroad. One member, Jeanie Reeve, who took on the high seas challenge of a Tall Ships Round-Britain journey, crewed by WIS (wounded, injured and sick) veterans and active service personnel (see page 27).

Another member, Lisa Findlay, took part in the Annual Culross Raft Race. Lisa's team battled high winds, forcing them towards The Bridges. Frantic shouts chased them until they swung around. They reached shore exhausted amid loud cheers. A soaked Lisa said, "The raft was fantastic and engineered by our Veterans Breakfast Club". Would she do it again? She grinned as she responded "Oh, yes".

Armed Forces Day celebrations occurred nationwide, and Kinross Rugby Club welcomed many veterans for a late breakfast. One of our members attended and is now encouraging two other ex-WRAC to join our group.

The highlight of the last six months has been our new meeting venue, the Ex-Servicemen's Club (locally called 'The Exxy') in Perth which gives us a better ability to support our local veteran community and we warmly welcome everyone.



Moray & Highland - Tracey MacPherson

On thinking what to include in our branch news, it seems Moray & Highland enjoy a bit of sport. Whether through physical attendance, active participation or virtual support, we have shared our interests in the Winter Olympics, 6 Nations, FIFA World Cup, World Snooker, biking, wild swimming and attendance at Motorfest

The branch met for a morning coffee and chat at the Erskine Veterans Activity Centre North in Forres. The centre was very welcoming, economical and full of vibrancy. As per our MO, we were so busy chatting, we forgot to take a photo – one of us will remember for next time!

The same day saw the flight path of the 90th Anniversary of the first Spitfire flight, fly over Moray and land at RAF Lossiemouth. It was accompanied by a Poseidon and from my view point, the Spitfire was just a speck but luckily some of our members got a much better view and some watched it take off the next day as it continued its tour round Britain.

Another notable tour that passed through Moray and Highlands was from Magnus the walrus. He was first spotted in Orkney before he made his way round the coast, to take some rest in Lossiemouth, Hopeman and Findochty. Don't be concerned about the markings on his body – I have it on good authority from a friend in British Divers Marine Life Rescue that this is normal. Thanks to Dawn for great pictures of the Spitfire and Magnus.



Stirling- Liz Dixon

Last month I joined the "Who Dares Cares" for the monthly walk around the Kings Park area of Stirling. It took a couple of hours, yapping with the guys and getting some good old Army humour, finishing off with coffee and a roll. One of the things I miss the most about Army life is the humour.

Lynne Connelly, is learning a new skill - kilt making. The students are making a kilt for a member of the Scottish Veterans Pipe Band. The course is being held at the A&SH museum in the grounds of Stirling Castle. Lynne is enjoying learning traditional skills of hand-sewing, fabric handling and use of small tools. Unfortunately, this is an endangered heritage craft.

Mhairi Turner likes walking and recently took a trip to the Island of Kerrera. The Kerrera ferry can take up to twelve passengers across to the island. Once there you can do a 10km circuit of the island or 5km by taking the road to the marina, north of the island. Both routes afford gorgeous views of Mull, Colonsay and the Garvellachs but we'll have to guess which one Mhairi took because she hasn't told us! However, we are recommended to visit Kerrera Tea Gardens and Bunkhouse for tea and cakes.



Ulster- Sylvia Connachan

We have had two new members join our group, so a big welcome to Elizabeth Adams and Alexander Jay. It seems that they have been WRAC Association members for years and just found us.

A few of our members and I met up for coffee at Forestside Shopping Centre in Belfast early in the year. It was nice to have a catch up, which was just as well because the weather was atrocious, with heavy snow in February and March, so we stayed indoors in the warm.

It was good to get back to normal in April with another coffee shop meet-up. Then later in the month, I went with Sarah Cairns, Elizabeth Montgomery, Elizabeth Adams and her daughter to Ballance House, Lisburn for the Somme Commemoration Service. We met an ex-RMP, who runs a tri-service group, so we went to her next meeting in Belfast.

Jill Hope and I attended Dromore RBL in May, for their coffee morning in the Town Hall and had a lovely time.

On the 7th of June I attended the Somme Remembrance Service and Parade at St Ann's Cathedral in Belfast. It was a beautiful and poignant service. Then on 14th June I attended the WRAC Association's Afternoon Tea in Edinburgh which was lovely.



Some of our Royal Signals ladies went to Blandford, for their annual reunion weekend and then a few of us attended the annual RBL Ireland, Somme Ceremony of Remembrance and Wreath Laying service, at Islandbridge, Dublin. We keep ourselves very busy in Ulster Branch.

Greetings everyone.

I have just recently taken over as North East Area Coordinator, so this is a rather brief report and no pictures as of yet but that will happen down the line. You have been warned!

I have been in touch with all of the branch organisers in the North East Area and had some great replies, welcoming me from over the Pennines. The ladies of the North East and North West will get this one as a bit of an in-joke.

Ice Hockey is my family's interest, and the season has just restarted, so my travels to Yorkshire and the North East will begin to be more frequent now. Once I have my plan of action in place, those in the lower part of our Area will feature somewhat on my travel plans. Those in the upper part will see me in between times.

I am looking forward to working with Lionesses of the WRAC Association in the area and can't wait to take them up on the many offers of a brew and a biscuit when I am on my trips to see them.



East Riding & North Lincolnshire - Dorothy Mitchelmore

The members of the East Riding & North Lincolnshire branch once again have been very busy.

We have enjoyed our NAAFI breaks on a regular basis, and this allows members to attend on days that suit them as and when.

Our overnight break to Grassington was sadly cancelled by the coach company due to them not being able to fill the coach so we hope to get something sorted for September.

We have had an increase in our branch membership over the last year. I contacted the Not Forgotten Association and asked if they would consider offering these members invitations to the garden party at Buckingham Palace. They were very excited to hear that they had been invited.



Marjorie Booker, one of the ladies who attended was presented to HRH Princess Anne. Marjorie served for 22 years in the WRAC and at nearly 90 years young she thoroughly deserved this moment.

Recently we were asked if we would attend the first Armed Forces Festival at Fort Paull near Hull. I was awakened early to a very blustery day that nearly lost me my gazebo but thankfully lots of willing hands appeared to assist us. Footfall was light, I think due to the weather, but we still enjoyed the day.

Thanks have to go to Roberta Grant, Wendy Corkerill and Melanie Brown for all their help throughout.

We have plans for a vintage tea party and later a Motown Daytime Disco. We will cover this in the next edition.

Setting up a new branch is easy!

We need more branch organisers for places which currently do not have a branch. If you live anywhere where you feel there isn't a branch local to you, and would like to find out just how easy and rewarding running a branch can be, contact HQ to find out how to get started.

Leeds - Michelle Gibbs

It's been a bit quiet in Leeds Branch recently, but a few of us managed to get to a 1940's weekend at Lotherton Hall in Leeds, West Yorkshire in June. It was advertised as 'a nostalgic day filled with re-enactors, a GI camp, vintage vehicles and live 1940s music.'

Pat Rocky Barker, Irene Jones, and I were joined by Irene's husband Andy, and my husband Dave. It's nice to have a couple of the chaps along in case anything needs carrying.

It started off as a warm day - until the sun came out - and then it became an absolutely scorching day! We had a great time walking around all the displays of people dressed up in different uniforms, re-enacting and showing off their incredibly well-preserved World War II vehicles. Our toes were tapping as a group of singers serenaded us with a few of Dame Vera Lynn's songs, and of course we joined in. There was also plenty of dancing on the lawn, but how they managed to dance in that heat is anyone's guess! We weren't sure our knees would take it, so we refrained from joining in and enjoyed watching from afar.

We finished off a lovely event with a picnic back at the car. It was a great day with great music and some lovely people too!



Lincolnshire Wolds and Coast - Betty Gash

We have welcomed Carolyn Lyle PMRAFNS from Horncastle, Nicky Okopskyj WRAC TA from Grimsby and Vicki Barker-Corney WRAF from Skegness to the branch.

The group have met at four different types of venues in the Wolds and Coastal areas this year – a garden centre, a market town, a themed cafe and a seaside resort.

In February eight members had a wonderful trip to Woodthorpe Garden Centre in Alford. The lovely atmosphere, delicious carvery and fantastic shop discounts were very welcome. Five members visited Louth in March, with drinks at Wonderland Gifts & Tea Shoppe, followed by traditional fish and chips at Mr Chips restaurant and then a visit to the indoor market. We enjoyed the company of Carole Tyler from Grimsby Branch for the Alford and Louth events.

Our May lunch was in Mablethorpe where six of us enjoyed sharing memories at the Blitz Tea Room, which serves traditional 1940s and WW2-themed British comfort food, with unique decor, artwork and original memorabilia.

We discussed serious issues on health and well-being at the Lumley Plaza Bistro in Skegness in June. But also had the camaraderie, fun and laughter.

I have also been busy attending the WRAC Association AGM in March, the tri-service visit to the Houses of Parliament in April and the RBL event at the National Memorial Arboretum for the 'Remembering the Iraq War 15 years On' in May with my husband Mick. (See page 25).





I have only been in the Central Coordinator role for a few weeks however I am looking forward to visiting the branches over the next few months.

One thing I would really like to set up is all the branches coming together this year and hopefully this could become an annual event.

In the meantime if you would like to contact me please email: central.area@wracassociation.org.uk or phone me: 07766 940852.

I look forward to meeting you all soon!

Leicester & Nottingham - Ann (Monty) Montgomery

This busy branch has a social meeting every month, often with a theme, and the summer months are filled with interesting outings.

At one of our meetings, we enjoyed a visit from Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, and we hope to go on a guided tour at the centre in Sutton Cheney, Leicestershire later in the year.

This year we were pleased to be able to celebrate the 71st anniversary of our branch. We are rightly very proud of our longevity and enjoyed a delicious celebratory lunch, as much happy reminiscing took place.

The beautiful Eye Kettleby Lakes near Melton Mowbray was the venue for a summer lunch and get together. We thoroughly enjoyed the sunny day with our guests.



There are several Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Clubs in our area, and we often join them for tasty breakfasts and/or cream teas. They are friendly and inclusive and usually free of cost to veterans.

New members are most welcome, and we would warmly welcome you to come and see us for a visit, outing or as a regular member. Contact details are in the Branch Directory of this magazine.

Peterborough - Vivien Hamilton

April saw several of the ladies enjoy afternoon tea at Peterborough Garden Centre. It was a first outing for two new members; Alison Buss and Frances Price as well as a return to the branch for Chris Corker and Dot Ryder who had recently moved back to Peterborough. They were joined by branch regulars, Pam Clifford, Jean Legg, and Branch Organiser Vivien Hamilton. The food was excellent, if far too much, and definitely one to revisit.

In June, the branch traveled to Thorney for a change of scenery. The food at the pub was good and the takeaway boxes were welcome for the left overs. This time, Vivien, Pam, Alison, Dot and Christine were joined by Lorraine Ball, Pauline Mason, and Anne Greenside.

The group also enjoyed a meal at the Miller & Carter steak house in Peterborough, with 6 members coming along - Dot, Chris, Anne, Pam, Lorraine and Jean.



Lincoln - Denise Aitken

A few members were invited to Joyce's 100th surprise birthday (see pics on page 79). She looked absolutely amazing, we all said we hope we look as good as Joyce when we are 100! Joyce gave a great speech and there were a few of us having to dab the corner of our eyes. She had a brilliant time catching up with her service friends who she had not seen for a while, although she still has regular phone calls with Shirley. What a wonderful photo of Joyce aged 100, Patricia 92 and Shirley 90. Shirley is still a regular member at our monthly meetings and has some great tales to tell of her time in the Army.

The two hours, when we meet up flies by, we are all surprised when it is time to say goodbye although we know it is au revoir and we look forward to meeting up again, if not sooner in a month's time.

If you would like to join us we have a Facebook page: WRAC Association Lincoln Group; and a Whatsapp Group: Lincoln WRAC. You would be more than welcome.



Sheffield - Sandy Warne

Our branch continues to grow, and we are very happy to have ladies from both the RAF and Royal Navy amongst our lovely group. You will receive a very warm welcome if you pop in and join us.

The great news is that Marion Sayles is now in remission. Yay! We also celebrated a very special birthday with Barbara Burnett in May. She doesn't look a day over 69!

The Sheffield and Lincolnshire groups came together in May, when 22 ladies attended the Not Forgotten Garden Party and new friendships were formed. So much so, that we now have 35 members from both groups going to London in September to see The Queen Elizabeth exhibition at the Kings Gallery, which everyone is very much looking forward to.

We were very fortunate to have also had both groups attend a day at the Houses of Parliament, arranged by Alex Fawbert. Thank you Alex for a brilliant and well-organised day.

Congratulations to Clare Haynes and Woody (Paul Woodward) on their engagement. The boy did good on his proposal, when he went into her work and got down on one knee in front of all her colleagues. It's been a bit of a whirlwind for Clare, as she also had her hip replaced recently in Oswestry.

Babs Burnett and Cheryl Jones are still 'clearing up' with the raffle prizes at our meetings, despite our best efforts to thwart them.



Area Coordinators Needed

**Are you in the Scotland & Northern Ireland or Eastern regions?
Do you want to support your fellow female veterans?**

Area coordinators offer support to branches in their region, contribute to the direction of Association membership, and sit on the Major Grants Committee of the Benevolent Fund. We have vacancies for coordinators in our Scotland & Northern Ireland or Eastern areas. We would welcome applications from enthusiastic members and friends or family who would like to show their appreciation for the service of our veterans.

