



Australian Women's
Army Service 1941–1947



Women's Royal Australian
Army Corps 1951–1984

AWAS WRAAC JOURNAL

OCTOBER 2024



Depression



Normal feelings vs. depression

We all feel sad or 'down' from time to time – it's part of being human.

For young people, it's normal to have occasional mood swings, feel irritable sometimes, and to be sensitive to rejection and criticism.

This can make it harder to tell whether you're experiencing "normal" feelings or whether you are becoming depressed.



What is depression?

Depression is one of the most common health issues for young people in Australia¹.

Depression ("major depression") is a mental illness characterised by feelings of sadness that lasts longer than usual, affect most parts of your life and stop you enjoying the things that you used to.

Symptoms of depression

You may be experiencing depression if, for more than two weeks, you've felt sad, depressed or irritable most of the time, or you've lost interest or pleasure in your usual activities. Other symptoms may include:



Loss of interest in food or eating too much, leading to weight loss or gain



Having trouble sleeping (getting to sleep and/or staying asleep), or over-sleeping and staying in bed most of the day



Feeling tired most of the time, or lacking energy and motivation



Difficulty concentrating and making decisions



Feeling worthless or guilty a lot of the time



Feeling everything has become 'too hard'



Having thoughts of death or suicide

People with depression might have other mental or physical health problems as well, such as anxiety, or using cigarettes, alcohol or illegal drugs excessively.



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From the WRAAC President



Greeting Members and Friends,

Our events for this year included the ANZAC Day March, AWAS/WRAAC Memorial Service at the Shrine on Sunday 5 May and the Annual Luncheon on Saturday 20 July which was held in the Greensborough RSL.

The theme for the luncheon was a trip down memory lane this

year. A display of uniforms and accoutrements provided us the chance to reminisce about our early days of Service. Thanks go to the team who set up the display on Friday evening: Ian and Marg Jager, Trish Anderson, Sue Weeks and Judy Wright, who provided most of the WRAAC Uniforms. Nola Williams set up the WRAAC





Uniform of the early 1950s the next day, so thanks to you all.

The tables were in the Green and Gold and again thanks to 'Team Jager' for their support, decorations and menus, and to the Jager girls, Emma and Amy for the conduct of the raffle.

The AGM is scheduled for Saturday 5 October 2024 which will be



held via Zoom, commencing 11.00 am. Note your diaries and please advise if you wish to attend this meeting or make an apology. Further details will be forwarded in due course.

My best regards to all,

Dexter Purcell

President

— 2025 — Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 2025

Friday 14th	RA Signals 100-year Parade Shrine of Remembrance Melbourne Check Sigs website for details. https://rasigs.org or email; certa.cito2025@defence.gov.au
Saturday 15th	WRAAC social group
<i>To Be Confirmed</i>	Contact Lyn Board or Liz Maclaine for details.

APRIL 2025

Thursday 25th	ANZAC Day
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MAY 2025

Sunday 4th	AWAS/WRAAC Service Shrine of Remembrance Melbourne
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JULY 2025

Saturday 19th	WRAAC Annual Luncheon Date / Venue to be confirmed.
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Journal Article Submission Deadline



*The deadline for all articles to be
included in the next Journal is*

FRIDAY 21ST FEBRUARY 2025

**Articles can be
posted or e-mailed to:**

Editor AWAS/WRAAC Journal

Postal Address:

C/- 87 Westmelton Drive,
Melton West, VIC. 3337

E-mail:

jager_id@bigpond.com

Member Contact Details Update

If you change your home address, please remember to let us know.

Also, if you change your phone number or email address, please let the WRAAC Association know by sending a message or contacting our Membership Officer.

Liz Maclaine Ph: 03 9397 1043

Email: lizardmac@hotmail.com

Congratulations LTGEN Coyle

**CONGRATULATIONS TO MAJOR
GENERAL SUSAN COYLE AM CSC
DSM ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF
HER PROMOTION TO LIEUTENANT
GENERAL AND APPOINTMENT AS
CHIEF OF JOINT CAPABILITIES.**



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Elizabeth Salmon: 0438 573 357

Ceremonial Officer

Elizabeth Salmon

Sub-Committee

Brenda (Ruby) Walters
Gai Cooke

WRAAC MEMBERSHIP

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

Please contact our Membership Officer Liz Maclaine on 03 9397 1043 or email ***lizardmac@hotmail.com*** and she will post out the appropriate form.

Member Contact Details Update

Vice-President Liz Maclaine wishes to thank all for taking the time to return their contact details update forms.

If you have not yet been able to return the form, please do so at your earliest convenience.

If you do not have or have misplaced the green form, we have included the membership contact details here.

Could you please update the following?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Reg. Number: _____

Phone Number: _____

Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Return to: - Liz Maclaine

16 Richard Street Williamstown Victoria 3016

Or: email: lizardmac@hotmail.com





WRAAC ASSOCIATION (VIC) INCORPORATED



Certificate of Incorporation No.: A0051572X

PRESIDENT: Dexter Purcell
SECRETARY: Carol King

16 RICHARD STREET
WILLIAMSTOWN. VIC. 3016
Telephone: 03 9397 1043

Website: www.wraacvic.com

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I:
(Mrs, Miss, Ms, Rank) (Surname) (Given Names)
Maiden Name (If Applicable): Date of Birth:
Address:
..... Postcode:
Telephone (Home): (Mobile): (Work):
Email Address:

Apply to become a Member of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps Association (Victoria) Incorporated. In the event of my admission as a Member, I agree to be bound by the Rules of the Association for the time being in force.

