AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ARMY SERVICE

IN

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

1942 - 1946
The following account concerns the service of the Australian Women's Army Service in the Northern Territory during World War II, from August 1942 to March 1946. It covers administration and conditions as well as the experience of some of the hundreds of women of this Service.

The reason for writing this account is as follows:

Mrs. Norma Burns (Kelly), who was a member of the A.W.A.S., made a personal visit to Darwin in 1974. During her stay, she paid a visit to Army H.Q. at Larrakeyah Barracks and asked permission to see the area where she had served during World War II. The members of the A.W.A.S. had actually worked and been accommodated within these barracks at 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks.

Mrs. Burns was introduced to the Officer-in-Charge and was shown around. He was very interested in her story and was unaware of the fact that any A.W.A.S. had been in Darwin, as there appeared to be no obvious record of this. It was thought that the only women stationed at Larrakeyah Barracks had been members of the Australian Army Nursing Service and, because of this, an avenue had been named "Nurses Walk" as a commemoration of the Women's Services.

Mrs. Burns was anxious that this situation should be remedied and that a record of A.W.A.S. service in Darwin during World War II should be sent to H.Q. 7th Military District. On her return to Melbourne she set about the task of finding someone who could research the subject and be prepared to write it. It was then that I was asked to write this account. I agreed to do it, but with reservations, as I have little confidence in myself as a writer. I also felt strongly that, if the account was to be complete, it would have to include the service of A.W.A.S. in all parts of the Northern Territory and not just the Darwin area. For some time, A.W.A.S. had been employed in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Adelaide River and in Mt. Isa (Qld), prior to authority being given for them to serve in Darwin.

The reason why I was asked to undertake this task, was that I had been the Deputy-Controller A.W.A.S. at the H.Q. of our Controller, Colonel Sybil Irving, M.B.E., at L.H.Q. Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. In 1944, I was sent to N.T. as Colonel Sybil Irving's representative to advise on A.W.A.S. policies and make recommendations to H.Q., N.T. Force, regarding the requirements for A.W.A.S. within Larrakeyah Barracks, to ensure that conditions would be satisfactory to A.W.A.S. personnel.
During this tour of inspection, I visited all areas where the A.W.A.S. were posted at that time. Travelling some of the great distances not only by plane but also by road, I was able to experience and understand something of the conditions of climate and isolation which were often felt in such areas. Personally, I feel that I was privileged to see the work being carried out by our Servicewomen and to feel the spirit (esprit de corps) of those members of the A.W.A.S. who were releasing men for forward areas, which was the purpose for which the A.W.A.S. was formed.

I regret that so much time has elapsed since the request was made for this record - the research has been considerable and not always satisfactory for various reasons.

The information has been obtained from the War Memorial Library, Canberra; the Australian Archives, Victorian Division; records of the first Assistant-Controller A.W.A.S. in N.T., Major Beatrice Marr; some of the women who served in the N.T., and from my own personal records.

I am greatly indebted to an A.W.A.S. who served in Alice Springs, Mrs. Shirley Bickham (Carson), who typed this account.

In conclusion, I feel that this account may contain some inaccuracies and omissions, which I regret. However, it has been written from the information available to me at this time and will, I hope, be of interest to those who read it, and provide a record of the service of women of the Australian Women's Army Service in the Northern Territory during World War II.

Dated: 27th July, 1984
Signed: [Signature]

(Lieut-Colonel Eileen Parry, Deputy-Controller A.W.A.S. 1944-1946)
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## WHERE THEY SERVED -

- Alice Springs
- Tennant Creek
- Mount Isa
- Adelaide River
- Katherine & Berrima
- MAP OF DARWIN
- Darwin
- 2 Aust Rec. Centre - Darwin
- Affiliated Supernumeries

## CONCLUSION

EXTRACT FROM A SERVICEWOMAN'S DIARY

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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ARMY SERVICE

An introduction to the Australian Women's Army Service (A.W.A.S.) is made in regard to its formation forty-three years ago and its growth, prior to commencing the account of the service of A.W.A.S. in the Northern Territory. All areas from Alice Springs to Darwin were part of the N.T. Force.

War Cabinet approved the formation of the A.W.A.S. on the 13th August, 1941. This entailed the introduction, for the first time, of women into sections of the Australian Military Forces, other than the Medical Corps. It was the first all-ranks service of women actually enlisted into the Army to release men for fighting units.

