



WRAAC ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA) INC.

Post Office Box 307
SAN REMO VIC 3925

NEWSLETTER

May 2008 – No 2/2008

Patron

Jessie Perkins MBE RFD ED

Honorary Chaplain

Rev W.G. (Bill) Pugh
Telephone: 03 9598 5841

President and Newsletter Editor

Jude (Wood) Pinkerton-Treloar
Telephone: 03 9874 7915

Vice President

Brenda (Ruby) Walters
Telephone: 03 9846 2152

Treasurer

Elizabeth Gibson RFM EM
Telephone: 03 9706 4080

Secretary and Public Officer

Cheryle (Howes) Brown
Telephone: 03 5678 5486
Email: rayhyd@bigpond.com

Membership Officer

Diane Sherry
Telephone: 03 9478 1073
Email: dishe1946@yahoo.com.au

Social/Events Sub-Committee

Brenda (Ruby) Walters
Telephone: 03 9846 2152
Liz (Stone) Maclaine
Telephone: 03 9397 1043

History Co-ordinator

Heather (Rankin) Fry
Telephone: 03 9795 8472
Email: hfy44@bigpond.com

Fundraiser Co-ordinator

Margaret (Robinson) Jager
Telephone: 03 9743 8267



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Greetings to all and welcome to the second newsletter for 2008. Your committee has been busy with the WRAAC website under the direction of SGT Heather Fry, gathering newspaper clippings and information for this exciting venture. Heather our history co-ordinator, has worked with such enthusiasm and pride on the construction of the website and we thank her so much for her hard work and dedication. The Association owes a big thankyou to Mr Clive Budd (Webmaster) for his guidance and understanding of our needs and to Ella Brown for her knowledge and supervision of site while Heather is away on leave. We appeal to each and every one of you to contribute all you can to the history of the WRAAC by saving your photos, newspaper articles and personal stories of your days of service. If you are a new member to the Association, we need you to add your story to the history of our proud Corps. The website launch will be at the International of Brighton on Saturday 26th July 2008 at the WRAAC Association Luncheon. We will conduct the AGM in October as the website launch will take extra time.

We look forward to seeing you at the luncheon as it is always a great day amongst friends to celebrate as one.

Yours in friendship
Jude (Wood) Pinkerton-Treloar

**ARISING FROM OUR COMMITTEE
MEETING**

**WRAAC LUNCHEON AND WEB SITE LAUNCH
Saturday 26th July 2008**

A reminder that the Annual Luncheon will be held on Saturday 26th July 2008. **(Booking form attached)**

If you wish to bring along a female friend/carer or family member to the luncheon this year include name on attached booking form.

**WRAAC AGM
Saturday 4th October 2008**

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 11.00am on Saturday 4th October 2008. The venue will be the Education Centre, Shrine of Remembrance.

**AWAS LUNCHEON AND AGM
Wednesday 13th August 2008**

The AWAS luncheon will be held at Legacy House, 293 Swanston Street, Melbourne. If interested in attending please contact Jude Pinkerton-Treloar on telephone 03 9874 7915 for information.

**RESERVE FORCES DAY
31ST August 2008**

This year 21 Sqn RAAF will exercise their right to enter City of Melbourne before the Reserve Forces Day March.

Form up at Queen Victoria Gardens South of Princes Bridge, Melways Ref 2F, H7 at 12.30pm for step off at 1.00pm.

We march to the Shrine Forecourt where a short service will be conducted. If you do not wish to march please join us at the Shrine for the service.

Dress: Blazer, beret, scarf and medals, if you do not have a blazer wear warm comfortable clothing and shoes. Don't forget to bring an umbrella.

Following the service we will gather at the WRAAC plaque to place a wreath in remembrance. Meet up for coffee at the Observatory Café after the march. A great opportunity to catch up with mates.