Cost of Membership: Annual Membership (\$8.00 per year) Life Membership (\$80.00)

(Circle Type of Membership required) Payment Enclosed: Cheque. Cash. Other.

If paying by EFT; For Bank Details, contact Liz Maclaine

(Please Circle) - Branch of Service. ARA. CMF. ARES. AWAS. OTHER:

Regt No.	WRAAC or Unit/s Served/Serving with	Approx. Dates
.....
.....
.....

Nominated By.

Name: Membership No:

PLEASE RETURN FORM TO

Mrs Liz Maclaine,

16 Richard Street, Williamstown, Vic. 3016

Telephone: 03 9397 1043 | Email Address: lizardmac@hotmail.com



CONSENT FORM

I consent to the following details relating to myself and my service history being published in the Association Newsletter/Journal and Association website www.wraacvic.com

I understand that this information is for the purpose of advising other members of my joining the Association and with a view to renewing old friendships.

DETAILS TO BE PUBLISHED

Service Number:
Given Names:
Surname:
Maiden Name (If Applicable):
Units Served with Approximate Years Served (Dates)
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
Signed: Date:

ONLY THOSE DETAILS FILLED IN BY THE APPLICANT WILL BE PUBLISHED

DO NOT COMPLETE THE ABOVE FORM if you do not wish to have your details published. Your decision to publish or not will be respected without question

FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY: Application Accepted. Yes / No. (Please Circle)
Meeting Date: Receipt No: Dated:
Annual Membership Card No: Date:
Life Membership Card Issued No: Date:

ANZAC Day 2024



Luise Nardella, Dawn Irwin, Margaret Jager, Kaitlyn (Girl Guides), Jan De Witte, Priya Cardinaletti

The ladies that were in Melbourne ready to march to the Shrine of Remembrance were thrilled to have a WRAC come and ask if she could march with us.

The answer from all of us was YES.

We welcomed Dawn Irwin to our group. What an amazing lady.

I asked if she could give us an insight into her ANZAC day experience in Melbourne and she has written this story. Ed.

My Anzac Day Experience

**(BY DAWN
IRWIN W474413,
NORTHERN
IRELAND)**

Six months ago, I made the somewhat radical decision to quit my job and go travelling. First the USA to see friends and blow off steam in the theme parks, then on to Australia to stay with a good friend with whom I had undertaken paediatric nurse training back in the day. I realised that my travel dates would include Anzac Day, and I made contact with the Returned and Services League of Australia to request permission to march, receiving a quick response in the affirmative.

The day arrived and we left home at 0435, coinciding with



the time the ANZAC troops started to climb Ari Burnu in 1915. With the car safely stowed we made our way on foot to the Shrine of Remembrance, glowing an eerie red in the midst of the darkness. A reverent silence was palpable as the darkness gradually emerged into light at the conclusion of the dawn service. We made our way back to Flinders Street station for some much-

needed coffee, and then on to Melbourne's oldest licensed pub, the Duke of Wellington, already busy despite the early hour. And so began my search for the banner of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (1951 - 1984). I spotted it eventually in the distance and made my way through the throng of servicemen and women. Upon explaining who I was, I was immediately welcomed with great enthusiasm and wide-open arms. WRAAC Association Treasurer, Margaret Jager, subsequently



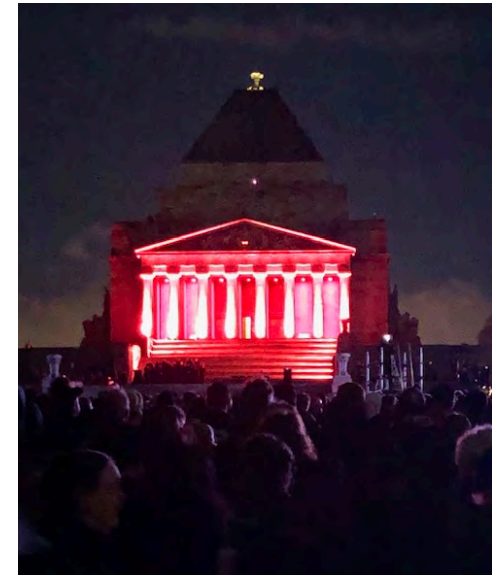
produced a cap badge and kindly presented it to me, further adding to the emotion that the day had already brought. I was introduced to each of the ladies as they arrived and had the pleasure of meeting Margaret's husband Ian and her lovely family. Ian was on photographic duties that day and Margaret led us for the march.

Marching complete, I was taken to the Garden of Flowers which is dedicated to the 70,000 women who served Australia in the Navy, Army, Air Force and Auxiliary Services. More coffee was quaffed, and I was introduced to Anzac biscuits which I can confirm are very delicious. We then made our way to the Arbory restaurant by the river which was providing complimentary breakfast for all service members and veterans. This was very well received and provided more opportunity for us ladies to get to know each other!

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end and there

were emotional goodbyes and promises to stay in touch as each of us took our leave. As I was making my way along the river to my next appointment, I met a beautiful little girl and her father who stopped me to ask if I knew where there were "army people" in uniform as his daughter wanted some photos and they'd missed most of the parade. I chatted to the little girl about army life in general and she was interested in hearing about the different roles, jobs and prospects. She insisted on a photo, after which I directed them to the restaurant where she could meet more "army people" and we parted ways with lots of "thank you" and "good luck" ringing in my ears.

