

EX-WRAAF ASSOCIATION VICTORIAN BRANCH

MAY 2018 Edition

WRAAF REUNION - ADELAIDE 6-8 April 2018

By Line by Trish Hodda

Laeraine Ewan-Chappell (WA) did an excellent job in organising the reunion, ably assisted at the functions, by a couple of helpers. The reunion was well attended by about 198 ladies, with all states and territories represented. We were surprised by the number of South Australians who attended and quite a chuckle was heard when Laeraine, whilst thanking all who made the effort to attend, said "thank you for letting me run your reunion". Loud acclamation erupted amongst gasps of surprise. That's what most of us thought.

Whilst people found their own accommodations, many opted to stay at the Hilton on Victoria Square as this had all the facilities and that is where the functions were being held. The restaurant, bar and lounge facilities catered well for those who wanted to enjoy relaxing and catching up with mates, old and new. Next door was a small market area and a Coles supermarket with cafes and coffee shops accessible, with the tram and taxis at the front door and lovely Victoria Square Gardens across the road. Most convenient.

Our reunion opened on Friday at 1800, with a meet and greet cocktail party. Food and drinks were plentiful (though slow to begin). The Hilton function room was abuzz with the sounds of excited chatter and happy squeals as people found old mates, some of whom had not seen each other in twenty years and some as recent as the last reunion at the Gold Coast. Much reminiscing and 'yarnin'". The cocktail party finished at around 2000 and people adjourned to someone's room or the hotel lounge to continue their 'catch ups', others, already tired from a day's travel retreated to the comfort of their beds to rest up for Saturday.

Saturday was a free day and those who stayed at the Hilton enjoyed magnificent daily breakfasts with everything imaginable on offer, including a chef to cook, 'eggs your way' or make a fluffy omelette. Some used the free day to continue their catch ups, going shopping, sightseeing and generally enjoying what was on offer in the lovely city of Adelaide. I took a couple of friends for a little Torrens River cruise on the 'Popeye'. Very relaxing.

Saturday night was the official dinner. This of course saw many new faces in the crowd as those who were new arrivals or did not attend the cocktail party found mates and began their socialising. The meals served at the dinner were very nice, wait staff efficient and obliging and conversations numerous and lively. Laeraine in her polka dotted full length ball dress and jewelled fascinator, performed her MC duties with great humour and enthusiasm. The formalities began with our esteemed WGCDR (Ret'd) Pearl Emma Cox delivering the toast to Queen and Country; Patsy Ludwick - Absent friends and Vale. I was honoured to be asked to say Grace, and Shirley McLaren and friends cut the cake.

Our guest speaker was The Honourable Natalie Charlesworth, a South Australian, recently appointed as one of only 12 women to be admitted as Federal Court Judges. Natalie said that having been asked to speak to an audience of Servicewomen and needing to prepare a suitable presentation called upon her recent and ongoing research into her own family's military history and how the family has been trying to understand the content of the letters and diaries of a close family member who served in the many overseas conflicts and had suffered severely from 'shell shock', now known as PTSD. She spoke of the difficulty family members endured because of the lack of understanding of what the terrors of war do to those who have been severely affected; how difficult it was for her Mother to understand largely because (I think it was her Father) would withdraw into himself - he would not and/or could not talk about it - as was, and is, the case with many who

have experienced the ravages of war.

Natalie drew parallels between how evidence is collected for court hearings, presented and examined to reach a specific outcome and the 'evidence' gathered from the letters, diaries and such of our men and women in their account of occurrences during battles and conflicts are treated similarly for a specific outcome – historical records, for compensation payments, medical treatments, awards and so on. Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and wanted to hear more from this very interesting and articulate young professional.

(Disclaimer) I apologise for any inaccuracies in my memory and mean no disrespect. Anyone who attended who can 'correct'/'update', please do so; your input would be appreciated and welcome.

All the formalities now dispensed with, there was more eating, drinking and making merry; a few raffles, the proceeds of which went to Welfare. When the meals were all complete, Laeraine fired up the jukebox and those that could, made good use of the dance floor. My knees ached just watching and my poor ears were not happy with the noise (regardless of how good the music was). By around 2230 many people adjourned to the Hotel lounge or rooms whilst a few 'kicked on' as they say, (including Moi, who was coaxed into joining the remaining few, Laeraine and a bottle of Pepperjack Shiraz (or two). My ears and liver are still recovering.

Much to the chagrin of many, there was no church service on the Sunday. This was left to individuals as they saw fit. Many were leaving after breakfast on Sunday anyway and those, including myself who remained, continued to enjoy the hospitality of the Hotel, the company of friends and the joys of Adelaide.