Contact HQ for more information: membership@wraca.org.uk

Norfolk- Lyn Hatch

It's been a busy summer for us here in Norfolk, we have enjoyed some great catch ups and taken full advantage of the glorious weather.

Every year Norwich City FC have a dedicated Veterans Match, February saw an invitation to an evening match. At half time Karelyn Smithson and I joined the other veterans for a lap of the pitch, what a wonderful reception we all received.

In March we stepped back in time with lunch at Poppylands, owned by the grandson of one of the ATS veterans who was posted from Great Yarmouth just before the bomb hit their accommodation block.

The next day a group of us went 10 pin bowling in Norwich, what a fun time we had - lots of laughter, took a little time to warm up but between us we did get a few strikes!

April a few of us met for lunch at The Waterside Rollesby, what a great venue then after lunch a short boat ride on the broad.

Back at the Imperial Hotel in May, this is always a great lunch location and where lately the planning for our summer events have taken place. Before we dispersed, we gathered in the car park at the ATS plaque, quietly acknowledging the women who lost their lives in 1943.

In August it was out to Hempnall for a BBQ, a big thank you to Rebecca and Peter for inviting us back again and for spoiling us with all that wonderful food.



I have visited Worthing branch who have had a few new members join recently. I have also visited Invicta branch and I need to arrange a visit to Canterbury next. I am with the Greater London Branch a lot as they are my local branch, we've had a few new members join us lately which is great. We have a WhatsApp group for most of the branch organisers within this area so we all keep in touch.

Greater London - Margaret Narroway



Greater London branch have had a few get togethers of late, we all gathered for some party food and endless cups of tea to celebrate our Area Coordinator Maggie Ashmore's birthday. A great time was had by all and it was lovely to catch up with so many of the branch.

We also had a meet up at good old Wetherspoons in Waterloo! Always such good value food and a drink or two! What a fun time we had!



Invicta Branch - Carole Foley

Five members of Invicta Branch, Margaret Ahmed Mohamed, Eve Carroll, Kay Styles, Wendy Staden and I were invited to attend this year's Not Forgotten Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 19th May. We were joined by two other WRAC Association friends from other areas. We had joined the newly formed The Not Forgotten Choir last year along with other Army, Navy and RAF veterans and following the choir's performance at St James' Palace in November 2025, were invited to attend the garden party and to be introduced to HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne. She shook hands with all of us and asked us where we came from. When we explained we were all from Kent, she mentioned that she had gone to school in Kent herself, that Kent was a big area and wanted to know more about which parts of Kent we lived in. She was very lovely to talk to and was genuinely interested in our story and about the choir. It was indeed an honour to have met her and we all had an amazing day which we will never forget.



Royal Hospital Chelsea - MaryAnn Clark

We have been very busy here at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, we've had so many events going on that it's really hard to tie more than a few of us together at one time!

The first big show of the year is always the RHS flower show and what a show it was this year, us ladies were there almost every day celebrity spotting although this is my second year and I've still not managed to get David Beckham or Brian May! Maggy Ashmore and I were joined by Pauline Milnes and her guest Nicola Ayrton who used to work at the National Army Museum next door for one exclusive evening event which we all thoroughly enjoyed.



The week following the Flower Show was 'Live at Chelsea' where Maggy Ashmore and I were lucky to meet some of the performers including Tony Hadley and boy band 911. We watched all the shows from our East Wing windows.

In July I was lucky enough to visit Silverstone and was hosted by McLaren. We were given a tour of the pit lane and the team's operations, it was all incredibly technical. I even spotted and was lucky enough to shake hands with Lewis Hamilton but unfortunately I didn't get a photo, he's so fast he just zoomed off on his scooter!

There will be lots more coming up for us ladies of the RHC, so watch this space.

Worthing - Carol Collins

Several of our branch members were able to attend a civic ceremony to mark the conclusion of The Worthing Journal's incentive 'Windows on the Pier', which was staged on Saturday 2 May.

The project, which has taken more than 14 years from start to finish, features 231 fused and stained-glass panels, created by the amazing glass designer, Siobhan Jones. Editor Paul Holden's aspiration was to create a cathedral-like gallery of stunning multi-coloured glass on Worthing Pier in Sussex. The aim was to fill every window in the windbreak, with each window telling an individual story, about people who have passed, historic events, and community organisations. There are hundreds of windows, so once complete, it will be quite a spectacle and something Worthing can be proud of.

The cathedral of multi-coloured panels over the sea has already become something of a tourist attraction in its own right and attracted many compliments.

Worthing Branch managed to raise the £600 needed to have a glass window made in memory of members who have passed, and it stands proud for all to admire. There were six of our members at the event, on what turned out to be a beautiful sunny day, and some of us stayed local afterwards, for a delicious fish and chips supper.



Our Taunton meet-up, first trialled back in February, has really taken off since the garden centre meet up. It was brilliant to see such a good turnout, including a very popular 'Huddle of Husbands'.

A special mention to those ladies who attended the Buckingham Palace garden party. It's also lovely to see the continued support from the Bristol group at Bristol Railway Station.

March gave us the chance to catch up at the WRAC Association AGM on a long but enjoyable day. Our guest speaker, General Dame Sharon Nesmith was pretty special and took time to chat and pose for photos.

A trip to Cornwall was organised, where we met up with members from Plymouth and Exeter. I am pleased to say that their meet ups are posted on Facebook. Thanks to Joanna Cooper and all the ladies there for spreading the word.

We know there are members in Exeter, and although there isn't a lead at the moment, plans are already in motion for another meet-up using email and social media.

Remember, whether it's three people or thirty, the important thing is getting together with fellow female veterans.

Please do keep posting your events on the South & South West WRAC Association Facebook page. There's nothing quite like the buzz of Lionesses getting together, with lots of laughter, shared memories, and plenty of "Do you remember...?" moments. Don't just read about it. Come along and be a part of it!



Bristol - Judith Stinchcombe

Ladies of the Bristol Branch celebrated their anniversary month at Newark Park, the National Trust House at Wotton Under Edge, in Gloucestershire.

Sir Nicholas Poyntz, an attendant to Henry VIII, chose to build his state-of-the-art hunting lodge here around 1550. The Clutterbuck Family then bought the estate in 1769 and made their mark, collaborating with various architects, including James Wyatt, who installed the eye-catching stained-glass window and various other embellishments.

We spent the day dressing up in the style of the day and wandering through the second-hand bookshop at the top of the house, where you could buy a book wrapped in brown paper for £2, without knowing the title or author.

There is a saying above the bookshop door, which quotes "If you read, you live a thousand lives. If you don't read, you live just one life" by George R R Martin.

It was Cornish pasties or salad rolls for lunch, with iced lemon donuts to follow. We ate in the hospitality tent, whilst dodging an exceptionally large blue peacock! We explored the manicured gardens in the afternoon, before leaving at the end of the day. This was a new experience for most of us, but very enjoyable.



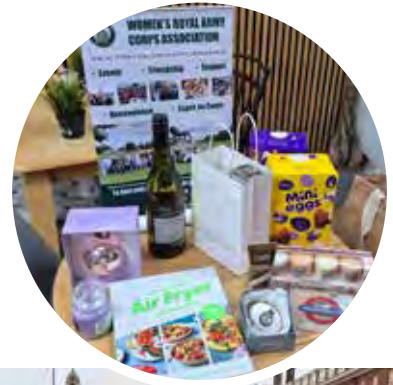
Dorset - Caroline Hearne

What a lovely meeting of banter and laughs we enjoyed in March, when we welcomed new members Suzy and Izzy with a quick round robin of brief intros, which sparked some wonderful memories. It's always so great to hear about our ladies history, so empowering!

We met again in May, at the Club Hub in Poole, where new owner Bee really looks after us, along with her hubby and gorgeous new baby Arras. I gave everyone an update about available veterans' services before we held our usual raffle. Oh, we do like a raffle!

In June, Dorset Branch got involved with the Shake & Stir Armed Forces Weekender in Bournemouth, which included Veterans' Parades, entertainment, dance and so much more. Everyone really enjoyed themselves. A couple of our ladies also attended Founders Day at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

July took some of us to a local Armed Forces and Veterans BBQ in Corfe Mullen, and we have loads of other fun meet ups planned for the coming months, please come and join us if you're local!



Plymouth - Ann Williams

Our first lunch out this year was a bitter sweet occasion, as we had sadly lost our lovely Ruth Jennings, at 91 years old, earlier that week. We gathered at one of Ruth's favourite venues, which she had booked to attend.

On Saturday 14 March two of us attended a get-together of Cornish Girls in Truro. We had a really pleasant train ride and a walk up the hill. Overall, we had a marvellous day.

Early in April, we had lunch at the Louis Tea Rooms near Callington, with magical views of Plymouth Sound. We were blessed with the companionship of one of our local ex-Royal Marines as a guest.

In May we went to The Cuddy Shack in Looe for breakfast. It was a new and much enjoyed adventure for us. Some members went down into Looe for a couple of hours afterwards, had a walk and a refreshing cuppa. We were excited to see several of the locations used in the TV series Beyond Paradise whilst there we were there.

Four of our Ladies enjoyed the Armed Forces Breakfast Club Coach Tour (see page 41).

In June we went out for an evening meal, which was a change from the norm for us.

We are pleased to report that Julia Crockett has taken over as our Branch Treasurer. We would love you to join us at one of our get-togethers.



Portsmouth and Isle of Wight - Val Duke

It has been a busy time for members over the past six months.

Earlier in the year, Phyllis, Linda, Cherie, and Sally had a trip to the Royal Armouries, Fort Nelson in Portsmouth, specifically to see the D-Day "For Your Tomorrow" installation, built as a commemoration of the service personal killed that day.

In March, one of our more energetic members succeeded in the Portsmouth 'Race for Life' supporting those who have survived cancer and remembering loved ones lost to the disease. An impressive £525.88 was raised. Well done, Cherie! We're proud of you. It was also Cherie's first attendance and insight at the Mayor-making ceremony.

Less energetic, however, was the Royal Garden Party attended by Tracy and Sally with HRH The Princess Royal in attendance. A buggy ride, the Jedburgh Pipe band, tea and sandwiches, The Royal Marines, Yeomen of the Guard (including a woman) and musical performances by Blake, the classical vocal trio all added to the festivities. At the end of the afternoon the Beating Retreat ceremony took place on the lawn, performed by the Band of the Royal Marines. The camaraderie and care shown for one another amongst strangers, veterans and serving personnel alike, was very noticeable and just added to this incredibly special occasion.

Last but by no means least, Marjorie, our most senior member, celebrated her 102nd birthday in July. Members continue to visit her in her rest home on a regular basis and tell her all our news.



Salisbury - Amanda Foster

In March, we enjoyed a visit to Amesbury History Centre, where Julia Doig, having previously served as our Association's Finance Officer, is now one of their key volunteers. Julia gave a fascinating and insightful talk, which we thoroughly enjoyed. It was a real eye-opener into our local history, rounded off with a visit to the excellent café.

Our coffee mornings, organised by Jackie and Linda Clark, continue to be well supported. These provide a great alternative for those of our members who are unable to attend evening events and offer the perfect opportunity to combine an outing with good company, coffee, and cake.

Thanks to our close link with the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club, we've also had the chance to take part in a variety of social gatherings, meetings, and events, strengthening friendships across the wider community.

We said a fond farewell to one of our ladies, Sue Bleese. Our thoughts are with her family, and we thank everyone who has shown such kindness and support.

Looking ahead, we are continuing to grow and evolve, by working with other clubs and organisations. This offers complementary activities and support for our members. We are extending our network, whilst maintaining strong connections with fellow Lionesses, creating even more opportunities for friendship and shared experiences.

For more information, why not follow us on Facebook at WRAC Salisbury Branch and also request to join our WhatsApp group for the latest updates.



Torquay - Pauline Marr

Lesley Davison, Mandy Fenwick, and Pauline ran the Birmingham 10k with the WRAC Lionesses. It was a tough course, but we all got round without injury. We all had a very enjoyable weekend and enjoyed checking out the city. We are looking forward to next year in Manchester.

Some of us joined twenty-one other veterans for a lovely homemade two course lunch at the Conservative Club. It is a monthly meeting which has been set up by the local council. They even had a little raffle. At only £12.50 we couldn't moan and intend to make it a regular event. We are particularly looking forward to the Christmas 'do'.

In July, Shirley Taper and Pauline took a road trip to Burnham-on-Sea to visit Diana Keenan in her new home. Diana is one of our original members and is enjoying her new location. We hope to visit again when we can co-ordinate our diaries.

We end our report with the sad news that our last ATS member, June Bourne has passed away. June served as a stewardess from 1948 to 1950, spending her last months in the WRAC at the changeover. June was an active member of the branch and as recently as 2024 marched in our local Remembrance parade, laying a wreath at the end. June's family opted for an unattended cremation but held a lovely celebration of June's life, to which Lisa Lynch and Pauline Marr were invited.



West Surrey - Stephanie Kolvik

The first half of 2026 has been a busy and rewarding period for our group, bringing together ladies through social events, Military heritage activities, and opportunities to represent as women who have served.

Our brunches are a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, welcome new members, and share plans for the months ahead. These events set a positive tone, filled with friendship, laughter, and renewed enthusiasm.

In March, members travelled to London for our Annual General Meeting. As always, the opportunity to network and strengthen friendships across branches was fantastic and we had the privilege of meeting General Dame Sharon Nesmith!

May brought the AGC's Veterans & Heritage Event at Worthy Down, celebrating the history and contribution of those in the Corps antecedent roles. The event provided an excellent opportunity to share experiences across generations, some highlights from the WRAC & Corps Museum and highlighted the important role the WRAC has played throughout military history.