My day was not over yet, and I made my way to "The G" aka the infamous Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) for the annual "Ozzie rules" football fixture between Collingwood (Magpies) and Essendon (Bombers) which is an opportunity to honour and recognise those who have served for Australia in times of war. Fans are encouraged to arrive



at the match early for a range of proceedings of pre-game ceremony including the veterans' parade. Veterans are treated with utmost respect by the stewards, one of whom offered to take photographs of me next to the memorials. The game was attended by 93,400 people, and I confess I have never experienced anything like it! It was hard fought and very close; the attitude and dedication of both teams really reflected the Anzac spirit. It resulted in a draw, with the Magpies captain encouraging the Bombers captain to make the post-game speech.

Additional prayers were:

Ex-Service's Prayer: Sheila Vennells-Praed

The Salute: Margaret Jager

The Wreath Laying Psalm:
Liz Rouse Salmon

Prayer for Current Serving
Members: Chaplain Kirsten Linden

During the wreath laying, Piper David Cretney performed the Lament, and this was followed by The ODE recited by Liz Rouse Salmon, The Last Post, a Minute's Silence and Rouse.

To conclude the Service, Kelli sang The National Anthem and Chaplain Linden gave The Benediction.

As always, this very solemn and peaceful service was attended by Association members and friends, and the very supportive parents of the Goonawarra Primary School Choir.

We shared a morning tea provided by the Association and we thank all participants and visitors.

Until next year...

Dexter Purcell



WRAAC Association Annual Luncheon | 20th July 2024



At our luncheon this year we had a display of WRAAC uniforms from 1952-1985 and a nursing dress uniform, nursing ward dress and cape.

Guest Speaker LTCOL Simmone Reynolds Commanding Officer, Defence Force School of Signals at Simpson Barracks. LTCOL Reynolds made her way to every table during the day to speak to everyone and get an understanding of what WRAAC did and how they did it. She was excellent. She spoke of how we as WRAAC



LTCOL Simmone Reynolds

were the trailblazers which has helped the women of today in the military. A very inspirational leader. LTCOL Reynolds is in charge of the 100-year celebrations for the Signals Corps Australia.

Thank you to Judy Wright who

supplied the WRAAC uniforms and memorabilia Photo's, clothes brushes, shoe brushes, sewing kit and lots more, of which she has been carrying around for 50 plus years, Nola Williams for bringing the 1952 WRAAC uniform and Sheila Freeman for lending us her nursing uniforms. How we ever fitted into those sports uniform I don't know. Thank You ladies, it made a great talking point on the day.

Lots of chatter filled the room by all, some ladies haven't seen



Cindy Marrett, Bronwyn Flack, Judy Landau, Deb Pearce, Dani O'Brien, Ruth Ogden, Nola Williams & Liz Maclaine

each other for 12 months so lots to catch up on. Then came the raffle with 71 prizes all donated by our members lots of fun was had I would like to thank Jenny Hayes, Amy Jager and Emma Jager-Willey for assisting with the

draw and scribing of winners.

A GREAT DAY WAS HAD BY ALL.

Thank you to all who have provided photos for this article. Ed.

School ANZAC Day Services

Killara Primary School in Sunbury had their service on the 22nd of April Nola Williams and Margaret Jager attended.

Goonawarra Primary School in Sunbury had their service on the 26th of April Bronwyn Flack, Judy Stewart and Margaret Jager attended this service.



ANZAC Day at Killara Primary School



ANZAC Day at Goonawarra Primary School.

Both schools had their choir's singing "Australia Remembers", "Lest We Forget" and both National Anthem's for New Zealand and Australia. The laying of wreaths which are made by the children of each class. After the services the children were able to talk to us and ask questions.

Down Memory Lane

Being an Olympic year, we thought we would have a look at a couple of our members that were chosen to carry the Olympic Torch for the 2000 Games in Australia as it made its way around Robyn Gibson and her husband Ken carried the torch in the Cook Islands and Lesley Bennett carried the torch in the Stawell area. How proud we were of them in being selected.



Lesley Bennett



Robyn Gibson

WRAAC SOCIAL GROUPS



What a wonderful day was held at Seaford RSL when 36 ex WRAAC gather for the Feb function of the WRAAC Social Group. Included in the group were; Lorraine McDougall, Vera Duane, Deborah Pearce, Jodi Sinclair, Bronwyn Rowleson, Pam Phillips, Margaret Jager, Sheila Vennells-Praed, Judy Stewart, Jenny Hayes, Kate Burgess, Bev Kummerlowe and her daughter, Margaret Handte, Ursula, Liz Maclaine, Dexter Purcell, Carol Cunningham (from WA), Mary Kelly, Lyn Board, Gay Markey, Bronwyn Flack, Melissa Bell, Susan Sayers-Phillips, Denise Warren, Nola Williams, Karen Martin, Ruth Ogden, Daniela O'Brien, Judy Landau, & Iris Petrass.



The group meets twice a year, last year in October we travelled to Altona RSL (for those who live that side of the city), and Seaford is for the other who live down the Peninsula area. There was lots of noise with laughter and talking, even more so when we had the photo of us all taken. If you are able, we will be meeting again in October the Altona RSL.