Miss Sybil Irving, M.B.E., was appointed the Controller of the A.W.A.S. with the rank of Lieut-Colonel. She was later promoted to the rank of Colonel.

Military Forces (Women's Services) Regulations - Statutory Rules 1943 No. 68 - notified in the Commonwealth Gazette on 24th March, 1943 - were to be administered by the Minister of State for the Army. These Regulations were divided into parts as follows:-

Part I. Introductory.
Part II. Australian Army Nursing Service.
Part III. Australian Women's Army Service.
Part IV. Australian Army Medical Women's Service.
Part V. Appointments, Promotions and Discharges of members other than Officers.
Part VI. Discipline.

General Routine Orders G.R.O. Adm. 131 laid down the Organisation and Control of personnel of A.W.A.S. The responsibility of the Controller A.W.A.S. was laid down in Appendix A as set out below:

"The Controller A.W.A.S. is the adviser to the Commander-in-Chief and to the principal Staff Officers on all matters affecting the welfare and well-being of members of the A.W.A.S.

She will supervise the performance of her representatives in L. of C. Areas or on Formation. Headquarters, and may communicate direct with them. She will perform such other duties as may, from time to time, be allotted to her or with the authority of the Commander-in-Chief.

She is entitled to visit any unit containing members of the A.W.A.S for the purpose of inspecting matters affecting the welfare and well-being of those, but will arrange such, through the commanding officers concerned."
Except as mentioned above, she will have no executive functions, nor will she have any responsibility with respect to the performance of duties in any corps or service."

A list was issued as a guide to the types of matters which concern feminine welfare and well-being. All concerned were expected to interpret it reasonably and intelligently, and with regard to the interests of the Service. This list included such things as - the maintenance of discipline, morale, health and hygiene, messing; the conditions, adequacy and interior economy of quarters, dress and deportment, the issue of clothing and necessaries, spiritual welfare, leave, physical and recreational training, amenities and recreational facilities and psychological problems.

The Assist-Controllers, as the Controller's Representatives, had similar responsibilities and they were able to communicate directly with the Controller. On completion of the first Officers' Training School in December, 1941, the Assistant-Controllers were appointed to all L. of C. Areas, except in the case of the Northern Territory.

DISCIPLINE

In the early stages of the Service, discipline was achieved by appealing for a high standard of behaviour and this was, in the main, successful. When breaches of discipline occurred, they were dealt with under Military Forces Regulations and the few habitual offenders dishonourably discharged.

At the time the Regulations for the Army Women's Services were promulgated, the policy was approved to have Supervisory Personnel appointed to all areas to supervise the conduct of A.W.A.S. (and later A.A.M.W.S.) in public places; to check irregularities in uniform; to handle cases where members were A.W.L.; to investigate complaints. When necessary, the Supervisory Personnel worked in co-operation with the Provost Corps. These A.W.A.S. personnel were specially trained at an A.W.A.S. School and each member had to be a volunteer for this type of work.

POSTINGS AND CATEGORIES

A.W.A.S. first served on L. of C. Area H.Q. and Base Installations and, in the second half of 1942, employment was extended generally and covered units as follows:

A.W.A.S. worked as drivers in Car Coys. and Regimental Establishments, drove staff cars, 3-ton trucks, jeeps, Bren-gun carriers, amphibious vehicles, ambulances, and attended to the maintenance of vehicles.

They worked in watercraft workshops, A.E.M.E. repair shops, in Entertainment and Photographic units, Broadcasting and Cinema units, and in all duties connected with Signals and in Field Trial Coys. They were employed as stenographers, typists, clerks and orderlies in the many areas where these skills were required; as hairdressers (for women only), as interpreters, as cooks, mess and kitchen staff, including several butchers, as canteen assistants and as salvage workers.

A small group worked in the Topographical Section of the Military Intelligence where they helped to compile a book containing maps and topographical information about New Guinea and the Islands. This book was for use by General MacArthur to enable him to work out the best route for his 'return' to the Islands. Another group of eight A.W.A.S. were quartered at the A.W.A.S. Barracks at Duntroon Military College and worked on a census of the Services.

Special duties were performed by an anthropologist, a linguist, a veterinary surgeon and a sculptress. A.W.A.S. were employed at Prisoner-of-War and Internee Camps at Karrinyup, W.A., Cowra and Liverpool, N.S.W., Murchison and Tatura, Vic., and Loveday, S.A. At Cowra, there was a group of A.W.A.S. with one Officer at the P.O.W. Camp. It was here that the greatest prison-camp breakout in history took place at 0200 hrs on the 5th of August, 1944, and by daybreak the mutiny of 1,100 Japanese had failed. The A.W.A.S. women showed great courage and there was no panic and no one was harmed. A.W.A.S. also acted on occasions as guards for Italian female internees in hospital, and assisted in courts.