June was one of our busiest months. We proudly supported the National Armed Forces Day event in Aldershot with the WRACA HQ team. Members enjoyed attending the RMAS World Pacesticking Competition, witnessing impressive displays of skill, precision, and military tradition... despite the weather! Some ladies had a memorable visit to Edinburgh for the Summer Event. I also had the opportunity as a serving member to promote the association at the Army Servicewomen's Network Conference, with our CEO Paula. Engaging with serving personnel and recruiting new serving members. (See page 5)

As we look ahead, we remain committed to friendship, remembrance, support, and advocacy. Sharing the stories and achievements of women veterans.



Winchester - Lisa Aven

We continue to enjoy good food and a good old natter in lovely Winchester, whilst a few of our members have visited the museums.

Earlier this year we attended the Basingstoke Veterans Group coffee morning. This is a tri-service gathering, held every Monday and a breakfast club held every 3rd Sunday. It is lovely to meet up with other WRAC girls! Some of the group also joined the Mayor in Basingstoke for the start of Armed Forces week by raising the flag outside the Civic Offices.

July saw the 25th Anniversary of Winchester Branch. We had a wonderful garden party with a buffet lunch, hosted by Herme Emery, who ran the branch for many years. This fabulous celebration was well attended, and the guest list included the Mayor of Winchester, Cllr Jamie Scott and his lovely wife, Wendy.

There was a last-minute panic trying to find the missing bunting but it was eventually found and along with the WRAC flag, the garden was decorated. Badges and a special cake had been made to commemorate the event.

It was a hot day, probably a little too hot, causing the Mayor to borrow a hat, which made him look like Liam Gallagher, so the talk turned to music and we all reminisced about songs from yesteryear.

Eventually even those who had brought along parasols and umbrellas had to make a beeline for the shade where we continued the fun.

Thank you everyone, for such for a great day!



Wales & the West

Ann Stack

Phew, it's been a busy six months! 26 attended Wales & The West Area AGM held at The Soldiers of Gloucester Museum, in my home town of Gloucester. Our guest speaker was our newly appointed Chair of Membership Janette Deans, and together we shared ideas and reported back on the events and activities our 10 branches have been enjoying. May saw a birthday party invitation from Birmingham Branch and I thoroughly enjoyed visiting them AND was introduced to my first ever Beetle Drive. I'm looking forward to visiting more branches in my area this year and seeing our membership grow. Did you know that there are over 850 WRAC Association members in Wales and The West Area and more on the horizon! Yes, we're busy!

Finally, I've signed up our Area with Tickets for Good. You can apply for free or heavily discounted tickets to a variety of events, countrywide but first you must create an account. This is the link address: volunteers.ticketsforgood.co.uk/users/sign_up

Select Wales and West Area WRAC Association as your organisation and then complete the form. There is no app so do check in regularly to see what events are available and even if you are not in our Area, you can still sign up. Enjoy!



Birmingham - Linda Leighton

After the fun and laughter of our annual pantomime trip, our March meeting was busy, with lots of members and a little quiz, thanks to Heather Gaughran.

Our ten-pin bowling days are a regular event enjoyed by branch members and friends. The winner in April was Babs Anderson – again! We needed a challenger, when lo and behold, we had a new winner in June, Lynn Anderson! But the trophy still went to the same house.

We all had a great time at our Birthday Bash in May, with lots of fun and games. We were fortunate enough to have a special guest Kerry Howard, who helped our Betty Webb to write her books. We also welcomed Area Co-ordinator, Ann Stack and Area Secretary, Elaine Simpson.

Many of our branch members took part in the WRAC Lionesses 10k run which was held here in Birmingham. Well done to Babs Anderson, Doreen Cox, Pat Neale, Jane Griffin-Ash, Phil Mattinson, Elaine Smith, Marg Davies, Morag Hardie, and Sheila Keeling.

Birmingham City Women's Football Club's avid fan Babs Anderson was very shocked to receive a phone call from club captain, Christie Harrison-Murray, thanking her for her continuous support of the club. What a lovely surprise!

Finally, branch member Sylvia Coleman has asked me to say how much she appreciated her birthday card through the post, as she had been feeling quite low and was really cheered up by it. A big thank you to our birthday card fairy, Brenda Grigg. What a star!



Coventry - Caroline Gadsby

As one of the newest branches (this is our first year) we are still trying to find our feet but have some great support from Ann Stack and Elaine Simpson - thank you ladies.

Liz Ward attended the annual AGM in London and Carolyne Painter attended The Wales and West AGM - thank you both. Since the last edition we have met twice and have also used our get togethers to help those not so technically minded, training them on how to use Microsoft teams. Why? Well the last Friday of every month at 7pm we have our WRAC Chatter on teams. A great opportunity to have a virtual get together and a safe space to talk in the comfort of your own home. They last for 30-45 minutes and we talk about anything and everything. Whilst this is a Coventry Branch 'thing' we are happy if anyone would like to join. If you would, just email caroline.gadsby@hotmail.co.uk. Invitations to join are sent out each month. We are also planning a quiz afternoon based on the terrific afternoon we had with the Tamworth WRAC Branch.

If anyone in Warwickshire or beyond would like to join please pop over to our Facebook page which is Coventry WRAC Association Branch or contact Caroline.



Gloucestershire - Ann Stack

With female veterans in every corner of Gloucestershire, it was time to trek to The Forest of Dean for skittles and afternoon tea at Sling Clubhouse. Bristol Branch joined us for a fantastic afternoon of connecting and raising funds for our local community and in turn, Sling's response was magnificent! A wonderful afternoon tea fit for royalty coupled with the enormous respect that was shown to us as female veterans.

We enjoyed a very competitive game of skittles, with one of our veterans venturing onto Gloucestershire's turf for the first time remarking 'It was a great day meeting old friends and making new ones, delicious food and everyone was talking and smiling.' This summed up perfectly how we should all feel when we join in with events and activities, near and far.

Bottle Green Knickers! Who remembers those passion killers? Well, Team 'Bottle Green Knickers' represented our branch magnificently at a pub quiz - a great evening of tasty morsels, laughs and exercising our brain cells. We were thrilled to come 9th out of 9 teams because that's 1st really, isn't it?

The Inter-Services Rugby roared out to us and luckily the Army v RAF game was held locally in Gloucester and will be until 2027. The Army Women played magnificently and stole the field with a 52-12 win, and they willingly posed with us for a picture during their celebrations.

It really is a privilege to see how far army women have progressed and we'll cheer even harder next year. Why not join us?



Herefordshire - Lynda Armstrong

Early in the year, at our lunch at The Green Man in Fownhope, we had members from other branches as far afield as Birmingham and Manchester join us. The meal was delicious as always, but the company far outshone the food.

The WRAC Association's AGM took place in London in March and a few of Hereford Branch members were in attendance. We all had a lovely day enjoying a delicious afternoon tea, listening to a talk from General Dame Sharon Nesmith, whilst meeting old friends and making new ones.

We really enjoyed our annual Veterans BBQ lunch at The Green Man in the company of a good number of our ladies plus partners and friends, and we are looking forward to our annual picnic.

As a branch, we have had an influx of new members wanting to join our Facebook page from across all three services. Hopefully, we will be welcoming Rosie Garrison, Ceris Granville, Kelly Farr, Tracie Wilton, Lou Lou Collins, Helen Ann Haycock, Amy Rawcliffe and Stella McManus-Chambers at one of our friendly get togethers.



Oxfordshire - Christine Townsend

Here in Oxfordshire, we have been fairly busy with swaps and changes, new members, and welcoming ladies from other services.

We took a trip away to visit the Hook Norton Brewery, as one of our members, Phyl Barton had had an operation on her hand, so couldn't drive. It was a good day for a lovely lunch and a look at the brewery. Interestingly, the brewery is a proudly independent family run business that still delivers by horse drawn dreys.

We also went to The Great Western Arms in Adderbury, as Jan Dytor has left us to go travelling in her narrowboat. Amongst our photos you will see us gathering for a goodbye lunch with our little adventurer Jan. Look out for her, as she could end up at a meeting near you.

We paid a visit to Standing with Giants to have a look at how they make those amazing figures that cover the countryside in remembrance of those lost in battles and wars. We even got to paint a few of the figures.

In August we went on a Midsomer Murders walking tour. Our lovely member Catherine Jones is a guide so she knows where the bodies are hidden!. We had a lot of fun with this event.

If anyone is interested in joining us on our trips in and around Oxfordshire, please contact me.



Shropshire - Shirley Gladwin

Shropshire branch has been really active again, with our members getting involved in more fun stuff.

Suzanne Musgrove did a 'March in March' with Combat Stress UK to raise funds to help veterans suffering with mental health issues. She walked ten miles around Haughmond Hill in Shrewsbury and raised £208. Well done, Suzanne!

Another fun event in March was a trip to Telford Bowling Alley. There were three teams and competition was fierce. Rose Desposito scored a creditable 180, Jan Foster a mighty 195 and Kathy Dennis a runaway top score of 210! They ended up treating everyone to a few songs on the karaoke machine. We need to give the venue fair warning for next time!

A few of our members were fortunate enough to be invited to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party in May, and to say it was a fantastic event is an understatement. HRH The Princess Royal was in attendance and gave her time generously to so many of the guests. She headed straight for the WWII veterans and listened attentively to their stories. It was wonderful to witness!

The first day of spring found Chris Powell, Sandra Davies, Steph Hickmans and Suzanne Musgrove tagging on, with our smart branch gazebo at Shrewsbury Football Stadium. It was a fabulous day with lots of interest shown by people attending the match. We are looking forward to many more outings to let others know about the WRAC Association at every opportunity.



South Wales - Deserie Mansfield

We have, as ever, been out and about, making memories and raising smiles.

We like to keep things moving by rotating our lunches and events across South Wales so we can meet our lovely ladies where they live. The Newport lunch started with a short tour of the town and a fascinating insight into community art dedicated to the brave women of two wars and other extraordinary women of the city. The women featured include three from the WAAC, two of whom served in France and one who worked on the ambulance trains. There were also four WW1 nurses and a WRAF driver, and two munitions workers who lost their lives in WW2 - a real testimony to the sacrifice women have made throughout the years.

In Cardiff, 27 tri-service women gathered for a fabulous catch-up: laughter, mischief, and friendly rivalry to South Wales style. Carmarthen was our next destination- the further west we have been to date. Shared charabancs, that fine old Welsh word, were very much encouraged. Some came on foot, others crossed county boundaries, and a few intrepid pioneers travelled up to an hour and a half to join us. The reward? A warm welcome, a wonderful hostelry lunch, and a brilliant impromptu catch-up with like-minded service women.

Our summer event continues to be a firm favourite, and what has now become an annual trip to Barry Island (or 'Barrybados' as the locals affectionately call it) never disappoints. Although we cannot guarantee the weather, it has a definite Gavin and Stacey / Nessa flavour, and brings together women from all services for sunshine, seaside air, laughter, and plenty of "what's occurring?" moments.

Do join us sometime- it's not just lunch!



Tamworth - Marie Smedley

We held our AGM in Tamworth in February, and then in March we had a small gathering in Lichfield, at the Bowling Green, where I held the fort as Chris Whitehead was heading to London for the WRAC Association AGM.

We enjoyed one April afternoon playing table tennis, pool, and board games before partaking of the obligatory tea and cake in Twycross. Later in the month we enjoyed a bracing 3 mile walk in the National Forest.

The merry month of May found us soaking up the sunshine on the canal side at Fradley Junction, as well as paying several visits to Lichfield Cathedral to see The Longest Yarn 2: Britain at War. We recommend a visit to view this if it comes to your area.

We were shooting things and spending Armed Forces Weekend at the newly renamed RBL Remembrance Gardens in June. On a sadder note, we have lost 3 of our members to the most Northern Battalion, Vee Moore, Nancy Puckey and Janet Bourke. We will miss them.

We are looking forward to the rest of the year, when we will enjoy picnics, pub lunches and so much more. Please feel free to join us if you are in our area.



Worcester - Jane Griffin-Ash

In mid-March, we met for lunch at the Eagle Vaults pub in Worcester. Afterwards a few of us walked over to Worcester Guildhall, at the kind invitation of Worcester's then Mayor, Dr. Matt Lamb. He first gave us a tour of the Guildhall, and then we were served tea and cake in the Mayor's Parlour. What a treat!

Sandy Cawley and I travelled over to Dunkirk with the Union Jack Club to view some of the sites of the 1940s retreat, including where the Nazis had massacred the prisoners they had taken. The beaches area was amazing too. Thousands of retreating personnel were rescued through Operation Dynamo there. We ate dinner on one of the evacuation boats, the Princess Elizabeth which was named after our dear Queen, when she was a child.



Several of us met up again at the Eagle Vaults in June, when we had a super meal and enjoyed excellent company. It was Jocelyn Welch's birthday, so we sang Happy Birthday to her. The birthday choir consisted of Dawn Major, Milli Jefferies, Sharon Chappell, Deborah Davies, Joy Harvey, Miriam Unwin, Joyce Nicholls, and Marg Davies.

Five WRAC Association members were present at the Worcestershire Armed Forces Week Flag Raising Ceremony outside the Worcester City Guildhall in June. Jo Foster was the Standard Bearer with Sharon Baker-Joyce, Dawn Major, Deb Ashton, and Marg Davies as escorts. Also present was the new Mayor of Worcester, Cllr Tor Pingree along with the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Maj Gen Mark Armstrong.