**For Details and to attend contact
Liz Maclaine on 03 9397 1043 or
Lyn Board on 03 5989 2553**



Western Suburbs Morning Tea / Lunch Group



*NOLA WILLIAMS, BRONWYN FLACK,
JAN DEWITTE, LIZ MACLAINE,
MARGARET JAGER, RUTH OGDEN,
JUDY LANDAU, DEBORAH PEARCE,
JUDY STEWART*

*DANIELLA O'BRIEN,
DEBORAH PEARCE,
BRONWYN FLACK,
MARGARET JAGER, NOLA
WILLIAMS, JUDY STEWART,
SHEILA FREEMAN*



Western Suburbs Morning Tea / Lunch Group

**MEET THE SECOND THURSDAY IN
EACH MONTH AT THE MELTON
COUNTRY CLUB.**



**28 – 30 RESERVE RD MELTON 3337
FOR DETAILS AND TO ATTEND,
CONTACT BRONWYN FLACK 0425 261 806 OR
MARGARET JAGER 0418 257 211**

Peninsula Ex-Service Ladies

**If you are in the peninsula area and wish to know
more please contact:**

Sheila Vennells-Praed 0407 357 987



VALE

MAJ LESLEY BENNETT RFD, ED F31790

19TH JANUARY 1926 – 8TH JULY 2024



Lesley Joined 8 WRAAC Coy on the 23rd November 1954. During her time in the Citizen Military Force, she attended many annual camps at different locations as Lonsdale Bligh, AHQ Sig Regt, S Comd Sig Regt as a Cpl, Pay course Prom to T/Sgt Nov 59. Unit change from 8 WRAAC Coy to 3 WRAAC Coy 1st July 60. Annual camps at Puckapunyal and Signal Training at Watsonia.

Then having been appointed to Comissioned Rank 21 May 63. Camps at Ballarat Airfield Area with 6Sig Regt, Brisbane with 118Sig Regt. Then posted to 3 WRAAC Coy as 2IC and Prom to Maj 14th January 1974.

Jude Pinkerton-Treloar recalls, I have never forgotten Lesley's lecture on the cleaning and

maintenance of a grease trap. It was an illuminating experience for rookies attending their first camp. There was nothing this incredibly gifted women could not do.

Lesley's family described her as loving the outdoors and her veggie garden was the best patch ever. She would take the nieces and nephews out and teach them the

names of trees, flowers, and birds.

She was also a pioneer with the Australian Property Institute (API) beginning the 1st female member of the API and in recent years have made an award in Lesley's name called The Lesley Bennett Excellence In Property Award.

Her quilting friends told a story she told them when she first went to Melbourne, she stayed at Queen Elizabeth Club she thinks it was called a hostel for young ladies to stay in the city. While there a US Navy ship came into port and the girls were asked if any were willing to show some of these sailors the sites. To Lesley's consternation her young man turned up on a motorbike. Not sure of his abilities, especially since he was used to driving on the wrong side of the road, Lesley took precautions at the first traffic lights stop in Collins street she carefully placed both feet firmly on the ground

to assist balance while stopped. The lights changed, he gunned the bike and Lesley was left standing in the middle of the intersection, he did come back for her, and the rest of the day was uneventful.

At a camp she was on the girls accidentally set fire to the large stone chimney after all the excitement died down and the owner of the lodge Tim had told us things were ok Lesley said "Tim" He answered Yes Lesley. Then Lesley told him you owe us 50 dollars for cleaning your chimney we'll send you a bill later.

Lesley was very intelligent sometimes grumpy but had a heart of gold and was always ready to give help and advice to any person in need.

Rest Easy Ma'am a life well lived.

Thank you to Jude Pinkerton-Treloar and the ladies of the Stawell Quilting Club for your comments. ED.

MRS EUNICE JOYCE LEONG NÉE CHINN VF346714

24/11/1920 - 29/05/24

It is with the greatest sadness that I inform you of the passing of my mother, Sgt. Eunice Joyce Kim Oy Leong, née Chinn, aged 103, #VF346714. She passed peacefully at 3.55pm today (29 May 2024) at Coppin Centre, Melbourne.

My mother served in Australia, training Morse telegraphers in several states, who communicated with Coast Watchers throughout the Pacific. She was a proud Chinese Australian born in Melbourne and served the country of her birth well, as did her 4 siblings who also served here and overseas on behalf of Australia. She often recalled the pride in her work of training others for this vital communications role and the deep sadness when knowing their opposite numbers in the Pacific had perished at the hands of the enemy, usually by the ominous transmission silence. Those were her worst moments and knowing the fate of her comrades

thousands of kilometres away.

She was a beneficiary of the re-education program for de-mobbed personnel after WWII and became a much-respected senior academic at both Melbourne and Monash Universities until her retirement in the late-1980s.

I am sorry to be the bearer of such sad news.

Anthony.

Biographic details for Eunice.

Eunice was born in country Victoria on 24 November 1920 to Chinese Australian parents. Her mother, Mabel Chinn (1884-1991), was a trained musician who founded the Oriental Orchestra in Hamilton during the 1930s, and her father, Timothy Coon, was a Chinese herbalist. Eunice, her brother, and three sisters all participated in their mother's concerts.

During WWII, Eunice and her sister

were keen to join the RAAF but were rejected due to their "not substantially of European origin". Not giving up on supporting Australia during the war, she applied as a telegrapher at the Australian Women's Army Service since she used to be a member of the Australian Women's Legion volunteer group and was trained at RMIT in transmitting Morse code.