Officers were appointed to staff duties as follows:-

Assistant Adjutant-General (for all Army Women's Services); with Senior Officers of Signal Corps., Officers-in-Chief, Director of Education, Director of Amenities, Director of Military Training, Chaplains Department, Director of Public Relations, Director of Rehabilitation, Director of Military Intelligence; in Quartering, Psychology and as an Aide-de-camp to a G.O.C.

Several A.D.Cs. were appointed from time to time for duty with the Colonel-in-Chief of A.W.A.S. This Office was accepted by the wife of the Governor-General and was held in turn by -

Her Excellency, The Lady Gowrie
Her Excellency, The Lady Duggan, and
Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Gloucester.
These figures may be of interest:

A.W.A.S. in R.A.A. numbered 3,618 in Fixed Defences
- " Signals " 3,600
- " A.A.O.C. " 2,600

A.W.A.S. UNITS

Recruiting Depots in all L. of C. Areas
Seventy-one A.W.A.S. Barracks for accommodation in
all States and New Guinea
Administrative Cadre for Welfare Officers
Training Schools - L.H.Q. Officer and N.C.O. Schools
A.W.A.S. Recruit Training Battalions and Companies
Physical and Recreation Schools and Schools for
Supervisory Staff

These Training Schools later became Army Women's
Services Schools and trained both A.W.A.S. and
A.A.M.W.S.

There were four Recreation Centres for all Army
Women's Services - one in N.T. and three in
Queensland.

RATES OF PAY

War Cabinet first approved rates of pay for A.W.A.S. on
19th December, 1941. The women would receive two-thirds
of the male rate per day. These were as follows:-

Officers
Lieut-Colonel - Controller 20/8 per day
Major - Asst.-Controller 18/2 " "
Captain - Commandant 15/8 " "
Lieutenant - Asst. Commandant 10/8 " "

Other Ranks
Sergeants 7/8 " "
Corporals 6/8 " "

Privates - Adults & Minors:
Minors were paid a lower rate until
they had completed 12 months service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Minors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>6/4 per day</td>
<td>5/- per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>5/8 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>4/6 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>4/8 &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>4/- &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>4/- &quot; &quot;</td>
<td>3/6 &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group 1: Wireless Telegraph Operator, Remington
Machine Operator, Draughtswoman, Photographer, Photo-writer.

Group 2: Cook, Stenographer, Storekeeper G.2.,
Instrument Operator, Tailoress, Motor
Transport Driver, Signalwoman.

Group 3: Typist, Teleprinter, Clerk Grade 2, Canteen
Assistant, Textile Refitter, Equipment
Repairer.
Group 4: Telephonist, Waitress, Orderly, Salvage Worker.

Subsistence Allowance was paid for personnel not rationed and quartered, at the rates of 3/- per day living at home and 4/6 per day living away from home for Service reasons.

The Groups were varied and expanded from time to time and the rates of pay and allowances were increased.

Food Ration Coupons were allowed for those not rationed and quartered.

A.W.A.S. attended A.W.A.S. Recruit Schools held in all L. of C. Areas except the N.T. The duration of each school was, at first, fourteen days and later was extended to eighteen days. On completion, personnel were posted to the appropriate units.

The A.W.A.S. soon developed into an effective force. Total enlistments numbered 24,026 of which there were 670 Officers and 23,356 Other Ranks. The maximum serving strength was 20,051 women in January, 1944.
When the Japanese brought the war to Australian soil by the bombing of Darwin on 19th February, 1942, it was realised, at L.H.Q. and in H.Qs. in other areas, that there would be a need for the skills of A.W.A.S. in the Northern Territory.

Authority was given, in the first instance, for A.W.A.S. to be posted to Alice Springs in 1942. This authority was later extended as time went on and, eventually, A.W.A.S. were posted as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>Aug. 1942 - Nov. 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide River</td>
<td>Jan. 1944 - Oct. 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennant Creek</td>
<td>Sept. 1944 - May 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Isa</td>
<td>Sept. 1944 - June 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Oct. 1944 - Feb. 1946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were small groups at -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>in 1944, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berrima</td>
<td>in 1945.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On 1st March, 1946, all A.W.A.S. were finally withdrawn from the Northern Territory.