Caption competition

Thank you to everyone who sent in brilliant suggestions for the photo of our ATS sisters working in comms. Our witty winner was Kathy Colclough who offered

"We'd like to order 8 fish and chips with mushy peas, please. We'll pay when the delivery arrives. Yes we are in wagon number 7. Thanks..."

Brilliant Kathy, your entry definitely got our stomachs rumbling!



For this issue, a four legged friend takes centre stage, but why is it taking a piggy-back, and what happens next? Thank you to WRAC Association member Annette Judge for sending this brilliant photo in (and featuring in it!). Email your caption ideas to editor@wraca.org.uk. Funny, clever, silly - all suggestions are welcome and we will print the best one in the next issue.



If you have a photo you think you could make a great caption competition entry, please send it to editor@wraca.org.uk

Joining any of the North West Area Branches offers a range of valuable benefits, both social and personal. Members become part of a friendly and supportive network of women who share a common background, creating an immediate sense of camaraderie and belonging. It provides an opportunity to reconnect with old friends or build new connections across the region.

Regular meetings, social gatherings, and organised events are held locally or over the wider area — such as summer picnics, bowling, and seasonal celebrations — offer enjoyable ways to stay engaged and active within the community. There is also a strong sense of mutual support, with members sharing experiences, offering encouragement, and celebrating each other's achievements.

The North West groups continue to grow, with new branch members in Chester bringing fresh energy and enthusiasm. Their involvement has strengthened links across the area and added to the variety of events and activities on offer.

For those interested in staying connected to the wider WRAC family, membership, which is free, helps keep traditions alive, whilst welcoming new voices. Whether for friendship, shared memories, or simply getting out and about, joining is a rewarding and uplifting experience.

Regular meetings, social gatherings, and organised events, such as summer picnics and seasonal celebrations, offer enjoyable ways to stay engaged and active within our community. There is also a strong sense of mutual support, with members sharing experiences and encouragement. Joining is both rewarding and uplifting.



Chester - Christine Hare

The Chester Branch of the WRAC Association has recently been rejuvenated and it is our intention to continue to promote the WRAC in the North West to offer friendship and opportunities to meet other military veterans. We will continue to offer a monthly lunchtime meeting in Chester along with pop up events to local places of interest or further afield.

We have put up posters advertising the branch in our local libraries and at the RBL Chester and the local Cheshire Regiment meeting place and hope to add some new members soon.

Jane and Christine are joining the WRAC contingent marching in the Cenotaph Parade in London and are attending the Royal British Legion's Festival of Remembrance in November.



**Setting up a new branch
or group is easy!**

Contact HQ today

We need more branch organisers for places which currently do not have a branch. If you live anywhere where you feel there isn't a branch local to you, and would like to find out just how easy and rewarding running a branch can be, contact HQ to find out how to get started.

Liverpool - Carol Fogg

We were happy to welcome 3 new Lionesses to our pride recently - Bernie O'Neill, Ronnie Stone and Eillen Madden. I am sure their time with us will be a roaring success.

We have been enjoying our usual meet-ups, however our friend and branch organiser Sally Phillips was taken from us suddenly. It was a great shock to her family and friends as Sally was someone who loved life, had a smile as big as herself with a laugh to match. She loved her husband Jason and daughter Sue and absolutely adored her young granddaughter, Amelia, who she would bring with her to our monthly get-togethers. Sally was an avid Liverpool F.C. supporter so her family requested that those attending her funeral wear something red and everyone was happy to oblige. On the day, as Sally's coffin was driven away, our ladies formed a Guard of Honour and saluted her as she passed.

Some of our branch members have been meeting up in smaller groups which gives us a great opportunity to get together nearer to different people. We've got lots planned over the coming months including a trip to the arboretum to check on our plot. We're also hoping to have afternoon tea on the Floating Grace which is a canal boat moored within the Royal Albert Dock run by Peter Kenny who served in the Army Reserves and now operates the Floating Grace. He'll be giving us a tour of the dock too, so why not join our branch and join in this amazing trip.



Manchester - Pip Flegel

A splendid jaunt for Manchester Branch in May was a trip to the Spitfire Visitor Centre, located in Hangar 42 at Blackpool Airport, which included a talk on all things RAF. We got to see a simulation of WRAF personnel operating in the control rooms and I asked him if any of the Ack Ack Girls had worked in the control rooms. To our surprise, he confessed that he had never heard of them, so we explained the role of the ATS and the Ack Ack Girls.

We then had a tour of the museum, where Jackie Walton, Liann Andrew and Beryl Sidebotham had the chance to 'fly' a Spitfire simulator and even shoot down the enemy. Thanks to Jackie for organising a great event.

In July I completed a 12-hour sponsored sing-a-thon to raise funds for the charities CancerHelp Garstang & the WRAC Association. There is more about the ear-splitting challenge separately in this issue, see page 19.

As well as in-person get-togethers we continue to gather through the wonderful world of the internet every Monday evening for our weekly quiz. We ring the changes with our quizmaster each time, so we get some really diverse questions thrown at us. One constant is the fun we have.



Wirral - Sharon Broderick MBE

This year marks the first stand-alone Wirral branch report in a while. A milestone made possible, by our sisters in Chester, who have rejuvenated their own branch and are now proudly independent. We are looking forward to meeting up with them regularly and getting into a little mischief together.

Earlier this year I celebrated my 60th birthday with a movies themed party, inviting many of my WRAC friends. Sheila Brown came as Pink Panther and some police friends decided to come as Sister Act. One of the girls came across a road accident on the way and had to arrest the drunk driver. Can you imagine waking up in a cell the next day, believing you were arrested by a nun?!?!

It has been a year of significant birthdays across the branch, celebrated with excellent parties, meals, and laughter that only comes from longstanding friendships. Sadly, a few of our ladies have been unwell but we hope to have them back in the fold very soon.

Lynne Cooke has generously hosted many meetings in her lovely home. Her little dog, Charlie, remains convinced he is not only part of the committee but also a fully-fledged WRAC veteran. Who are we to argue?

We also meet once a month for a meal, with the venue chosen by our ladies and the ever-efficient Sheila Brown, who ensures everything runs smoothly.

We have a couple of outings planned for later in the year, so expect plenty of photographs, and perhaps a few stories next time.



Other Groups

Band - Lyn Ramsey

Despite heavy snowfall across parts of the country, fifteen former members of the WRAC Staff Band gathered for a reunion. A few friends were unfortunately unable to travel because of the weather, but those who made it were determined not to let the snow spoil the occasion.

Many of us had not seen one another for more than forty years. While a few faces took a moment to place, once maiden names were mentioned the years simply melted away. Before long we were chatting, laughing and reminiscing as though we had only been apart for a few weeks rather than several decades.

Although our military careers took us in different directions, the shared experience of serving as musicians in the WRAC Staff Band created friendships that have endured throughout the years. Memories of training, performances, postings and life in the Army were exchanged throughout the day, accompanied by plenty of laughter.

Some members still play and perform regularly, while others have long since put their instruments away. However, our shared love of music remains a bond that connects us all. The reunion was a wonderful opportunity not only to remember the

past, but also to celebrate where life has taken us since leaving the Army. The overwhelming feeling at the end of the day was that forty years had disappeared in an instant.

Everyone agreed it was a tremendous success and we are already looking forward to the next reunion.



PTI - Lyn Hatch

What a weekend that was! Wimbledon Ladies Singles finals, England v Norway FIFA World Cup quarter-final, a heatwave and our reunion!

The bar had gradually filled up as we all arrived on Friday afternoon, and the air conditioning struggled to cope. It's always amazing how quickly everyone just falls in and the reminiscing starts.

We gathered for a quiz and games night on Friday evening. Oh, the fun we had with a loaf of bread, a children's game, plastic cups and balloons!

On Saturday it was a little cooler as we headed for Peterborough City Centre, then the staff and other guests at the hotel swimming pool were entertained by Sheila Lloyd-Graham and the Mermaids Synchronised Display Team.

How quickly the time went, and before we knew it, dinner was over. Sue Westlake gave a short speech, awarded the Dora Nightingale bowl to Kate Bettison for her many years of organising the reunions, which started off at the ASPT WOs & Sgts Mess in 1995, with the last one being held in Farnborough in 2018.

As soon as we had finished eating, there was a mad dash to the lounge area to grab seats and get comfortable before the big match. What an atmosphere, as they played the National Anthem! Pat Rosewell shouted, "Stand up!" It must have been strange watching us all jump up and sing – very loudly.

What a fabulous result to end our brilliant weekend! Now we look forward to doing it all again in two years' time.



Provost - Caroline Gadsby

In March WRAC Provost held their annual reunion in Cambridge with 46 attendees.

WRAC Provost Group started back in 1998 when 16 Provost ladies met in Somerset. From there the annual reunion was formed. The reunions were an idea of our Sgt Bimbo [Charmaine] Coleman who is now a Royal Hospital Chelsea In-pensioner. Bimbo served in the WRAC Provost for over 22 years and worked at Guildford as a drill sergeant. Bimbo missed seeing 'her girls' and asked to have a get together with her close friends. It was agreed to hold our reunions in early March each year.

Over the years the numbers have increased by word of mouth. Each year in a different location. There were no reunions during the pandemic in 2021 and 2022 so our 25th Anniversary Reunion was arranged in 2024 - when 60 people attended the dinner.

As years have progressed ladies are now attending during their retirement and often look forward to making the reunion a long weekend or little holiday away from home. Ladies are very supportive of each other, often keeping in touch or meeting up throughout the year. They are particularly supportive of each other during challenging health issues.

The next WRAC Provost Reunion will take place on Saturday 20th March 2027 in Poole, Dorset. Full details details of the weekend, venue and special rates for the hotel are available, see page 77 for contact details.

If you cannot make next year's but would like to join our contact list for future reunions please contact Andrea. We have veterans of all ages who attend and it would be amazing to see some new faces!

New attendees who have served either in Provost or RMP are welcome and soon make new friends. Please pop along to Facebook page WRAC PROVOST if you would like to reconnect.



Etherton Ribbon Group - Karen Davies

We are delighted to announce the formation of the WRAC Association (WRACA) Etherton Ribbon Group. This is a new special interest group within the WRAC Association for those who have received the Etherton ribbon in recognition of the historic injustice suffered by LGBTQ+ personnel who served under the Armed Forces ban before January 2000.

Receiving the Etherton ribbon has been both deeply personal and emotional. It recognises not only the service of those affected by the ban, but also the unfair treatment experienced by so many members of the LGBTQ+ community during their military careers. Through this group, we hope to create additional opportunities for friendship, shared understanding and mutual support.

Our aim is to bring members together socially several times each year, helping to build connections across the Association in a welcoming and supportive environment whilst ensuring that we reinforce and support the work of the WRAC Association. We are excited about creating a visible and positive community within the wider Association.

The WRACA Etherton Group is open to all Etherton ribbon recipients, and to allies and supporters who wish to stand alongside us and help foster friendship, inclusion and understanding.

We would like to ask anyone interested in joining the group to complete a short survey to help us to confirm the events and begin to grow the organising committee for our group. If you would like to find out more, express an interest, or help shape the future of the group, please join our facebook group - WRACA Etherton Ribbon Group.

We look forward to building this community together.



From the Branch News Editor: Babs Anderson



Well, that's another 6 months of frenetic energy expended on branch events and get-togethers. I've been quite exhausted just reading about what some of you get up to!

Whenever I have the chance to speak with your branch representatives, they often tell me that nothing has happened. However, once we get talking, we discover that at least one interesting thing has occurred and is exciting enough to tell our members about. On the other hand, it is absolutely true that some branches have only met for a lovely pub lunch and a chat a couple of times, where the only extraordinary occurrence was the rising price of a decent merlot. I must admit, I have still enjoyed the chance to have a chat and a giggle with our reporters, whether there was any news or not.

One of the most important things to remember to do whenever a group of you meet up is to take photos and send them immediately to the Editor of Lioness. I'm not saying that I always think to grab a photo, because I don't, but it can be anyone in the group who remembers that our mobiles are incredible pieces of equipment. Let's share the joy!

Look out for some changes to Branch News in the next edition of Lioness, when we will continue to report what our members have been up to, but in a slightly different way!

DEADLINE FOR BRANCH NEWS SUBMISSION: 30TH NOVEMBER 2026
Christmas party photos only may be added up until 11th January 2027

Area Coordinators Needed

Are you in the Scotland & Northern Ireland or Eastern regions?
Do you want to support your fellow female veterans?

Area coordinators offer support to branches in their region, contribute to the direction of Association membership, and sit on the Major Grants Committee of the Benevolent Fund. We have vacancies for coordinators in our Scotland & Northern Ireland or Eastern areas. We would welcome applications from enthusiastic members and friends or family who would like to show their appreciation for the service of our veterans.