**SWAN HILL EX-SERVICEWOMEN REUNION
6TH April 2008**

On Sunday the 6th April, approximately 80 guests gathered at the Swan Hill RSL to celebrate the 36th Reunion of Ex-servicewomen. The Service was a simple wreath laying ceremony with Marna Sandford placing a sheath of flowers on behalf of the WRAAC Association. Following the service and continuing the fine tradition, of how many girls can sit around tables pushed together we began to talk about our service days and the fun we had so many years ago.

The happy chatter continued throughout the day as we found a familiar face to catch up with and exchange news and memories and by the way, we still enjoy HAPPY HOUR which is always held at a different venue each night before dinner. We all remember the lifelong mates made after a happy hour at a camp or bivouac!

This year the entertainment was provided by a local group called the Catalina Bush Band playing songs from the war years and it is wonderful to know the words and sing along with everyone. God bless Vera Lynne and those heart-warming lyrics. The good news is that Swan Hill may host the re-union next year and that is welcomed news as we all look forward to this great weekend of fun and friendship.

Swan Hill is an invaluable source of history with its RAAF Catalina Museum at Lake Boga close by so a visit to the museum is a must.

AN INTERESTING FACT

Lake Boga

With the speed of the Japanese advance through South-East Asia, a remote facility was required for Australian and US flying boat servicing and repair, and Lake Boga was chosen for this function in 1942. Initial personnel arrived to establish No.1 Flying Boat Repair Depot in June of that year, and over the next five years, the unit would service RAAF, Dutch and American flying boats. The station at Lake Boga closed in November 1947.

Friendship

*I went outside to find a friend,
But could not find one there,
I went outside to be a friend,
And friends were everywhere.*

ANZAC DAY MARCH 25TH April 2008

Melburnians by the thousands lined St Kilda Road as the marchers stepped out to the cheers of a proud Nation and this year appeared to be the benchmark of goodwill and a genuine sense of pride in being an Australian.

Our WRAAC Association members marched along behind the AWAS and in front of Land Army girls with Judith Kennedy, calling the step. A highlight for us was the crowds response to Gwenda Walker and Norma (Ned Kelly) Burns waving to them from their vehicle, it was certainly a time to remember.

Following an eyes right at the Eternal Flame and a snappy left wheel, we were dismissed and joined fellow marchers for a welcome cuppa and *bikkie served by the Salvation Army*.

MEMORIES OF ANZAC DAY 2008

Catching up with Gnaire Foster busily organizing the World War 1 banners while looking great in a uniform that still fits.

Dawn Ciechowski looking resplendent in her CFA uniform.

Seeing Maggie More and Diane Sherry at the Shrine ready to join their mates and continue the march.

The warmth of friendships made and strengthened as an ex-servicewoman.

The pride of marching and representing the WRAAC and our mates who could not be with us.

Meeting up with girls you have not seen since last year and the passion of this great day..

Greetings from the crowd as they recognize a familiar face amongst the marchers.

Our Association member Glenys Williamson and husband David driving veterans to the Shrine of Remembrance who were unable to march.

Elizabeth Marchant leading the RAAF contingent.



Ex-nurse Elizabeth Marchant was greeted as a heroine when she led air force veterans - the first woman chosen to head the RAAF marchers.

AWAS & WRAAC COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE Sunday 18th May 2008

The weather was against us but it did not dampen the warmth of the day as we celebrated the ties

that bind us forever in history. The strength of having served and sharing similar experiences in Australia during war and peace we surely are special. We owe a debt of gratitude to the women of the AWAS as they were the forerunner to the WRAAC and their fine example of leadership and devotion to duty is inspiring. The AWAS flag flew proudly overhead as the piper called us to the Shrine to join our friends. The service held within the Sanctuary of the Shrine of Remembrance, with Padre Andrew Delbridge officiating, the wreaths designed and made by Margaret Jager looked beautiful as we paid tribute to the memory of all service women.

The wreaths were placed by MAJ Jessie Perkins (AWAS) and Brenda Johnson (WRAAC) with the inspirational AWAS Prayer read by CAPT Gwenda Walker and our WRAAC Prayer read by MAJ Maggie More. The haunting lament played by Hawthorn Agnew (Piper) can at times leave us with a sense of sadness only to feel uplifted as we reflect on the happy memories of the mates who are no longer with us.