It was not until January, 1944, when A.W.A.S. were permitted to go to Adelaide River, that an Assistant-Controller was appointed for the N.T., to be posted to H.Q., N.T. Force (AIF). This officer was Captain Beatrice Marr (later promoted to Major) who duly arrived at Adelaide River in January, 1944.

Major Marr was Colonel Sybil Irving's representative in regard to matters of welfare and well-being for all A.W.A.S. in the N.T. and Mt. Isa (Qld). She visited all areas at regular intervals, whenever transport was available. She remained in N.T. until July, 1945, when she was posted to L.H.Q. Her successor was Major Dora Madden who was later replaced by Major Elizabeth Ratten who remained as Assistant-Controller until all A.W.A.S. were withdrawn in March, 1946. The maximum strength of A.W.A.S. grew to 14 Officers and 370 Other Ranks in December, 1944. However, the overall number who served in the Northern Territory over the whole 1942-1946 period was greater, due to replacement of members as their period of service was completed. In February, 1946, there remained only 67 A.W.A.S. to be withdrawn.

**CONDITIONS**

A.W.A.S. posted to N.T. had to comply with the conditions laid down in G.R.O. 25 of 26th March, 1943 and with later amendments. Personnel had to be -
(a) Volunteers.
(b) Spinsters, widows, divorcees, wives of P.O.W's. or wives of missing members of the Defence Forces. (Married women only under special circumstances and with special authority)
(c) Without dependants under the age of 16.
(d) Over the age of 21 years and under 40 years. Officers under 45 years.
(e) To have served at least for three months in a H.Q. or unit.
(f) If an N.C.O., to have qualified at an A.W.A.S. N.C.O. School.
(g) Be medically fit for service in N.T. - Al or A2.
(h) Period of Service: Alice Springs, a maximum of 2 years service with leave after 12 months, followed by a further period of 12 months.
    Adelaide River or Darwin, a maximum of 12 months and not to be re-posted to these areas. At times, these periods were longer than 12 months as replacements were dependent on availability of personnel and movements to the Territory.

It was considered that A.W.A.S. posted to tropical areas should be well selected, taking into account the climatic and living conditions of the areas. There could be no normal recreational leave and there was a possibility of boredom, discontent, home-sickness and emotional strain. It was hoped that unnecessary transfers during the period of service would be avoided by insisting on the special conditions laid down. It was reported that there were very few problems in this regard.

DISCIPLINE

When A.W.A.S. moved to Darwin, the discipline was tightened, because of the nature and size of the area and the number of troops present. Special Rules and Regulations were promulgated which were stricter than, and in addition to, those for other States. They varied according to the situation and the special needs existing at the time, and some of these Rules applied only to the Darwin area.

In general, A.W.A.S. Barracks were out-of-bounds to all male personnel, except those on duty, and invited guests with the A.W.A.S. Barrack Officer's approval. All the outings had to be approved by this officer and the women were required to go in groups of not less than six and return to unit lines not later than 2300 hrs. At picture shows special areas were reserved for A.W.A.S. and here they could be accompanied by a male escort. Regulations on the wearing of uniforms were different from those elsewhere because of the climatic conditions.

TRAINING

Training was not carried out for A.W.A.S. in the N.T. All personnel had received recruit training and at least three
months' experience in the Army. They had completed A.W.A.S. N.C.O. courses, if applicable, and A.W.A.S. Officer training was only carried out by L.H.Q. in Melbourne. The only exception was for courses arranged through A.A. Education Service.

POSTINGS AND CATEGORIES

The units to which A.W.A.S. were posted in N.T. were: –

H.Q. N.T. Force (AIF), H.Q. 11 L. of C Area and 20 L. of C Area, where they were attached to - Movement Control, Signals, Ordnance, Pay and Records Offices, Intelligence, Postal, Canteens, Amenities and Education Services, Medical and Legal Services, Officers' Shops, C.R.E. Works, Printing and Stationery. They also staffed the various A.W.A.S. Barracks and the Recreation Centre which catered for all Army Women's Services.

The categories in which A.W.A.S. were employed included -

Clerks, Typists, Stenographers, many sections of Signals, Canteen Workers, Tailoresses and Hairdressers (for Women's Services only).