Contact HQ for more information: membership@wraca.org.uk

BRANCH DIRECTORY

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Area Co-ordinator - Vacant

Aberdeen

Contact: Sandra Lemmon

Email: huggles46@btinternet.com

Ayreshire

Contact: Arlene Reid

Email: arlenereid@hotmail.co.uk

Edinburgh

Contact: Robbie Knox

Email: robbieknox55@gmail.com

Fife & Tayside

Contact: Debbie Coupland

Email: debbiecoupland14@gmail.com

Glasgow

Contact: Joyce Steele

Email: steele_joyce@hotmail.com

Moray & Highland

Contact: Sue Simpson

Email:

morayandhighlandsbranch@yahoo.com

Stirling

Contact: Liz Dixon

Email: liz_m_dixon@yahoo.co.uk

Phone: 07745 751657

Ulster

Contact: Sylvia Connachan

Email: Loughran425@gmail.com

Phone: 07847 131568

North East

Area Co-ordinator - Shelley Whitehead
northeast.area@wraca.org.uk

Bradford

Contact: Christine Janice Jane

Email: janicejaneuk@yahoo.co.uk

Phone: 07979 501518

Cleveland

Contact: Suzanne Allan

Email: suzanne_allan416@hotmail.com

Phone: 07801 571528

East Riding & North Lincolnshire

Contact: Dorothy Mitchelmore

Email: mydeluxe06@icloud.com

Phone: 07897 449920

Grimsby

Contact: Gail Davy

Email: gaildavy240@gmail.com

Phone: 01472 347868

Leeds

Contact: Michelle Gibbs

Email: michellegibbs012@aol.com

Phone: 07810 686559

Lincolnshire Wolds and Coast

Contact: Betty Gash

Email: bettygash1959@gmail.com

Newcastle

Contact: Tanya Hall

Email: tanyalouise4472@gmail.com

Phone: 07590 323497

Central

Area Co-ordinator - Denise Aitken
central.area@wraca.org.uk

Derby

Contact: Judy Smith
Email: Judy.smith4529@gmail.com
Phone: 07790 848364

Leicester and Nottingham

Contact: Sue Slattery
Email: sue@abby1941.plus.com
Phone: 07434 577010

Lincoln

Contact: Denise Aitken
Email: central.area@wraca.org.uk

Peterborough

Contact: Vivien Hamilton
Email: vivienhamilton1@gmail.com
Phone: 07783 412278

Sheffield

Contact: Sandra Warne
Email: sandra.warne@btinternet.com
Phone: 07713 252521

Eastern

Area Co-ordinator - Vacant

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire

Contact: Chris Barrett
Email: 78chrisbarrett@gmail.com
Phone: 07508 322989

Colchester

Contact: Kerry Warnes
Email: kerrypam@hotmail.com
Phone: 07763 122474

Kings Lynn

Contact: Audrey Pearce
Email: audreypearce308@yahoo.co.uk
Phone: 07534 648806

Norfolk

Contact: Lyn Hatch
Email: wracnorfolk@aol.com
Phone: 07929 070665

Suffolk

Contact: Liz Ives
Email: lizives@hotmail.com
Phone: 01473 807099

London & South East

Area Co-ordinator - Maggy Ashmore
southeast.area@wraca.org.uk

Canterbury

Contact: Susan Wing
Email: susanwing14@gmail.com
Phone: 01843 836430

Greater London

Contact: Chrissie Mills
Email: chrissie.mills@hotmail.co.uk
Phone: 07505 199653

Royal Hospital Chelsea

Contact: MaryAnn Clark
Email: maryannclark7600@yahoo.com
Phone: 07505 199653

Invicta

Contact: Karen Radford
Email: radders67@gmail.com
Phone: 07702 651045

Worthing

Contact: Carol Hill
Email: cazhill6cazhill6@hotmail.com
Phone: 07790 922110

South & South West

Area Co-ordinator - Amanda Foster
southwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Bristol

Contact: Judith Stinchcombe
Email: wracbristolbranch@outlook.com
Phone: 07837 455352

Dorset

Contact: Caroline Hearne
Email: wracdorset@gmail.com

Exeter

Contact: Vacant
Email: southwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Plymouth

Contact: Ann Williams
Email: m_ann1@blueyonder.co.uk
Phone: 07714 216592

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

Contact: Sally Watson
Email: sally1882@gmail.com
Phone: 02392 799028

Salisbury

Contact: Amanda Foster
Email: salisburywracvets@gmail.com
Phone: 07788 316596

Southampton

Contact: Stephanie Caws
Email: stephaniecaws@sky.com
Phone: 07599 919762

Torbay

Contact: Pauline Marr
Email: paulinemarr55@gmail.com
Phone: 07787 763779

West Surrey

Contact: Stephanie Kolvik
Email: westsurreywrac@gmail.com

Winchester

Contact: Lisa Aven
Email: nlaven05@proton.me

North West

Area Co-ordinator - Dawn Hawker
northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Chester

Contact: Jane King
Email: wracchester@gmail.com
Phone: 07956 776662

Cumbria

Contact: Dawn Hawker
Email: northwest.area@wraca.org.uk

Lancashire

Contact: Gail Newsham
Email: gaildki@talktalk.net
Phone: 07939 505485

Liverpool

Contact: Pat Brown
Email: pat-br@hotmail.co.uk

Phone: 07896 486171

Manchester

Contact: Pip Flegel
Email: pipflegel2009@gmail.com
Phone: 07375 095532

Oldham

Contact: Kath Kirtley
Email: kathleenkirtley@gmail.com
Phone: 07910 925070

Wirral

Contact: Sharon Broderick MBE
Email: sharonbroderick139@sky.com
Phone: 07784 068826

Wales & The West

Area Co-ordinator - Ann Stack
wales.west.area@wraca.org.uk

Birmingham

Contact: Rosie Garrison
Email: rosie-garrison@live.co.uk
Phone: 07791 476343

Coventry & Warwickshire

Contact: Caroline Gadsby
Email: caroline.gadsby@hotmail.co.uk

Gloucestershire

Contact: Ann Stack
Email: anndewsnip@hotmail.com
Phone: 07842 831364

Herefordshire

Contact: Lynda Armstrong
Email: lynda.armstrong1960@gmail.com
Phone: 01443 837592

Marches & Mid Wales

Contact: Bernie Dolan
Email: bernie.dolan@live.co.uk
Phone: 07980 841802

Oxfordshire

Contact: Christine Townsend
Email: christine.townsend54@outlook.com
Phone: 07756 681441

Shropshire

Contact: Chris Powell
Email: chris.powell2024@outlook.com
Phone: 07773 264492

South Wales

Contact: Deserie Mansfield
Email: wracswales@outlook.com
Phone: 07940 001866

Stoke On Trent

Contact: Ann Morris
Email: anniemorris886@gmail.com

NEW

Tamworth

Contact: Chris Whitehead
Email: chris_wol@hotmail.com
Phone: 07833 546388

Worcester

Contact: Jane Griffin-Ash
Email: janebgash@icloud.com
Phone: 07880 732245

Other Groups

PTI Group - Lyn Hatch E: wracnorfolk@aol.com T: 07929 070665
Band - Sue Rummery sue.rummery@gmail.com
Sole Sisters Walking Group -
Debbie Walker E: walker_d22@sky.com T: 07946 733932
Provost - Andrea Ford E: andreaford1@sky.com T: 07590 515930
Crafters - facebook group - WRAC Crafters
Etherton Ribbon Group - facebook group - WRACA Etherton Ribbon Group.

Area Coordinators Needed

Are you in the Scotland & Northern Ireland or Eastern regions?
Could you support your fellow female veterans?

Area coordinators offer support to branches in their region, contribute to the direction of Association membership, and sit on the Major Grants Committee of the Benevolent Fund. We have vacancies for coordinators in our Scotland & Northern Ireland or Eastern areas. We would welcome applications from enthusiastic members and friends or family who would like to show their appreciation for the service of our veterans.

Contact HQ for more information: membership@wraca.org.uk

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

Hermé Emary

Hermé was keen to start up a Winchester branch, and the inaugural meeting took place on 30th June 2001, (after applying for its approval on 2nd May 2001), with 16 members attending.

To date there have been around 70 members, past and present. Hermé's contributions over the years to the branch have been professional, exemplary and most loyal; ensuring members are supported, friendships made and new members welcomed with open arms.

Herme has a wonderful ability to organise the branch members and events, and has been just the right person for this 'job'. Initially, meetings took place in various locations around Winchester such as The Worthies Social Club, the Community Room at Worthy Down and various restaurants in the area, and occasionally in her garden on a fine day. Most meetings in recent years have taken place in a steakhouse in Winchester which is very convenient for those travelling some distance.

Hermé efficiently arranged many outings to London including the Royal Tournament where, unknown to those attending, she had arranged a stretch limo to transport members from the Union Jack Club to Earls Court. She also arranged visits to Westminster Abbey (where photography was permitted) and the London Silver Vaults (where photography was not allowed, but we did sneak a crafty group photo). Hermé organised a visit to RMAS to see Fantasy of Fire which was a fantastic event.

Hermé has been very proactive in raising funds for the Association through organising raffles, cake sales and quizzes, raising over £1,500 during the first ten years. She quite often handed out military related items that she had come across, notebooks, diaries, badges etc; Even though Hermé has now stood down from the secretary role within the branch, she continues to support the new secretary with enthusiasm, advice and a friendly ear, whilst still attending branch meetings / events.

Nominated by Lisa Aven and Amanda Foster



Lynn Blowes

Lynn was posted into the position of Chief Clerk RAPC Association in 2007. Her new office was next door to the WRAC Association office and she soon joined the Winchester Branch, in the same year.

In 2008, she volunteered to take over as Branch Treasurer when the holder of the post at the time (Rowena) was posted to Nepal. Lynn has held the post of treasurer continuously from 2008 to present.

As treasurer, she produces an annual report and spreadsheet of the accounts for the branch AGM, and for Association HQ back when each branch had to submit accounts for consolidation. Lynn was responsible for making sure that annual subs were paid (when we requested them) and producing minutes. When it was decided to stop requesting branch subs, her input was critical in ensuring that Winchester branch had the funds to continue to support branch events, by deciding which could be subsidised and by how much.

Lynn's contribution, support, organisation skills and hard work over the last 19 years has most certainly made this branch a place to go for friendship, camaraderie and joy.

Nominated by Lisa Aven and Amanda Foster



**If you like to nominate someone
for the certificate of appreciation,
please contact your area co-ordinator**



100th BIRTHDAYS

Birthday wishes go out to these members who will be marking their centenary soon.

- Mrs Barbara Brown
- Mrs Florence May Gallimore
- Mrs Joan Neve
- Mrs Patricia Hill
- Mrs Beryl Mallett

Congratulations to all of our members who have had birthdays since the last issue of the Lioness, especially to our new centenarians. We hope you all enjoyed the cards and flowers we sent. Here are some photos from our recent recipients!



Georgina 'Gina' Shadrack turned 100 on the 20th April and sadly died peacefully one day later. She had led a very full life, with the ATS being so very much a part of it, especially as an active member of the WRAC Chelmsford branch. To mark her 100th Birthday, her family arranged a celebration party which over 60 people attended. Her daughter told us that she was very appreciative of the flowers and card from the WRAC Association.



You can read Gina's obituary on page 91

Joyce Gough celebrated her centenary with friends Patricia (92) and Shirley (90) and were joined by four members of Lincoln branch on 26th April with a fantastic cake. Joyce joined the ATS aged 19 and shared a photo from her time in service with us.



Do you know anyone with a 100th birthday coming up? Please make sure you let us know if so, as we would love to be able to send them their centenary flowers from us.

As always, we love to see photos of our members with the flowers we send, so please send them to us here: editor@wraca.org.uk

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT THE VICTORY SERVICES CLUB, LONDON
SATURDAY 21ST MARCH 2026, 12:30

Amanda Hassell (AH) Chair and Vice-President
Rowena Naile MBE (RN) Chair of Membership Council
Monica Jones (MJ) Chair of Ben. Fund Major Grants C'ttee
Alexandra Fawbert
Janette Deans
Barbara Johnson
Helen Merrington-Rust MBE
Shân Veillard-Thomas

Vivienne Buck
Sue MacKenzie
Dawn Munday
Shelley Whitehead

Paula Rogers (CEO) Chief Executive Officer
Jane Winfield (JW) Finance & Governance Officer (minutes)

Maggy Ashmore
Amanda Foster
Dawn Hawker
Tracey MacPherson
Ann Stack

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Item	Notes
8	Influence Report – AH The Female Veterans Transformation Programme is in its final year. The Female Veterans Toolkit was launched in November where we were joined by the Minister for Veterans and People, Louise Sandher-Jones MP and Director, Office for Veterans Affairs, Anisha Worbs. Now in the education and training phase we need your help to let the organisations that we engage with from your GP to your MP know about the toolkit. The FVTP staff - Liza Jarvis, Stacey Denyer & Ria Luke all thanked. Paula Rogers, CEO, has been elected to serve a further three-year term on the executive committee of Cobseo. Our Trustee Viv Buck also sits on this committee in her capacity as CEO of BLESMA. The Association is leading the way in restoring berets and cap badges to those affected by the pre-2000 'gay-ban'. Short video shown of Cathy Cherry (a previous restoration recipient) to promote applications for financial restorative measures as the deadline is December the 12th 2026. Cathy Cherry thanked.
9	Annual Report and Accounts – TS (online) New auditors HSJ Accountants have been appointed. We have had a smooth transfer of responsibilities. HSJ has checked financial policies and processes as well as the accountancy figures to ensure we are meeting our own rules as well as those of the Charity Commission. There are no outstanding actions to be taken. Sarah Morris, internal auditor and Jane Winfield, Finance & Governance officer thanked. Investment managers RBC Brewin Dolphin has done a fantastic job with investment gains of £572,704 this year. Legacies received totalled £30,519. Thanks to everyone who donated including the Lionesses fundraising activities. AH - Thanked Tim for his four years as treasurer, and thanked Rowena Naile for her time at the WRAC Association including presentation of leaving gift.
10	Resolutions – AH None received from trustees, Membership Council members or our branches.
11	Any other business – AH No other business tabled or raised.
12	Dates of Next Meeting – AH Next AGM will be on Saturday 20th March 2027. Location TBC but might not be London. The meeting closed at 13:30
Full minutes and accounts available at wraca.org.uk	

Statement of Financial Activities For The Year Ended 30 September 2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	2025 Total funds	2024 Total funds
	£	£	£	£
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:				
Donations and legacies	37,724	199,207	236,931	283,328
Charitable activities:				
Other Events	2,798	-	2,798	763
Grand Reunion	36,024	-	36,024	-
Investments	234,832	-	234,832	236,375
Other	9,655	-	9,655	5,411
	<u>321,033</u>	<u>199,207</u>	<u>520,240</u>	<u>525,877</u>
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Raising funds	(37,883)	-	(37,883)	(27,557)
Charitable activities:				
Direct Costs	(112,908)	(157,061)	(269,969)	(154,490)
Grant Funding	(200,878)	-	(200,878)	(217,349)
Support Costs	(229,251)	-	(229,251)	(253,304)
	<u>(580,920)</u>	<u>(157,061)</u>	<u>(737,981)</u>	<u>(652,700)</u>
NET EXPENDITURE BEFORE INVESTMENT LOSSES	<u>(259,887)</u>	<u>42,146</u>	<u>(217,741)</u>	<u>(126,823)</u>
Net gains on investments	572,704	-	572,704	799,405
NET EXPENDITURE	<u>312,817</u>	<u>42,146</u>	<u>354,963</u>	<u>672,582</u>
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	<u>312,817</u>	<u>42,146</u>	<u>354,963</u>	<u>672,582</u>
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:				
Total funds brought forward	8,226,847	36,204	8,263,051	7,590,469
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>8,539,664</u>	<u>78,350</u>	<u>8,618,014</u>	<u>8,263,051</u>

Letters...