She was officially enlisted in 1942 at Army Headquarters, Victoria, and had further training in Morse code at Park Orchards. After attending Non-Commissioned Officer School in Sydney, her rank advanced to Corporal. She was sent to Alice Spring for six-months to lead a telegraph team of six who receive and send coded messages and forward them to the local Commandant. Before the war ended, she was sent to Bonegilla to be an instructor in Morse code and signals procedures, which become a starting point of her teaching career.

Eunice attended the University of Melbourne after the war to study French. She was appointed as a part-time tutor in French after receiving her Master of

Arts (Honours) and transferred to Monash University as a full-time tutor and later become Reader in French Literature. She was also an English teacher at Nanjing University in China during the early 1970s.

Here we reprint an article originally written by Eunice and published in our Journal; March 2016 issue.



Eunice Leong Nee Chinn -VF346714
MY AWAS SERVICE
(A Personal Perspective)

It is said that you should never begin a piece of writing with an

apology, however, as it is 73 years since I first joined the AWAS, if my memory fails at times on dates and names, I apologize in advance.

As I recollect, only three girls of Chinese descent in Victoria joined the forces in the Second World War - my sister who was in the WAAF, a WAAF Nurse Phillis Anguey and myself. This is not surprising, because we were brought up strictly, had never left home, had never mixed with strangers, and had never travelled. In our case, I can only surmise that our father gave permission to our joining up was because China had been fighting against the Japanese invasion alone for four years.

My sister and I had trained in the Australian Women's Legion in First Aid, and at the RMIT as wireless telegraphers in case male operators were called up, so were able to begin working immediately as operators after "rookies".

My introduction to "rookies" was certainly a shock. The facilities at Glamorgan, the junior school of Melbourne Grammar were totally inadequate. Can you imagine

ten or more naked women of all shapes and sizes trying to get under the one shower which was in a bath? The rest of this period, I have cheerfully forgotten.

The first AWAS wireless telegraphers began working at the HQ of Heavy Wireless in Queen's Road, Melbourne.

Two experienced male operators the Donovan brothers, who were very helpful to us, worked the link to East Timar sporadically, because our soldiers there were constantly on the move - Timar being occupied by the Japanese. The other link was to Chongking the war-time capital of China.

At first, we were in camp, under canvas but very comfortable, at Park Orchards and were driven each day to Queen's Road. Later, we operated out of Park Orchards. We worked on shift work on a 24-hour basis which, in fact, had some advantages as well as disadvantages. The early wireless AWAS operators were a very closeknit group, somewhat supercilious, as we were quite few, but established

enduring friendships.

It was decided to send us as detachments of six operators to all the capitals of Australia. The first group leader to Sydney was Beryl Burfurd who, until her recent passing, became our voluntary amanuensis who kept us all up to date with one another long

Beryl to NCO's school In New South Wales. We were sure that we were chosen because they wanted to get rid of our many complaints. In any case, we emerged from the school as corporals.

My next move, which rather dismayed me, was to the almost unknown Alice Springs in 1944.



after the war to the present.

We were accommodated in a unit in Sydney but were not really under its jurisdiction because we belonged to Signals HQ. After a short period, to my surprise, I was sent with

I was sent in charge of the detachment. The members, as I remember, were June McPherson, Florrie? Dottie Owler (Campbell), Molly Blackstock (Pillar) and another Sig whose name I can't



recall. We were housed in the AWAS camp which comprised mainly South Australian AWAS.

A male lieutenant was theoretically our chief, but as we seldom saw him and he did not belong to Signals, we were virtually independent. In some ways, were fortunate. Being directed by HQ Signals, no-one outside our detachment knew who was rostered for duty, nor what time we began or ended our shifts, so we were free to do whatever we wanted when not on duty.

The journey to Alice Springs from Adelaide was an unforgettable experience. It took, as I remember three days, because of usual breakdowns of the old Ghan, on a railway track similar to that of Puffing Billy. It was an enjoyable and interesting trip for our group. I had always asserted that to travel with my back to the engine would make me sick, but having found three other bridge players, I didn't even notice I had travelled all the way with my back to the engine.

Much to our surprise, as the train was travelling mostly through the desert, we expected to see just plains of undulating red soil. Instead, the desert contained

life - patches of spinifex grass, occasionally a stunted mulga trees and, hiding low under green leaves, brilliant red and black Sturt Desert peas.