On the Monday, Caroline Hanrahan, myself and 'civvy' friend Margot, took a train ride for a nostalgia visit to the RAAF Base at Edinburgh. Caroline had set the visit up and through the courtesy of Sqn Ldr Sheena Stapleton, Executive Officer, 24 (City of Adelaide) SQN we were met at the front gate by LACW Kylie Baker (in her blue cammies) who drove us around, giving us a guided tour of the base. When asked how she was picked to do the job, she said she had volunteered and was honoured to do so. She was keen to meet ex-servicewomen (especially one who had done over 30 years), hear our stories and our comparisons between 'the old days' and now.

When asked about her experiences, she related she was the only one in her family history to join the Service, had been in just 6 years and has already seen overseas service, having been deployed to United Arab Emirates for 6 months recently. She also said she was about to pick up her hooks (and well deserved). She was very interested and amused by our account of our time at Edinburgh on Rookies. The base whilst changed, still had some stalwarts. The old WRAAF Block is still there as is our old Recruit Block, L Group and what was back then, seen as the new WRAAF quarters. Many buildings have been knocked down (largely due to the presence of asbestos) and the parade ground is all but overgrown. Training has moved to WAGGA. There is a large Army presence with tanks everywhere but very few aircraft (they must have been on patrols). There is a new state of the art Mess, Sports building, Headquarters and Canteen. The Messes whilst now combined under one roof are still segregated into, OR's, SNCO's and Officers. We enjoyed our trip down memory lane and Kylie was an excellent guide. She has done herself and her Service proud.

Well folks, aren't you sorry you didn't go now? I hope those who were too unwell to do so have now recovered and can stay healthy until the next one.

'When and where is the next reunion?', I hear you ask. Much debate is being had amongst interested parties. The year 2020 is being touted with some of the Canberra mob indicating they might run the reunion there. There is also a rumour that Toowoomba is considering.

Personally, with the 100th anniversary of the RAAF and 70th of WRAAF in 2021, I believe we in Victoria should try to springboard off those celebrations and have the next reunion, here in Melbourne, in 2021. In fact, try to find out who are the contacts for the anniversary celebrations, see if we can get funding and maybe get the event organisers to combine our reunion with those celebrations. Food for thought?

Thank you, Trish, for your welcome report. Editor



ADDITIONS TO OUR MEMORY BOOK

Vale**Colleen Ellem nee Brown**

Died 15 February 2015

Gwen Morton

Died 23 December, 2017

Madeline Grace Buckley nee Walker

(known as Grace)

Blaxland, NSW area

Died 28 February, 2018 -Aged 87 years

General Hand LACW—Served 1951-1955
WRTC 8**Peg Lindsay nee Shorten**

Born 17 July, 1932—Died 12 April, 2018

(It is thought her given name was Margaret, but always known as Peg.)

W13549—WRTC #24 Richmond January-February 1952—Stewardess

Two postings to Amberley and one at Richmond. Discharged as Sergeant.

Joined Brisbane Branch Ex-WRAAF 21 Jan 1996 and retained membership.

Attended Adelaide reunion and returned home day before her sudden death.

Amy Taylor

Died 28 Jan 2018

Pat Frewin nee Webb

Clerk 1959—1961

Died August 2017

Beris Von Hein

Died 07 January 2018

WRTC 054 Pt Cook August/September 1954

Beris had a long illness, suffering from Dementia

Rita Cobbe

WRAAC NCO and WRAAF OFFICER

Rita lost her long battle with cancer

Died 20 February 2018 at Blayney NSW

Born Radcliffe Qld.

Kathleen Winifred (Kath) Hawley

W13943

Ex-WRAAF Corporal

Died 05 May 2018

Aged 85 years

WE WOULD LOVE TO KEEP THESE BOXES EMPTY, BUT LIFE BEING WHAT IT IS THAT IS WISHFUL THINKING.

Still, we can only spread the news if you pass it on to us.

SICK LIST

VAL ACORN nee WRUCK
SHIRLEY DELANEY nee WEIR
JUNE GOSPEL nee HOY
EILEEN KILLEEN
BERIS McEVOY nee BEAUMONT
LYN MITCHELL nee KITE
HELEN RODDOM nee SULLIVAN
COLLEEN WITHERS nee LISTER

On a Happier Note:

In April, Colleen Withers nee Lister celebrated her 89th year.



Now if this had been the March Newsletter (as it should have been) we would have been ahead of the event, but it is still very, very noteworthy.