Dear Editor,

Intake 518 - 40th Anniversary Reunion in Guildford.

Did you join the army and start your basic training on 13th April 1987 and pass out 22nd May 1987?

If so, next year is the 40th anniversary and a reunion is being arranged in Guildford over the weekend of 9th - 11th April. We would love as many as possible from the intake to attend.

For further details please contact Tracy Hook 07810 171169 or Sandy Saxton on 07713 252521.

Regards
Sandy Saxton/Warne

Please get in touch with Sandy or Tracy directly if you can put them in touch with anyone from Intake 518 or would like to attend the reunion, we're looking forward to seeing the photos already!

Ed



Dear Editor

In 1981-82 I served with Kim, I think McConnell, in 59 Independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers in Plymouth at Crownhill Fort.

There were only three WRAC serving with the Sqn and we were barracked at HMS Drake with WRNS. I was posted from the Sqn to RAEC in February 1982. Shortly after that the Sqn went to the Falklands for the duration of the war with Kim as rear party and we lost touch. Lorna Scott, the third WRAC has sadly passed away.

I recently spent the weekend with the lads from 59, and would love to be able to locate Kim and for her to see the guys again. If there is any way of finding Kim, that would be wonderful.

Many thanks,

Hayley Gay

If anyone knows of, or has any contact with Kim, please email editor@wraca.org.uk so we can hopefully reconnect these WRAC ladies.

Dear Editor,

I am hoping to track down any former colleagues who also joined the WRAC in Oct 1973. At our passing out parade at Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Guildford we had the enclosed photograph taken.

I am second top row, third from the left in the photo and would be so pleased to hear from anyone who passed out with me. At the time, I was Susan Jack, on marriage Susan Mawer.

Thank you so much,

Susan Kent

If you remember Susan or know someone who would have joined at the same time as her please let us know - editor@wraca.org.uk



Dear Editor,

I am hoping to reconnect with anyone who might remember me from my time in the WRAC. My platoon mates would probably know me as Megan Irving.

I joined the WRAC in January 1980 till 1984. I did my training in Guildford (Intake 436) and after passing out I stayed on the barracks as one of six WRAC hairdressers.

In November 1980 I embarked on a tour to Northern Ireland: Thiepval Barracks Lisburn as a hairdresser running a small salon. I was lucky enough to earn my first stripes from a private to a L/CPL.

When the trade was disbanded, I decided to join the WRAC medics and whilst waiting for my dates for my training I was posted to Aldergrove Camp [Aldergrove Flying Station]. From here, I patrolled with a team of soldiers on the streets of Belfast, carrying out searches during the troubles. I also became a loadmistress on the Lynx helicopters.

After two years in Northern Ireland I was posted to Keogh Barracks, where I commenced my medic training. I ended my army career at COD Donnington as a medic on the camp, leaving to get married. We're both ex-military and still happily married after 42 years.

It would be great to hear from anyone who remembers me, and find out how they're getting on.

From Maggie Thomas

Does anyone recognise Maggie (Megan) from the photo, or did you serve in any of the same places as her at the same time? If you did, email editor@wraca.org.uk and we'd love to put you in touch.



Dear Editor,

I am trying to track an old friend called Holly - I am afraid I don't have her surname. We underwent the WRAC Officer Assessment together in the late summer of 1986, sharing a room at Westbury. Holly passed and I am afraid I did not. She went on to Sandhurst thereafter. My name at the time was Katherine Griffiths. Would you be able to help me try and reconnect with Holly?

Many thanks
Katherine Wills

Did anyone else attend the WRAC Officer Assessment in the summer of 1986? Perhaps you remember Holly from Sandhurst? If anyone has any recollections of Holly please email editor@wraca.org.uk so we can put Katherine in touch.

Dear Editor

Its taken me over 30 years to get this done. But I always vowed I would. My Mother hated tattoos, with a passion. Not only would she have been angry (I'd have coped with that) She would have been heartbroken, even with such a laudable subject... and she was very proud of my service. I could never have caused her that upset. She passed last year so this was my time to do this.

The years I spent in the Army were arguably the best time of my life and I was particularly proud of the WRAC both as TA and as a regular soldier. My identity as a WRAC and as a servicewomen has never left me. I hear this from so many male and female veterans regardless of length of service. I left because I wanted children but it broke my heart to do so. I never felt I fitted anywhere else really, even though I have a good career in Education. I hope you all approve and understand my need, at 60 to do this.

Sara Emanuelli





The WRAC Association is open to all female veterans.

Whether you served in the Royal Navy, the British Army or the Royal Air Force
you'll find a home within our association.

If you have female friends who served in the Royal Navy or Royal Air Force, why not encourage them to join today. It's free, and we can link them up with other female veterans nearby.

Plus serving women are also welcome, so if you have daughters, granddaughters,
goddaughters or nieces

currently serving,

tell them about

the WRAC

Association.

It's great to hear

news from them

about the modern

Armed Forces and

to share our proud

history with them.



Let's keep the camaraderie going and the conversation flowing.

wraca.org.uk/join

In My Day...

A 2025 biography tells the terrific tale of a hitherto-unknown ATS girl, we featured Part 1 of Rena's story in our last edition of the Lioness

Part 2: Beyond Bletchley

Rena Stewart was a Scottish linguist, ATS and Bletchley Park Girl for whom Bletchley Park was just the start.

Trials and translations

In September 1945, Rena and several other Bletchley Park girls were sent to Germany with the Intelligence Corps. After an epic journey across war-torn Europe, they arrived at Bad Nenndorf, near Hanover. This former spa was now being used as an interrogation centre. Her role there was to translate the statements of captured Nazi officers, ahead of the Nuremberg trials. It was life-and-death work (since many of the prisoners would go on to be executed) but an interesting challenge.

A top-secret task

One day, Rena's boss (a Major Bill Oughton of the Intelligence Corps) came into her office, looking serious. He gave Rena and her Bletchley friend Margery Forbes a top-secret task: to translate Hitler's will. They did so with great care, consulting every dictionary, and not telling a soul. Nor did they know what happened to their work – or not until 1947, when the historian and Intelligence Corps officer Hugh Trevor-Roper published a best-selling book, *The Last Days of Hitler*. Rena bought the book and spotted her and Margery's translation within it. Although other English versions of the will had been done by then, she was proud that theirs could be considered "definitive."

Work hard, play hard

Germany in September 1945 was a frightening place to be – at least to Rena and the girls. There were genuine fears of a Nazi uprising, and they had to be escorted everywhere by male soldiers. However, they managed to have a splendid social life. A photo album, found in Rena's belongings after her death, is revealing. It contains images of bombed out cities, but also of parties, love interests and sightseeing (including to Hitler's bunker). There is even a scribbled note bearing the nickname 'Sergeant McHaggis'!

Moving on to the media

The adventure of Germany ended in December 1946. Rena wasn't too sad to go home, though, as she considered the war a bit of a distraction, from her long-held dream of becoming a journalist. Her job hunt was difficult, because she couldn't talk about her secret work experience, and because she was a woman. However, after several months she managed to find a role at the BBC World Service, as a lowly clerk. Rena worked her way up from there, over nearly 40 years, fighting and "conquering" workplace sexism. Ultimately, she became the first female leader in the newsroom; respected for her journalistic skill, gentle smile and will of iron. "My greatest achievement," she declared, "has been getting people to recognise that a woman can be as good a journalist as a man." And although this wonderful woman's war service was a relatively short episode in her story, it seems to have helped her on her way to the top.

And finally

Rena never married nor had children: too busy, she admitted. But she did live to 100 ½, and she had a ball at every step of the way!

Rena's biography: soldier, journalist, feminist and fun-lover 'The Story of Rena Stewart', by Victoria Walsh, was published in May 2025 by Pen and Sword History.



Rena (front row, second from left) and her colleagues outside their billet at Bad Nenndorf



Breaking glass ceilings at the BBC

Rena at home aged 100



Rena and her brick at Bletchley Park





Obituaries - Their Final Salute



LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROSEMARY ESTHER CORNWELL (NÉE SMITH)

16 December 1943 - 14 March 2026



Rosemary was born in Clifton, Bristol and educated at Bromley Girls High School; she left after taking 'O' Levels. After attending Miss Foster's Secretarial College and working briefly as a secretary she joined the Army. She trained at the WRAC School of Instruction, Liphook and was promoted to Junior Under Officer before commissioning in August 1964.

Her first postings were to the Central Ordnance Depot, Bicester followed by the Royal Armoured Corps Centre at Bovington, Dorset and the WRAC Centre at Guildford. Thereafter she became Second in Command of 10 Company WRAC in Aldershot at the brand new Duchess of Kent Barracks.

After Aldershot, she went to the Royal Army Veterinary Corps Centre at Melton Mowbray with the kennel maids and grooms in her charge. She was not keen on horses but did start an enterprise of rearing pigs and selling them! Then followed a tour as a Women's Service Liaison Officer before a posting to HQ UKLF, Salisbury as Staff Captain (Operations and Plans) where she met her future husband, David Cornwell, an RAOC officer.

She retired from the WRAC on marriage and they were posted to Germany but sadly the marriage failed. As Rosemary always said 'David took the Volvo and left me the dog!' Later she was grateful for this as 'Tigger' detected carbon monoxide escaping from the boiler in her cottage!



Five years later she re-joined the WRAC and was posted to 12 Company WRAC Mill Hill as Officer Commanding of the Postal Workers and Clerks working in the MOD. On leaving Mill Hill, she became Staff Officer Personnel, HQ Wales in Brecon followed by RCB at Westbury as Assistant Training Officer. In 1987 she was promoted to Lt Col and her last two postings were as Commander WRAC in HQ London District and HQ NE District in York. She retired in February 1993 and for several years was employed by the Military Charity BLESMA.

She always stayed in touch with her WRAC friends: Sue Wing, Jenny Andrews, Sue Bateman, Rowena Patrick, Liz Saxon and Audrey Smith, meeting up with them on many occasions over the years. Audrey spent wonderful holidays with her on Safari in Kenya, Thailand, Corfu and in Tenerife where Rosemary bought a timeshare, later exchanging her weeks for holidays in more exotic locations. Along with Jenny and Sue, she spent many happy times sailing with the Offshore Cruising Club which started her passion for offshore sailing.

In 2000, Rosemary and her partner, Alan, sailed from the UK for a new chapter in her life afloat in the Mediterranean, eventually settling in Malta and renting a small flat close to the harbour, the two of them sailing 'The Med' on wonderful holidays. She became well known in the Ex Pat community and spent many hours as a 'Trolley Dolly' selling newspapers and magazines to patients in the local hospital and fund raising for the Cathedral particularly by selling second hand clothes. Many friends and family flew to Malta for relaxing holidays over the next couple of decades. She sang in the Cathedral choir, and persuaded some of her guests to join her in the choir stalls!



Rosemary was always up for any challenge and one of the most demanding was pushing her caravan over the peak of the Dolomites as her Ford Escort was struggling! She took two Scots Guards kilts to Rome, helped make two hundred trifles in the middle of the night, learnt to ski on the new Aldershot Ski Slope and canoed on the Wye to encourage her servicewomen. She was always willing to help with DIY and once she passed out breathing in fumes from radiator paint. She was the 'life and soul' of the party, with a bubbly character, infectious laugh, cheeky grin and will be greatly missed by all her friends and family.

*Col Audrey Smith OBE
With contributions from Rev Susan Wing*



COLONEL FRANCES EDWINA HUTLEY (NÉE GREAVES) BSc FBIM psc† NADC

20 October 1941- 20 April 2026



Frances was born in County Down and was educated at Glelola Collegiate Grammar School before studying at the Methodist College and then Queens University in Belfast reading Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Psychology, graduating with a BSc in Psychology. She joined the University Officer Training Corps and gained a scholarship, but remained in the OTC and commissioned into the Territorial Army. Frances attended the Short Commissioning course at the WRAC School of Instruction in Hindhead and was granted a Regular Commission in September 1963.