The service over we then proceeded to the Western room and enjoyed the fine food prepared and served by the Association committee. Our thanks to Margaret Jager's daughters Amy and Emma for their help on the day. It is wonderful to have the support and encouragement of our families as we are finding our children and grandchildren interested in our history, they to feel part of the Association.

The Staff at the Shrine of Remembrance make it possible for us to have these special services throughout the year and we cannot thank them enough for all their help and guidance.

On behalf of the Association a Certificate of Appreciation was sent to Shrine Staff with our grateful thanks.

We intend to have the combined service next year and we look forward to your attendance.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LAND ARMY



Every ANZAC day as an Association we form up in front of a group of ladies and comment how proud and happy they look in their green blazers with an interesting crest emblazoned on the pocket. We

thought it was time to get to know them and their story.

The AWLA was formed during the Second World War to combat the acute labour shortage in the Australian farming sector. It was modelled on the same principles as the English Land Army which operated during WWI and II. The Directorate of Manpower was established under the Minister of Labour and National Service and the AWLA was raised on the 27th July 1942 and existed until the 31st December 1945. The crest of the AWLA is a sheath of wheat on a green background, the garter surrounding the centre includes the words Australian Women's Land Army surmounted by a crown. The AWLA at its peak totalled 3000 which approximately 700 were in Queensland. The attachment to our newsletter was kindly supplied by Nance Ormsby a former member of the AWLA and is a copy of a speech she gave at her local RSL Club. Australia owes the women of the AWLA its grateful thanks for a job well done. If you wish to obtain more information on the AWLA, the following reading is recommended:

Down to Earth the story of the Australian Women's Land Army in Victoria (compiled by Mary Lowe)
The Fourth Service by Mary Macklin.

AROUND THE WRAAC PACK

WRAAC ASSOCIATION SA

Sad to hear the WRAAC Association SA is closing in 2009.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Margaret Prowse Ex AWAS

SICK PARADE

Heather (Rankin) Fry reports to be doing well after recent eye surgery.

Elizabeth Gibson is still not feeling one hundred percent.

Best wishes to Brenda Walter's parents who are not well at the moment.

Our thoughts are with Liz Maclaine's father who is not well and in hospital.

ON THE MEND

Caught up with Shirley Croxon and she is coping well after her hip injury.

To all our members who are not feeling well at this time our thoughts and prayers are with you. If you wish to have a chat please contact a committee member (telephone numbers on front cover) or our Chaplain Rev. William (Bill) Pugh – Editor

TRAVEL NEWS

Denise and Peter Hodder back from a trip to Russia, report having had a great time and loved St Petersburg.

If you have enjoyed a trip away please let us know – we all enjoy your travel news – Editor

WELCOME BACK

It was good to welcome back Joy (Foley) McLaren who is now residing in Victoria. We caught up with her at the AWAS/WRAAC service on the 18th May 2008 and she looks great. Look forward to seeing you at the luncheon.

THANKYOU

We really appreciate all the notes of support and encouragement, that you take the time to contact us, it is greatly appreciated.

Jude always looks forward to receiving news from Margaret Roberts. We are thinking of you Margaret.

MEMBERSHIP

We would like YOU to contact any ladies whom you may know who were in the Army (CMF Ares and ARA) regarding joining the Association.

Please contact our Membership Officer Diane Sherry on 9478 1073 or email at dishe1946@yahoo.com.au and she will post out the appropriate form.

Could you let Diane Sherry know if you have an Email address. Her contact details are listed above.

SHRINE NEWS

COMMEMORATIVE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS EXHIBITION

Eastern Visitor Centre
30th May - September 2008

Curated by Bronwyn Hughes, who has recently completed her doctorate on stained glass windows, this exhibition includes sketch designs, photographs and watercolours demonstrating the wealth of memorials that have been created in this medium to those who died in the First World War. These have often been the result of commissions by the families of lost service men and women. The exhibition focuses on the work of William Montgomery between 1915 and 1927.

GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH EXHIBITION Western Visitor Centre

9th February – September 2008

This exhibition of black and white photographs, from the collection of the Australian War Memorial, documents the military career of Sir John Monash. A bronze portrait bust of Monash by Paul Montford and Monash's First World War tin hat have been added to this fine display. Memorabilia, an audio

visual and additional text linking Monash to the Shrine are included in this exhibition to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Australia's military service on the Western Front in 1918.

THE NURSE, THE ADMINISTRATOR AND THE VOLUNTEER : STORIES OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AND WAR

Friday 1st August 2008

War's Forgotten Faces Lecture Series

Presenter: Assoc Prof Melanie Oppenheimer

Lady Helen Munro Ferguson was the wife of the Governor-General and founder of the Australian Red Cross Society during World War 1. Sister Narrelle Hobbes joined the British nursing service and served in Malta, Sicily, Mesopotamia and India. Each of these women made significant contributions in their own way, yet are relatively unknown. Melanie Oppenheimer tells the history of their war service.

Shrine Web Site:

For all information about Shrine programs visit the website at www.shrine.org.au.

Telephone (03) 9654 8415

FOR THE DIARY JUNE – NOVEMBER 2008

26 TH July 2008	WRAAC Luncheon and Website Launch	International of Brighton
13 th August 2008	AWAS Luncheon Re-union/AGM	Legacy House, 293 Swanston Street Melbourne
31 st August 2008	Reserve Forces Day	Check RFD Website
4 th October 2008	WRAAC Association (Vic) Inc. AGM	Education Centre Shrine of Remembrance
15 th November 2008	Council of Ex-servicewomen's Pilgrimage to the Cairn and Luncheon	Luncheon at English Speaking Union

ATTACHMENT:

1. Annual Luncheon Booking Form
2. Australian Women's Land Army by Nance Ormsby

WRAAC ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA) INC.

32ND ANNIVERSARY REUNION

Members are invited to a luncheon to celebrate the 32nd Anniversary at

**THE INTERNATIONAL OF BRIGHTON
81 BAY STREET, BRIGHTON
ON SATURDAY 26TH JULY 2008
AT 11.30AM FOR 12.30PM**

Cost is \$45.00 which includes a 2 course luncheon, drinks including beer, wine and soft drinks. Followed by tea, coffee and chocolates.

Pre-lunch drinks will be served from 12.00pm

DRESS: Neat Casual

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**BOOKING FORM 26TH JULY 2008
(BOOKINGS CLOSE ON FRIDAY 11TH JULY 2008)
To: Mrs Brenda Walters, 5 Austin Place, Templestowe, Vic. 3106
Telephone: (03) 9846 2152 Mobile: 0414 702 707**

NAME:(please print).....

ADDRESS:.....

(if booking for another member please include their name/s on this form)

Type of Membership (please circle) Life / Annual / Associate / other

Meal Requirement (please circle) Vegetarian / Diabetic / Other

Transport Requirement Willing to pick up another member

(please tick) I need a lift to attend

Seating I would like to be at a table with the following ladies:

.....

.....

PAYMENT Lunches at \$45.00 each \$

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

(By Nance Ormsby)

The Australian Women's Land Army was created to overcome the shortage of rural workers due to men joining the armed forces. Demand for labour was critical, particularly in the rural industry which was necessary to feed, clothe and equip personnel.

At the same time there was a need to try and maintain the maximum possible supplies of food for the general population who were suffering from a number of restrictions such as food and clothing rationing. Everyone in Australia had to have coupons which were issued annually by the government to purchase these goods. There was extreme urgency needed to harvest and increase the food, cotton, wool, tobacco and flax production.