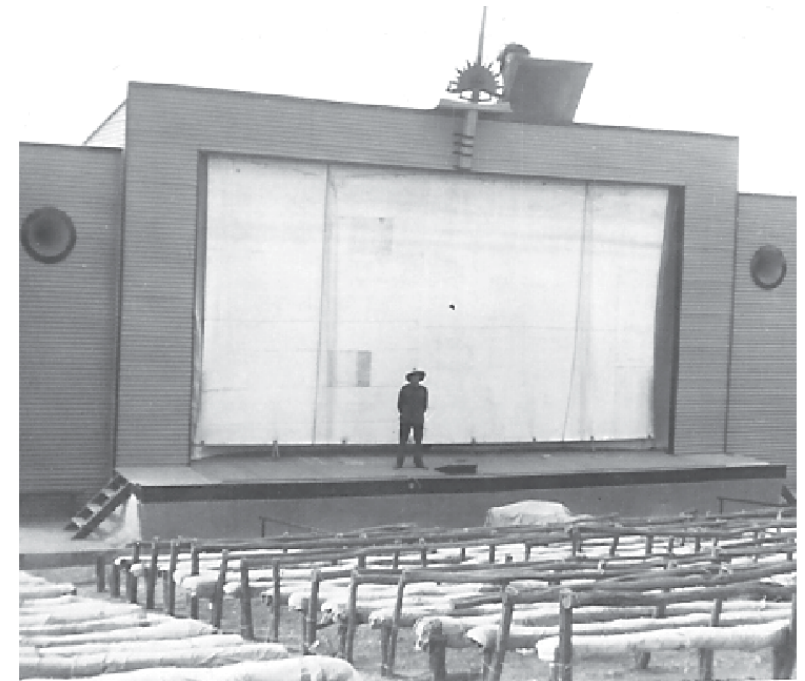
Then there were the mirages. We were sure that there were lakes in the desert. I had never believed one could really see mirages, but we experienced them on that journey and believed that we were seeing vast expanses of water.

The desert in some ways is very beautiful - vast, eternal, peaceful - untouched by civilisation, but deadly for its lack of water - "the beauty and the terror" of our wide, brown land.

Alice Springs then consisted almost entirely of one long, main road, dominated at one end by the AWAS camp and at the other by the Army

Transport units who transported all manner of secret goods and products "up the track" somewhere up towards, but not quite as far as Darwin.

We were totally unaware that Darwin had been bombed by the Japanese although we knew that some local people had come from Darwin.



Very few Aboriginal people were visible, but perhaps it was because we did not visit the town as there were scarcely any shops, and none suited to our needs. We also travelled everywhere, as I remember, in army vehicles. The paintings of Albert Namatjira were, however, already famous in Alice Springs and we saw many copies of his works. The vivid reds and blues of his landscape and, the stark contrast of his luminous shadows are a true depiction of the supposed "dead" heart of Australia.

Life in 'The Alice" apart from work seemed almost idyllic. The days were very hot, but we were young and enjoyed the heat, and the nights were cool. I expect that the relative freedom we enjoyed compensated in part for our isolation. As male soldiers outnumbered the AWAS by more than fifty to one at least, females were popular and had the choice of as many suitors as they desired.

Despite the discrepancy of numbers between female and male soldiers, there was never any hint





Eunice with a fellow AWAS enjoying some free time in the Alice.

of unacceptable behaviour as far as we were aware, and army camps are quite a hotbed of rumours. We were also rather naive and perhaps, being young and inexperienced, were protected by a certain innocence. Our accommodation was in permanent plaster-board units, divided into rooms which were shared by two AWAS.

There was no furniture in the rooms except for beds, but all the AWAS could find young soldiers eager to make them rough cupboards or shelves to find favour.

Our work as wireless operators was very intense. It demanded complete concentration to avoid any mistake

in the coded messages. It was sometimes difficult if transmission was poor because of outside conditions, or a poor signal, and sometimes it was due to poor operating.

At some time, any operator could break down and that meant that to be accurate, the speed of transmission would be very slow.

There was also the strain of constant shift work, hot earphones clamped to the head, and having to sleep in the heat of day, but we managed it satisfactorily and even enjoyed it.

As our small group worked independently from the rest of the camp, we became very close, and some friendships continued lifelong.

We always went out as a group, excepting for the operator on duty, and surprisingly, there was seldom any disagreement among

us, as any problem that arose was solved by discussion. We also had good relations with the other South Australian AWAS with whom we shared outings and socialising when we were free.

The members of the group agreed that the time in "the Alice" was one of the happiest in our wartime experience. I was also promoted to sergeant at this time and had the bonus of a room to myself, although it was usually filled with the other members of our group. Perhaps it was the isolation of our position which bonded us, as normal off-duty recreations were limited, and we missed our families.

We grew to know each other's families well, just by constantly talking about them and sharing any cakes or other scarce goods sent to us by them.

All the AWAS were really overwhelmed with kindness. The landscape around Alice Springs is very beautiful The MacDonnell ranges

overlook Alice Springs, and the red soil emphasises the vibrant colours of the green leaves of plants, and the brilliance of the blue skies. In our leisure times, we were taken to visit beauty spots like Emily Gap and Standley Chasm which are lofty cliffs with small trickles of water running through underneath - something exceptional in such a dry area.

Other AWAS were able to get leave to be taken further "up the track" to other places, towards Darwin,

and I remember their talking about one place called, I think, Palm Springs, which was apparently very beautiful. For our group, however, this was not an option as we worked a 24-hour shift.

We were taken on picnics on days off, or nights off which were cool and pleasant. Then





there were dances every Saturday night when girls had

I remember one concert in particular, when I accompanied a young singer who had been a member of the Viennese Boys' Choir visiting Australia when the war broke out, and was forced to stay in Australia. He had a beautiful tenor voice, and his

name was Stefan Haag, who later became the director of the Sydney Opera Company.

I also remember a brilliant violinist from the Sydney Symphony Orchestra whose musical accompaniment was so difficult that I very nervous that I would ruin his solo.

When I think about it, I often have to laugh. On this particular concert, I played a piano solo "Rush hour in Hong Kong", by Abram Chassins, and sang a famous Chinese folksong "Jasmine" in Chinese.