Her first posting was to 8 Independent Company at the Ordnance Depot in Bicester as a Platoon Officer before becoming Administrative Officer at the National Defence College in Latimer, moving onto the Personnel Selection Team at the WRAC Centre allocating recruits into trades. In 1968 she was posted as an Intelligence Officer and OC WRAC to 9 Signal Regiment in Cyprus where she met Robin Hutley. On her return to the UK she served in 10 Signal Regiment in Hounslow.

Frances broke through many glass ceilings during her career. In 1973 she became the first woman to spend a year at the Royal Military College of Science in Shrivenham (Division 2 of the Staff College Course) designed for Technical Staff Officers, and to gain a 'dagger' after her 'psc' post nominal. In April 1974, whilst at the Army Staff College in Camberley, she married Robin, and at the end of Staff College was posted to the Ministry of Defence as a Technical Intelligence Officer responsible for Soviet military analysis and assessment alongside key NATO allies. A tour at AG16 in the Directorate of Manning followed, managing the careers of WRAC Junior Officers.



On promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, Frances went to the WRAC Directorate before becoming the first WRAC Officer appointed as a Lt Col on the Staff of HQ BAOR, responsible for personnel, service schools, Army hospitals and medical services throughout Germany. In 1985 she was promoted Colonel and posted back to the WRAC Directorate as the Deputy Director. A year later she went to HQ UK Land Forces in Wilton as Commander WRAC and was proud to become a Freeman of the City of London. She was selected to attend the NATO Defence College in Rome and always remembered the course with fondness regularly attending annual reunions there.



Her final posting was to NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons as the first WRAC Officer to be appointed Deputy (Army) Mil Representative. She excelled in her role as an enthusiastic and capable member of the team who supported the UKNMR in this highly significant task. She was also the first UK female General Staff Officer trained for NATO Nuclear Weapons Release Procedures. Working in a tri-service, multinational world she proved immensely efficient and her enormous sense of fun was admired, respected and loved in equal measure.

Frances and Robin bought their final house in St Margaret's Bay near Dover - he had retired early to support Frances in her career. Being great wine lovers and connoisseurs, they named their house 'Merlot' and constructed a temperature-controlled wine store in the garage! Travelling all over Europe, they were happiest in their favourite spot on the Mosel in Germany. They sailed on their boat 'Yeoman' before they took to cruising further afield to Russia, the Med and Kenya. Frances was a member of the Forces Art Society, and her paintings hung in the Mall Galleries in London. She taught art locally and ran exhibitions of her own and her students' work. After Robin died Frances cruised further afield from Norway to Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Canary and Cape Verde Islands. She was a member of the local community, Church, and Art Group as well as charities including the Royal British Legion.



Frances was a trailblazer - able and competent, kind and caring. Very determined if something needed to be achieved, she ensured her subordinates grew in confidence and achieved their potential. Always smiling, witty and amusing, warmth and generosity were her bywords.

Col Audrey Smith OBE
*With contributions from family members,
 Col. Ian Logan, Elizabeth Saxon, Rowena
 Patrick and Wendy Hereford*

MAJOR SUSAN BARKER (NÉE TAYLOR)

10 October 1946 - 4 February 2026



Sue Taylor was born in Kent, and educated at Ashford Grammar School for Girls where she was a prefect and House Captain, and represented the school in all sports.

She commissioned into the WRAC in December 1965, serving her 19 years in locations including the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot, WRAC Centre, RAEC Centre in Beaconsfield, Hong Kong (where she was ADC to his Excellency the Governor of Hong Kong - see photo), Cyprus and MOD. Her appointments ranged from regimental duty and sports administration to staff jobs in various HQs. Sue played Inter-Service Tennis at Wimbledon, Inter- Service and Combined Services Hockey and Inter-Service, Combined Services and Minor County Squash. She became Hong Kong Squash champion, and Army Women's Squash champion on 4 occasions, and played a match at the Pentagon during a Combined Services squash tour to the USA.



Sue met Robin Barker, an RAEC Officer, in Cyprus and chose to leave the Army after they married and accompany Robin to Germany for the next 5 years. There she embarked on an OU degree which she completed on their return to the UK.

Sue joined Army Golf Club in 1992, and was appointed Captain of the Ladies Section in 1999 - the Centenary of the founding of the Ladies Section meaning Sue presided over a variety of events to commemorate this special year. In 2003 she was elected Lady Captain for a second time, an honour not afforded to many, and in 2020 Sue became the first lady elected Club Captain. She became Army Junior Golf Co-Ordinator in 2016 at which point there were 32 juniors; by last year there were 81! Despite her declining health Sue kept 'her finger on the pulse' at the Club and celebrated her 79th birthday in the Clubhouse.

Sue was a dedicated treasurer and deputy coordinator of the WRAC PTI Reunions. She was selfless with her time both to Army Golf Club and the WRAC PTIs and is remembered with great respect and affection.

Brigadier D A Harrison MBE JP DL, and Lt Col Sue Westlake MBE

DORIS IVY GOSS

14 May 1925 - 7 March 2026



Doris Goss served in the ATS from May 1943 until January 1947. She reached the rank of Sergeant and worked as a Clerk Class I. Doris, having worked at The Times newspaper as a typist and shorthand writer, was an efficient administrator: organised, dependable and discreet. Her wartime service took her from Guildford to the Welsh Guards Training Battalion, then to Egypt and later Jerusalem.

One of the most serious incidents recorded in her service history was a flying-bomb attack on a battalion sports meeting in June 1944. Doris was wounded and others were killed. She never spoke dramatically about such events and after serving in Britain she was posted to Egypt, where she worked in a typing pool at Tel-el-Kebir. Official records suggest she worked in Intelligence, although Doris never discussed that aspect of her service in any detail. What she did talk about was the King David Hotel. She recalled the explosives hidden in milk churns, the warning calls that were made, and the tragic consequences when those warnings were not fully acted upon.

After leaving the ATS she spent more than four years living in a convent in Normandy. She wasn't religious and never became a nun, which only made the story more intriguing! During her last

hospital stay, a doctor mentioned that Doris still carried shrapnel in her body, somehow it seemed entirely fitting that Doris had quietly lived with shrapnel for decades without ever making a fuss about it.

Doris had no close family to arrange her funeral, yet she was not forgotten, with the RBL and WRAC Association members from Greater London Branch in attendance.

Adrian Anderson, friend and neighbour



SUZANNE STONE

4 October 1968 - 25 April 2026



Suzanne was immensely proud of her exemplary service in the WRAC. After serving at various UK bases and deploying to the First Gulf War, she received a commendation for her dedication during the national ambulance strike. Suzanne and I were very proud to form up to march together at the Cenotaph with the WRAC Association a few years ago.

Suzanne accomplished so much in her life; a Duke of Edinburgh's award, serving in the WRAC, becoming a police officer, a first aid instructor, gaining a teaching qualification and receiving commendations from both her military and police service. In the early 2000s we underwent driver training together and became the first two female high-speed test drivers for General Motors, such an amazing experience.

Suzanne loved animals, golf, cooking, quiz programmes, music and singing and was very entertaining. She loved all sports (watching, not participating!). We would buy 'experiences' to enjoy together - go-karting, skydiving, pottery, horse riding, white water rafting and shooting to name but a few. As an air cadet she had enjoyed flying chipmunks, gliders and had helicopter lessons; more recently she went up in an aerobatic plane which she took control of to do barrel rolls, she loved the thrill and danger.

Her strength, humour, compassion, understanding and love were not just traits they were the core of who she was. Suzanne could lift even the heaviest of days, and made everyone around her feel seen, and made you feel safe to be yourself. Love filled every corner of our life together.

Suzanne's life was cut short at 57 and despite the advancement in her illness she had so much determination to survive. She showed true courage and resilience - never complaining and carried herself with a quiet strength that inspired everyone caring for her. She wanted to protect the people that loved her, especially me, and she did it with courage.



I had the honour of being married to Suzanne for 27 years and she was the centre of my world. Thank you for your humour, compassion, strength and the love you gave me so freely, I will carry you with me for the rest of my life. The silence is deafening; there's an emptiness all around and within me. You have left a huge void which will never be filled. With all my love always forever yours. Until we meet again Darling, thank you for loving me and making my life complete.

Karen Sillett - Wife

JEAN MARY DOE

12 December 1930 - 5 November 2025

Jean was Chair of Southampton Branch long before I joined in 2005 and continued in the position until her death. Jean always ensured that all branch members were made welcome and integrated well with the other Branch members and always kept in touch with any member who was absent due to ill health.

Jean's forte was organising trips: to Dorchester market, Stewart's Garden Centre for the Christmas decorations, Tangmere Military Aircraft Museum (where she practiced her flying on the simulator!) and many other outings to eateries near and far, which included liaising with the Not Forgotten Association for boat trips around the Solent with lunch or even a Christmas dinner on board. One of her favourite memories was having High Tea at Buckingham Palace and chatting with Princess Anne, The Princess Royal.

Jean's army career was in the TA driving 3 tonne lorries and occasionally getting lost in the dark having to navigate with a map as there was no satnav in those days! She continued driving in civilian life running her own mobile sales business.

Jean will be greatly missed by all of us at the Southampton Branch of the WRAC Association.

Lynn Jenkins - friend



CHRISTINA LOVICK (NÉE LAMBIE)

18 March 1954 - 23 November 2025



Christina was born in Glasgow, the youngest of three children. She left school at the age of 15 and worked as a machinist before later training as a hairdresser. At just 17 years old she joined the WRAC, where she met her future husband, David, whom she married in December 1972.

Army life took Christina and her growing family to many places. While posted in Hanover in 1975, she welcomed her first daughter, Sarah. Claire was born in Northern Ireland in 1978, followed by Samantha in Berlin in 1980. After David left the Army in 1982, the family settled back in Glasgow, where their youngest daughter, Joanne, was born in 1985. It was during her time in Northern Ireland that Christina met her lifelong best friend, June — a friendship she treasured deeply throughout her life. She always spoke fondly of her years spent in and with the Army and was delighted to fulfil a long-held wish to revisit Berlin a few years ago, bringing back many treasured memories.

Wherever life took her, Christina was known for her kindness, warmth and willingness to help others. During her years with the Army community, she volunteered in NAAFI canteens at their various postings. Back in Glasgow she worked as a lollipop lady before joining the Dove Project through the Church of Scotland, where she worked as a secretary. Alongside this, she dedicated many evenings to volunteering with young people, offering support, guidance and care to countless children.

Although Christina and David separated in 1996, they remained close friends. In 1998, Christina met her partner, Linda, with whom she shared 28 happy years. In October 2025, Christina was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia and she sadly passed away a few weeks later at the age of 71 surrounded by her loving family.

Christina is survived by her devoted partner Linda; her four daughters, Sarah, Claire, Samantha and Joanne; her beloved grandchildren Stephanie, Bethany, Ryan, Kaci, Aria, Darci, Belle and Karter; and her great-grandchildren Lillie and Colby.

A devoted partner, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend, Christina touched the lives of so many people with her generosity, compassion and unwavering support. She gave so much of herself to others throughout her life and will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved her.

Sarah Lovick-Rooney - Daughter



FIONA MARGARET KIRBY (NÉE TULLOCH)

5 May 1966 - 1 February 2026



Fiona served for nearly 8 years as a chef in the WRAC/ACC from January 1985 – December 1992. She was proud to be WRAC/ACC and enjoyed her short but busy time in service. Fiona met Keith Kirby whilst undertaking her chef trade training at St Omer Barracks, Aldershot. She was posted to Leconfield after trade training and Keith was posted to West Germany, not ideal! Fortunately, during a visit by a WRAC senior officer to Leconfield Fiona mentioned that her boyfriend was in West Germany and that she wanted a posting out there; she was posted to Dusseldorf in 1986 and they got married in 1987. In 1990 Fiona was posted to The Duchess of Kent Military Hospital, Catterick which was her last unit in the Army and Keith was also posted to Catterick at the same time.



Fiona left the ACC/RLC in 1992 and quickly got a job as a chef on Catterick Garrison working for many companies within the Garrison. She was Catering Manager at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick Garrison when she sadly passed away on 1 Feb 2026. She was diagnosed with terminal stomach, ovarian and bowel cancer in August 2025 and was given 6 months to 2 years to live but only survived 6 months. Fiona had been looking forward to her 60th birthday this year and 39th wedding anniversary with a trip to Tokyo with Keith but it was sadly not to be. Her dying wish was for her ashes to be scattered from the Forth Road Bridge in Scotland and on the Howgill Fells, Sedburgh.

Keith Kirby - Husband

GEORGINA SHADRACK (NÉE POMROY)

20 April 1926 - 21 April 2026.



Gina was born in Minehead on 20 April 1926, where she lived with her parents and younger sister, Elizabeth until the family moved to Springfield in the early 1930s. She attended Sunday School and soon became a member of the Springfield Church choir. Her education was entirely in Springfield and Chelmsford and, following a three-year course in art at Chelmsford Mid-Essex Technical college, she left to work as a clerk. The war was progressing and as volunteers for the armed services were needed, Gina joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service, serving mainly in the north of England and HQ Eastern Command near London. She accepted a commission in 1947 and remained in her role until demobilisation.

On returning to civilian life Gina joined Essex County Council becoming Deputy Youth employment officer for Chelmsford. In 1949 she married her childhood friend Alan Shadrack. They had three children - Linda, Carolyn and Philip and ultimately they became proud grandparents and great-grandparents. Gina continued in the church choir, enjoying choral music and the joy of singing. She had many happy memories of helping with church fetes, rummage sales and arranging holidays for church members. She taught the piano and enjoyed a variety of creative hobbies: flower arranging, cake icing, jewellery and greetings card making.