THE SEARCH IS ON

Brisbane Branch is seeking the whereabouts of **Cpl Pat O'Halloran, Clk Med** who served at Edinburgh 1964—1966. Can you help?

Sydney Branch have received information and photographs from the son of **Betty Clara Murphy nee Pringle**, who was in the first intake at Laverton in 1951. She served at both Point Cook and East Sale, and was a Stewardess on DC3's.

If you knew Betty and would like her current details contact me (Brenda Douglas) and I will forward the information to Sydney Branch.

From Facebook (on the 'exRAAFIES group') Leanne McKell is looking for people who may remember her parents, **W221188 Margaret Gill (always known as Maree)** and **Max Buckley**. Max is deceased but it appears that Maree is still alive. She was based at Point Cook, Richmond and East Sale during her four-year WRAAF-life.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well, Ladies, another year has begun. I do hope that this finds you in good health.

I'm sorry we didn't have our regular luncheon in February / March, but do look forward to meeting up with you in June at Altona R.S.L. Full details in this newsletter.



Unfortunately we no longer march on Anzac Day in Melbourne thanks to our falling numbers and the inability of those who would march to manage the distance. Nowadays we mainly support our local community activities instead. Ironically this year, we were allocated a 9.00 am start (instead of standing around until 10.30—11.30 am waiting for our march-off, as usually happens). As you will have noted in the press releases or on the telecast of the march, most of the Womens' Services were at the head of the march. Well, that's life!!!

See you in June,
Regards June

This may be of interest to you. I have received advice that a forthcoming reunion is planned to mark the 25th Anniversary of the closure of No 1 Store Depot RAAF Tottenham. Date is 23 June 2018 at 1200 noon. It will be at the Sanctuary Lakes Hotel, 280 Point Cook Road, Point Cook 3030.

For those who go back a little way, this location is about halfway between RAAF Laverton and RAAF Point Cook, on what we knew as a single-lane track named Aviation Road. Memories!

The cost is \$55 and include food, a booklet with names of attendees and a commemorative mug and pen. Book at www.trybooking.com.

The sources of this information, of course, is Facebook (second or third hand) but if you use that programme, check it out.

Again I have to apologise. I did intend to get this newsletter out in March but life threw a couple of spanners in, so here it is in May. I guess that we all need to accept that the issue dates are not set in concrete. After all most of us are retired or semi-retired and no longer slaves to timetables and clocks, or so I've heard.

From all reports the Adelaide Reunion went off very well and a ball was had by the lucky ones who were there. Congratulations to Laeraine on her planning and organisation. From experience as part of the team who organised the Beechworth Reunion so many years ago now, it is a big big task. For Laeraine it had the added feature of being done remotely and single-handedly. It was great that we had a reporter on the spot to give us news of the event.

The news of the reunion marking the closure of 1SD reminded me that time passes by so quickly. I was fortunate to attend the Dining-Out at 1SD Officers' Mess (which from memory was a combined Officers / SNCO function) and was astounded when reminded that it is 25 years ago. So many things have happened since then that one forgets some highlights of one's life.

Talking about Dining-Ins, I attended one at Laverton Combined Officers'/Sergeants' Mess recently where the guest of honour and keynote speaker was 'our own' AC Jenny Lumsden. Her address was titled AC to AC marking her career progression from AC(W) to AC. It was very interesting and as well as I thought I knew Jenny I learn so many new aspects of her service career. Just confirmed something we Victorian Ex-WRAAF know—she is a very talented lady.
Cheers, The Editor

Our next Luncheon is programmed for Sunday 24 June 2018 at Altona RSL. Noon start, and table booking will be in name of Brenda Douglas.

Confirm your attendance on 03 9749 6068 [answering service available] NLT 14 June 2018. Now that is only a very short time away, so there is no reason to say '*I forgot the date*'. Why not ring as soon as you read this newsletter, before you forget.

WHERE: **ALTONA RSL CLUB {CNR SARGOOD ST AND RAILWAY ST SOUTH}**

COST: **APPROX \$20.00—APPROX \$40.00**

(YOUR CHOICE FROM THE MENU)(THREE COURSES AVAILABLE)

DRINKS: **BAR PRICES** PARKING: **PLENTY AVAILABLE**

TRANSPORT: **RAIL STATION ADJACENT**

**CONTACT US —****VICTORIAN BRANCH**

PRESIDENT — June Gospel (nee Hoy)

SECRETARY — Ann Steele (nee Dodds)

EDITOR — Brenda Douglas (nee Whiting)

MAIL

Brenda Douglas

41 Bourke Crescent

Hoppers Crossing Vic 3029

EMAIL

victorian.exwraaf@gmail.com