I wore a long, satin Chinese dress (cheong sam, so-called) and I received a most thunderous applause which I am sure was only because of the dress. When I look back, I think how bizarre it was - in the middle of a desert in the heart of Australia, in Chinese dress, singing in Chinese to a mixed audience of mostly male soldiers, local civilians and Army women.

The detachment spent six months in Alice Springs, and we were then on leave. It was during that leave that I met up with my school-girl friend Lorna Bushnell whom I hadn't seen for a few years, as she had been stationed in Queensland. After the war, we met twice overseas. Lorna was a secretary in the Australian Diplomatic Service and travelled extensively overseas.

We met twice in Europe, once, when Lorna came to visit me when I was on study leave and she was in Brussels, again when I stayed with her in Geneva. We had lunch

together at least once a year, ever since. I was very saddened recently when she passed away and the AWAS Association was represented by Jude Pinkerton-Treloar at her funeral. She will always be in my thoughts with my Sig. pal Beryl Burfurd.

I expected to be sent to another capital after my leave but was a little disappointed at being returned to Alice Springs with two of my original group and some other operators from Heavy Wireless.

We worked together again very harmoniously, and life carried on again much as it had during our first six months. The novelty of being there had, of course, worn off, but it was still enjoyable working in "the Alice", and the climate was just as good. Again, the six months passed quite quickly and we were on leave again.

It was now at the beginning 1945 and the costly war was slowly coming to an end. Instead of being sent on detachment again, I was told I was going to Bonegilla to train new AWAS in signals procedure. I was naturally disconcerted, as I had enjoyed the wireless operating experience,



VF509863 Sig L. G. Bushnell

when he said that "a good teacher sells him/herself".

I found the truth of those words much later. The last batch of trainees were girls who had been trained as guards along the coast of Australia. I heard that they were extremely tough, had been taught to use a rifle and were most reluctant to re-train as wireless operators and would give me a bad time. I was very nervous that I would be unable to control the class, but apart from the fact that they were not really interested in the re-training, I found them to be a very interesting group and we got on famously. Whether

they learned anything is another matter, but the war finished soon after and it was never necessary.

I stayed in Bonegilla till the end of the war. The Army provided assistance for what careers we could follow after discharge. I had no clear idea of what I should do after the war.

My music teacher wanted me to take music as a career, but I was not prepared to put in the hours and hours of practice each day.

and of course, being independent of many rules and regulations.

Before the new trainees came in, the instructors were taught how to instruct by a Colonel who had been the head of the Department of Education at Melbourne University.

I did not know then, but what I learnt was to be of the greatest importance to my future career. He was a splendid teacher, and I will always remember his words

I had thought of journalism, so took a course with RMIT and had the luck to have as a tutor, the Australian author, Alan Marshall, who taught me just how cliché-ridden my writing was and how I could improve it. I am very grateful for the admirable advice received from him.

In the end, I went back again to school which I had left just before the Matriculation year, much to my parents' disapproval and distress. I matriculated and went on to further studies. I will never forget what Army service taught me.

The great city among its members of education, background, beliefs and outlook meant that tolerance was the first life lesson learned. I never experienced any discrimination or prejudice in the AWAS because of my Chinese background. Teamwork was another essential in our work, and the ability to discuss and decide on matters without compromising principles was another important step in preparation for life.

It is possible that I would never have known and appreciated the vastness and the beauty of the "dead" heart of Australia, had it

not been for my Army service. I also learned what responsibility meant and the need for self-discipline. These were the lessons carried on throughout my life.

On looking back, I suppose I joined up somewhat selfish and complacent, and left knowing the importance of sharing, loyalty and the acceptance of others' views.

My husband and I were interviewed a few years ago by a Chinese television crew who were very surprised and interested to learn that I had been in the Australian Army and wanted to know something of my experiences. The video was later screened throughout China and some friends in China were very surprised to see my photo. So the AWAS is not only known to the Western world but also to the East.

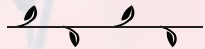
Thank you, Eunice, for sharing your AWAS story with us, it was truly an amazing journey. We look forward to catching up with you soon. - Ed



Lest We Forget

WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE
BECOMES A MEMORY,

OUR MEMORY BECOMES A
TREASURE



Sick Parade

To all our members who are not feeling well, our thoughts and prayers are with you. If you wish to have a chat, please do not hesitate to contact a committee member



RA Signals 100 Years CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The RA Sigs will open the celebrations with a parade at
The Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne
on Friday 14 February 2025.

No details provided at this time.

If you wish to know more about the 100 Year celebrations,
including local activities, please provide your contact details to
Dexter Purcell dexterf@ihug.com.au who will update you as
information becomes available.

The Signaller Website is <https://rasigs.org>
More information can be found via email at:
certa.cito2025@defence.gov.au



WRAAC Polo Shirts

We have arranged for WRAAC Association Polo Shirts to be produced.

Order Forms are available from Sheila Vennells-Praed,

Telephone: 0407 357 987

Or by email from s.vennells@bigpond.com

PAYMENT: @ \$45.00 per shirt

By cheque or money order made payable to "WRAAC Association (Vic). Inc."

Or pay into the bank account of WRAAC Association (Vic). Inc.

ORDERS WILL BE PLACED IN BATCHES WHEN WE HAVE ENOUGH FOR THE SUPPLIER TO PROCESS.)



Entombment of the Unknown Soldier



On the 2nd November 1993 the body of an unknown Australian Soldier was recovered from Adelaide Cemetery near Villers-Bretonneux in France and was repatriated back to Australia, a journey that took 5 days.