Gina was a real stalwart of the WRAC Association and of Chelmsford Branch, serving as both secretary and chairman for many years. In 2008 she was one of four ex ATS members of the WRAC Association presented to Queen Elizabeth II at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the formation of the ATS.

After her husband Alan died in 2003, Gina continued to live independently in the family home, enjoying its memories and especially the pleasure of her garden. To mark her 100th Birthday, her family arranged a celebration party to which over 60 people attended.

Carolyn Watt - Daughter

HELEN LOUISE BUTTERWORTH (NÉE THOMPSON)

14 January 1970 - 9 December 2025



Helen, also known as Tommo/Pathfinder, attested into the Women's Royal Army Corps in September 1989 and commenced Basic Training at the WRAC Centre, Guildford on 11 October 1989 with 6 Platoon, Intake 547.

After Basic Training she went to Leconfield to complete Driver Training and from there a first, and only, posting to 41 Squadron RCT at Aldershot. Helen very quickly settled into life there and threw herself into everything 100% - loving the daily routine of vehicle maintenance / driving details and also the social and sporting side of military life. It was on one such driving detail to Sennybridge Training Area that Helen earned her nickname of Pathfinder - something which stayed with her throughout her military career and beyond! Whilst at 41 Squadron Helen deployed on Op Granby, the Operational Name for the 1991 Gulf War and was awarded the Gulf War Medal 1990 - 1991 with Gulf Clasp 16 Jan - 28 Feb 91.

She left the Army in November 1992 and returned "up north" where she settled into civilian life and later raised her two amazing children, Louis and Jess. She was then to meet her absolute soulmate, and love, Haley. They married in November

2022, living life to the full with lots of fun and laughter as they looked forward to spending the rest of their lives together as a family. Tragically this was not to be.

Helen very sadly passed away aged 55, after an incredibly short but dignified and courageous battle with cancer. The service in Pontefract Crematorium, which was attended by so many friends and family, was a testament to the love felt by all those who had been lucky enough to have had Helen in their lives. Special thanks to WRAC Association Standard Bearer Heather Bradbury for attending.

Taff Jones - friend



SYLVIA ELIZABETH 'BETTY' HAYTHORNE LYNAS (NÉE HILL)

27 May 1927 – 7 February 2026



Betty Lynas was my neighbour and 'pal' for twenty years and will be sorely missed. She was a joy to be with; funny, interesting, smart and inquisitive. Although her army service was relatively short, it remained an important part of her identity of which she was rightly proud. Betty was a natural storyteller and her tales of her service in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) were legendary to family and friends! Known as 'Headcase Hill' by her fellow servicewomen, Betty's sense of fun meant that she had many adventures.

Betty enlisted into the ATS on 14 May 1945 (Regimental No. W/326861) and served for three years as a Driver. After training, she went to 123 Car Company in Kent before going overseas in 1946 to 721 Company RASC, Bad Oeynhausen, B.A.O.R. where she was a staff car driver.

Betty was born in Sunderland but moved to Saltburn by the Sea in Yorkshire in 1937, where her father worked on the railway. She left the ATS in 1948 and married Bill Lynas in 1950. They settled in Saltburn and

had two children, Geoffrey and Valerie. After Bill died suddenly in 1983, Betty remained committed to her family and wider community. She had a bright and inquiring mind and was always keen to learn new skills. She completed a Certificate in Professional Development in IT at Teesside University and learned to use a smart phone to keep in touch when her hearing failed in her latter years.

Every year Betty would remind me to 'polish your medal' for the annual Remembrance Parade and was very proud when she finally received her 1939-45 War Medal. Betty died, aged 98 years, after a short illness, leaving her son and daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Joan Heggie - Friend



RUTH JENNINGS

14 December 1934 – 10 February 2026

Ruth was born in Wellingborough Northants. She had a Roman Catholic upbringing and attended boarding school in Glastonbury. During that time her father served in the RAF and was awarded the Croix de Guerre and her mother moved to Looe in Cornwall.

Ruth worked for her parents on their market garden in Looe before doing a cookery course which included Business Management. She then joined the WRAC for 3 years as a vehicle mechanic - she could strip an engine down and successfully rebuild it and could drive any vehicle. Her postings were Guildford, Woolwich, Germany and Donnington.

On leaving the WRAC, Ruth was granted a work permit for the USA and after many adventures there returned to the UK. Following an accident which involved many operations and treatment, she studied Horology in Exeter. When her friend Val was made redundant at the same time as she was, and employment came up in Plymouth, they joined forces with Val's parents to buy a bungalow in St Budeaux. She was a regular attendee (along with her beloved dogs!) at the nearby St Pauls Catholic Church and had many friends there. Ruth loved her garden and tended it lovingly for the 48 years that she lived in her bungalow.



Ruth was a real stalwart of the WRAC Association and Plymouth Branch in particular over so many years. She held the offices of secretary, treasurer and chairman within the branch several times and was a fantastic mentor to the current chair. She will be hugely missed and will be remembered with great affection.

Ann Williams - Friend and Chair Plymouth Branch

ELAINE MEAGHAN (NÉE BURNS)

18 September 1944 - 14 May 2026

Elaine was born in Portsmouth, Hampshire in 1944 and aged just 17 she enlisted into the WRAC in October 1961. After her basic training at Lingfield she went to Yeovil to do her Clerical training and her first posting was to the War Office in Berkeley Square, London, of which she was immensely proud. She had an enjoyable and rewarding time there but it came to an end with her marriage to Michael who was in the Royal Hampshire Regiment. After a posting to Germany as a wife, Elaine returned home to England in the late 1960's following their divorce.

Raising three children on her own meant she had to be resourceful, resilient, tenacious and indomitable, traits that served her well for the remainder of her life. Elaine married again in the early 70's to John (Royal Engineers) and they had another son. During this time she became an accomplished seamstress which culminated in her designing and creating beautiful wedding dresses. She was also enthusiastic about DIY projects and gardening and was an award winning recipient of the "Hampshire in Bloom" prize for several years running. She was an Arts and Crafts savant too, so that whatever needed to be imagined, embellished or adapted she was able to do.

Sadly 1985 brought personal tragedy with the death of her eldest son Terry and then in 1990 she was widowed. Elaine dedicated herself to her work as a housekeeper on various estates until her marriage, for the final time, to Bill. Her later life was devoted to family and friends (many of whom she met whilst being manager of the Slimwise Clinic), her garden, her pets and creating fabulous gift cards. She was sadly widowed again in 2011. A staunch monarchist and supporter of the late Queen Elizabeth, who personally acknowledged Elaine for her creative abilities.

Elaine had a wicked sense of humour which was ever present throughout her entire life. Above all, she was a devoted mother whose family meant everything. Elaine passed away after a lengthy illness on the 14th May 2026 aged 81. She is survived by her daughter Tania (ex WRAC) and sons Paul (RAF Regiment)and John (her Jingo!).

Paul Meaghan, Son



DOROTHY GARNETT (NÉE WILLIAMS)

27 January 1927 - 5 January 2026

Wirral branch sadly said farewell to our last ATS veteran at the remarkable age of 98.

A woman of great character, charm, and quiet strength, Dorothy was one of life's true ladies and a much loved presence within our branch. She will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her.

In a fitting tribute, members of the branch formed a guard of honour at the church, lining her final journey with the respect and affection she so richly deserved.



Last Post



Barker, Major Susan (Sue) née Taylor of Mytchett on 4th February 2026 (WRAC)
Bourke, Mrs Janet née Willetts of Burntwood on 19th May 2026 (WRAC)
Bourn, Mrs June of Torquay on 13th May 2026 (ATS and WRAC)
Bradley, Mrs Joan née Bartram of Normanton on 14th June 2026 (ATS)
Buglass, Mrs Sandie née Whitehouse of Morpeth on 11 June 2026 (WRAC)
Candlin, Mrs Margaret née Adamson of Kirby Green, Lincoln on 28th December 2023 (WRAC)
Cornwell, Lt Col Rosemary of Malta on 18th March 2026 (WRAC)
Claridge, Mrs Nora of Birmingham on 14th June 2026 (ATS)
Crockford, Mrs Sally of Hastings on 24th April 2026 (WRAC)
Crowther, Mrs Pauline Anne née Kenchatt of Crayford on 17th March 2026 (WRAC TA & WRAC)
Garnett, Mrs Dorothy née Williams of Wrexham on 5th January 2026 (WRAC)
Given, Mrs Janet née Mason of Birmingham on 5th August 2026 (WRAC)
Hall, Mrs Moira of Kennington, Kent on 19th June 2026 (WRAC)
Hannaford, Mrs Estelle of Ascot on 9th March 2026 (ATS)
Henderson, Mrs Christine of Harlow on 2nd February 2026 (WRAC)
Hutley, Col Frances of Dover, on 20th April 2026 (WRAC)
Jennings, Miss Ruth of Plymouth on 9th February 2026 (WRAC)
Kirby, Mrs Fiona née Tulloch of Catterick on 1st February 2026 (WRAC)
Lovick, Mrs Christine née Lambie of Glasgow on 23rd November 2025 (WRAC)
Lynas, Mrs 'Betty' Syliva Elizabeth née Hill of Saltburn by the Sea on 7th February 2026 (ATS)
McLean, Mrs Alice of Egham of Stanwell on 7th June 2026 (ATS)
Meaghan, Mrs Elaine née Burns of Waterlooville on 14th May 2026 (WRAC)
Oldham, Miss Dorothy of Perthshire on 1st February 2025 (ATS)
Pigford, Mrs Joyce née Crossland of County Durham on 7th June 2026 (WRAC)
Pilkington, Miss Shirley of Chorley on 24th January 2026 (WRAC)
Puckey, Mrs Nancy née Venni, of Tamworth on 22nd March 2026 (WRAC)
Shadrack, Mrs Georgina née Pomroy of Chelmsford on 21st April 2026 (ATS)
Stone, Ms Suzanne of Desborough on 25th April 2026 (WRAC)
Wright, Mrs June Skivington of North Shields on 31st March 2026 (WRAC)



Legacies and Donations



Legacies

The WRAC Association very much appreciated the legacy bequeathed by:

Colonel Anne Margaret Clissitt
Miss Dorothy Oldham
Colonel Susan Penelope Richards

In Memoriam

Since the last Lioness kind donations were made by individuals and branches in memory of the following:

Colonel Frances Edwina Hutley

Frequently asked questions

Donations - To make a donation please visit wraca.org.uk/donate, or call 0300 400 1992. We also gratefully accept legacies and donated shares.

Membership Information - For any membership related query please email info@wraca.org.uk or call 0300 400 1992. Please inform us if you change any of your contact details.

If you are aware of a member's death please let us know so we can update our records, include them in the Last Post or feature their obituary in the Lioness. If required, we are able to arrange a coffin drape for their funeral.

The Association sends flowers to all members on their 100th birthday. If you are aware of a forthcoming 100th birthday, please email us so we can check we have their up to date address details.

Remembrance & Events - To request to attend a Remembrance activity or an event please email events@wraca.org.uk or call 0300 400 1992.

Tickets for the Field of Remembrance Opening and the London Cenotaph Parade are for Association members only.

We are invited each year to attend the Service of Remembrance in Guildford where we retain the Freedom of the Borough of Guildford. Places are often available and attendance is encouraged.

We occasionally receive free tickets for events, or invitations to attend functions by other organisations (such as Governor's Review, The Buckingham Palace Garden Party etc.). Join the waiting list at any time.

Parade clothing - In line with the Royal British Legion and other Regimental Associations, parade dress is to be smart and appropriate: the norm is for dark colours. WRAC scarves are available from the HQ shop which can be worn with a warm winter coat.

Since the Association is no longer an active Corps, Stable berets and forage caps should NOT be worn. However, the Corps beret may be worn.

Etiquette for wearing medals only allows the wearing of official awards.

- The WRAC Association brooch, veterans badge and/or Etherton pin may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole. No other medals or badges may be worn when representing the Association.
- Your own medals awarded in service are to be worn on the left breast of a jacket.
- The medals awarded to a deceased service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative ONLY if the wearer has no medals of their own. You may not wear your own medals AND those of a relative.

Questions about pension, service records or other veterans services - Veterans UK is your one-stop shop - go to gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk or phone 0808 1914 218. The WRAC Association does not hold any service records

All serving and ex-serving persons are eligible for a Blue Light Card and/or a Defence Discount Card. Find out more at: bluelightcard.co.uk / defencediscountservice.co.uk

Branch information - please email info@wraca.org.uk or call 0300 400 1992 with any questions.

Details of your local branch can be found in the Lioness and on our website - wraca.org.uk

If you would like to set up a branch, please get in touch with your Area Coordinator who can support you with this.

All new branches are sent one table top banner. Additionally, headquarters provides A4 posters and leaflets for branches and can send these to you on request.

Lioness - please email editor@wraca.org.uk.

If you are hoping to write an article please email us with details. The Editorial Team will consider all submissions and let you know if we are able to include it, give you a word count and let you know how many photos we need.

WRAC Association, mailing address - WRAC Association, Worthy Down Camp, Worthy Down,
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Benevolence: benfund@wraca.org.uk

Lioness: editor@wraca.org.uk

Website: wraca.org.uk



**Membership of the WRAC Association is FREE
and open to any woman who served or is currently serving in the
Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force**

**Recommend a friend to keep the sisterhood growing
and the camaraderie flowing**