Land Army recruits had to accept the condition that they had to go where and when they were directed. Although they were doing work of national importance they were employed by the people who owned the farms. They were paid 2 pounds per week with their keep. They were supplied with overalls and boots and their dress uniform which was the same as the Australian Women's Army. The girls received 12 days annual leave. Girls from all walks of life joined the AWLA whose age limit was from 16 years.

They worked on dairy farms, poultry farms, harvesting vegetables, orchards, cotton fields, cattle stations, tobacco harvesting and flax fields. The inauguration of the AWLA not only produced evidence that girls from all walks of life volunteered to do difficult physical work as their war time effort, but it opened up a new scenario of just how important the little known flax crop was in defence work.

Flax grows to about the size of oats and it has blue flowers and its bulbs contain linseed from where linseed oil is derived. But it is the long stalks that produce the linen thread. No soldiers boots or coats can be made without the linseed thread. The Air Force needed canvas and ropes and parachute harnesses which are all made from the flax. Canvas hose pipes were needed by the A.R.P. and civilian fire brigades. Tents and tarpaulins were needed by all the services.

When war broke out in 1939, Britain lost its flax supply from Russia, Belgium and Ireland. Britain then sent 400 tons of flax seed to Australia. The British government then gave the Australian government the contract to sell the flax back to Britain at a price of 8 pounds 10 shillings an acre.

Because of the grave shortage of local help in the areas where flax grew best, the Australian government was faced with recruiting new help for getting and processing the flax fibre if Britain was to get the product it needed so desperately. In 1939 Australia had 2000 acres in flax crop. By 1944 there were 40,000 acres under flax. This dramatic rise in acreage was caused by the growing and urgent need of the British government to maintain its equipment for defence purposes.

Land Army girls worked very hard in the flax fields. There were doubts from some farmers that the girls could do the work. The farmers soon found out that the untrained girls possessed initiative and ability to stand and bend for long hours in all weathers. Working hours were supposedly 48 hours per week but very rarely did the girls work only those hours. Those of us who worked on diary farms would work 70 – 80 hours a week. We had never heard of Women's Lib then. We accepted the conditions and workload as part of war time.

There were two training depot. One was at Mont Park Mental Institution where they had a diary farm and a large 20 acre vegetable farm. The girls were accommodated in one of the vacant nurses homes. We spent two to three weeks there and then were assigned out to various farms and properties. Werribee Research Farm was the second training centre.

Extreme urgency was required in food production. Potatoes were picked up by hand behind a mechanical digger. Potatoe production rose from 1000 tons to 12,000 tons by 1944.

Spring season was always a very busy time. At one big poultry farm 10,000 chickens were hatched every Monday morning and another 10,000 on Thursday during the season. All had to be fed and watered. Twenty girls worked there for 6 weeks.

Diary farms always needed help. Girls working on diary farms in the metropolitan area (e.g. Doncaster and Whittlesea areas) had to rise between 1 – 3am for the milk to be delivered to homes and businesses. There was a never ending demand for Land Army girls in all the rural industries.

Some girls did as many as 4 or 5 jobs in a year, travelling from one end of Victoria to the other. There were over 5000 girls in the Land Army in Australia, 1500 were in Victoria. Some of the orchards, vegetable and tobacco farms and flax fields had hostels for the girls to live in. Field Officers, who were from all walks of life, were trained to take charge of the hostels. Other girls who were sent by themselves to farms lived on those farms in varying conditions.

Some months before the war finished legislation was put to the government, to make the AWLA the official fourth women's service but that was shelved when the war finished. All records were destroyed.

When the war finished some of the Land Army girls stayed on the farms until the men came home whilst others returned to their pre-war lives. There was no formal coming together of the girls in the years following the war.

A reunion of ex Land Army girls was held in Adelaide in 1986 and from there an association of ex Land Army girls was formed in Victoria. This group was then given permission to participate in the ANZAC Day march from 1987.

We still meet regularly and although we are in our eighties we still refer to ourselves as 'the girls'. We are very proud of what we did for our country during the war and from the recognition that we receive from the crowds in the ANZAC day march, we believe that the community understands and appreciates what we achieved.