On the morning of the 7th November 1993 the Bearer Party lay the unknown Australian Soldier on the catafalque in Kings Hall of Old Parliament House. The Bearer Party handed custody of the coffin to the waiting catafalque party. The catafalque party mounted around the coffin to ensure the safety of the body while it lay in state. 4 tri-service ADF members of an armed guard stood with their heads bowed and

their arms (weapon) reversed. The guard stood facing outward approximately 1 metre from the coffin as a symbolic form of respect for those who have fallen.

I was the Commander of that catafalque party; my guard consisted of 3 Army (including myself), 2 Navy and 1 Air Force. 4 guards, 1 Commander and 1 reserve.

Old Parliament House Kings Hall was open daily from 0900 to 1700 for the public to come and pay their respects. The catafalque party vigils were 30 minutes on, 1 ½ hours off. There were 4 catafalque parties, so each day each catafalque party mounted its vigil four times. The vigils ran for the following 3 days.



Catafalque Party 1 -
Myself 3rd from left

On the 11th November 1993 at 0900, my catafalque party was tasked with handing over the unknown Australian Soldier to the Bearer Party for the final journey to the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial.

The unknown Australian Soldier was buried in a Tasmanian Blackwood coffin, on which were placed a bayonet and a sprig of wattle. Soil from the Pozieres battlefield in France was scattered in his tomb.

The task entrusted to me and 3 other Senior NCO's two weeks prior to the 7th November was to take 20 plus soldiers of 3 services and teach them drill, Army style. Obviously,

the army soldiers were as we say 'up to speed' but the Navy and Air Force struggled with the way we (Russell Offices RSM) wanted it done. One must



Unknown Australian Soldier Kings Hall



Catafalque Party - Guard Mounted

remember that this was just over 30 years ago and at times we were still 3 independent services and there was no Federation Guard.

We spent the next 2 weeks slow marching the halls of Old Parliament House with our Steyr rifles and counting steps as all commands had to be issued in a whisper, just loud enough for the guard to know when to outwards turn etc. As the counting of steps continued, at each turn, little stick-on colored dots were placed on the carpet to mark where the turn to the catafalque would be, just in case the soldier had lost count.

The RSM was pleased with how all the practice days went and then it came to the day before the unknown Australian Soldier would arrive to lie in state. As I was

the only female catafalque Commander the RSM decided it would be good PR for my guard to be first out for the handover from the Bearer Party. I was overwhelmed by nerves as the whole of Australia would have eyes on Kings Hall the next morning. Thankfully my guard did themselves proud and hopefully no one could see me shaking in my patent leather boots, literally. Once each guard got over their first vigil, it was business as usual for the coming days.

Then on the 10th November the RSM says, well seems you did such a good job taking the first guard, you can do the last one as well. Oh, thank you RSM, not.

The days of the unknown Australian Soldier lying in state were quite remarkable in that I had no idea the impact that



this soldier would have on the public that came to pay their respects. The floral tributes grew so big, we had to put them on plastic sheets so they could be moved easily on Remembrance Day. Amongst the tributes were cards written by soldiers to their loved ones that had been kept just for this day. So many families never knew where their loved ones lay, so this unknown Australian Soldier represented all who never had any closure. Embroidered handkerchiefs, old letters in their age wearied envelopes, Sympathy cards, Valentine's Day cards and some jewelry were left amongst the flowers; a sign that some of the broken hearts were now at peace. I remember one lady who silently wept in the shadows of Kings Hall

never knowing if this unknown soldier was her lost love.

Guarding the unknown Australian Soldier was a task bestowed upon me by my unit SSM when the Russell Offices RSM needed soldiers for various parade tasks around Canberra. I look back on that time as being involved in a small moment of history and I was grateful my unit SSM volunteered me. I can say with pride that we all guarded the unknown Australian Soldier as he lay in state prior to his entombment in the Hall of Memory on Remembrance Day 1993.

Mary Kelly.

Thanks Mary. Job well done. Ed.



Anxiety



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is like 'worry'. It's an unpleasant emotion that most people feel when something might be risky, frightening or worrying. Everyone experiences mild anxiety when faced with stressful situations, like just before a sporting match or an exam. This kind of anxiety is normal and is our body's way of preparing us to act in difficult situations. Anxiety can actually help us perform better by revving us up and helping us feel alert.



Anxiety can become a problem when it is very intense, happens a lot of the time, feels overwhelming or it interferes with your daily living.

What are the symptoms of anxiety?

Physical feelings of anxiety include an increased heart rate, faster breathing, muscle tension, sweating, shaking and 'butterflies in the stomach'. People with anxiety disorders experience these physical symptoms a lot more often. They might also experience:



- Persistent worrying and excessive fears
- Being unable to relax
- Avoiding challenging situations
- Being socially isolated or withdrawn
- Trouble concentrating and paying attention
- Poor sleep
- Problems with work, social or family life.

What are panic attacks?

Panic attacks can occur as part of any anxiety disorder, but not everyone with anxiety problems will experience them.

Panic attacks are when you are suddenly overcome by strong fear and experience physical symptoms of anxiety, like a pounding heart, difficulty breathing, shaking, feeling dizzy or feeling sick. Panic attacks are short (about 10 minutes) and usually feel frightening and intense. Someone having a panic attack might feel like they're having a heart attack or an asthma attack, or they might fear they're losing control.