During Colonel Sybil Irving's visit to N.T. in early 1943, she recommended that A.W.A.S. should not be employed as Drivers, Cooks or Store-women in the area; the only exception being that they were permitted to work in A.W.A.S. units but not in male units in these categories.

A.W.A.S. Officers filled the following vacancies on W.E.:–

A.W.A.S. Officers in charge of A.W.A.S. Barracks.
A.W.A.S. Officer in charge of the Recreation Centre.
A.W.A.S. Officers with Signals and Ordnance in technical appointments.
A.W.A.S. Officers with Education and Amenities Services appointed for Army Women's Services

WORKING HOURS

A.W.A.S. were kept busy during their tour of duty, and often worked at night or on shifts, or wherever there was a need. The normal working hours were –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday to Saturday</td>
<td>0745 hrs. - 1600 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Usually one parade at 0900 hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After December, 1945, these hours were altered to –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday to Friday</td>
<td>0745 hrs. - 1630 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>0745 hrs. - 1230 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Usually one parade at 0900 hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACCOMMODATION

A.W.A.S. were quartered in the following Barracks and Units:-

**Alice Springs**
- at 53 A.W.A.S. Barracks, to accommodate 100 women, some of whom were in transit. Prior to the barracks being built, accommodation was at the Australian Army Medical Women's Service camp, opposite the 109 Aust. General Hospital.

**Tennant Creek**
- Special quarters were set aside within the Army Barracks at 20 L. of C. Sigs. to accommodate 1 Officer and 24 Other Ranks.

**Mt. Isa**
- Special quarters were set aside, as above, for 1 Officer and 24 Other Ranks.

**Katherine and Berrima**
- A.W.A.S. were quartered within A.A.M.W.S. lines, which were adjacent to the Aust. General Hospitals in these areas. There were only about 6 Signalwomen at each of these places.

**Adelaide River and Darwin**
- at 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks, Adelaide River, to accommodate 200 women. In October, 1944, this barracks was transferred to Darwin and accommodated in Larrakeyah Barracks.

**Barrow Creek Banka Banka and Larrimah**
- Army Staging Camps were set up in these areas to accommodate A.W.A.S. in transit north of Alice Springs to Adelaide River and Darwin.

The types of huts varied in the different locations, but all were designed to suit the climate. Huts of asbestos cement sheeting, iron, wood or masonite were built or altered to suit women's requirements. In Alice Springs barracks, some huts were built of wood, but others, including the sleeping quarters, were made of cement sheeting, each hut being divided into cubicles with sisal-board partitioning. Partitions were built only to the top of the wall area and the unlined roof part was left open through the length of the hut to allow a free flow of air. Doors and louvred and shuttered windows could be opened or closed, depending on the weather. Severe sandstorms often occurred and sand would seep into the huts, even with doors and window shutters closed. Floors were of concrete which is probably why the huts were so cold in winter. The barracks were enclosed with a brushwood fence.

Accommodation for temporary personnel, north of Alice Springs, was usually in tents. In the more tropical areas, huts were built partially opened at the ends and sides, capable of being shuttered when cold nights were experienced. In these areas mosquito nets were provided. These huts had no partitioning, being like one large dormitory. In Adelaide River Barracks the openness of the hut was probably the reason why a large black snake got in one night and settled under one of the beds. When the snake was located, it caused a big stir, and one of the guards on duty was called in to shoot it. Recreation huts in these areas were built in a similar fashion.
Floors were either of concrete or antbed which were kept polished for dancing. This type of building for recreational purposes proved very successful.

In Alice Springs the Billygoat Hill water station had been completed and hot and cold water was laid on to ablutions and kitchens in that barracks. North of Alice Springs pipe water became too hot for normal use by 1000 hrs. daily and could be used for washing and showers at the lunch-time break. In the mornings and evenings it was luke warm and hot water systems were not necessary and not missed. Soyer stoves were provided in kitchens and messes and for boiling clothes, if required.

The office accommodation provided was of a similar type of construction to the sleeping quarters, being tropical huts of varying types. When A.W.A.S. were eventually moved to Darwin with 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks, they occupied part of the Permanent Army quarters at Larrakeyah Barracks. It was a large concrete building which was completed after October, 1944.

STAFFING OF BARRACKS

A.W.A.S. Barracks were staffed by A.W.A.S. except for members of the A.A.M.W.S. in charge of the R.A.P. The W.E. for a barracks accommodating 200 was as follows:-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>Officer-in-Charge and 2 i/c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.S.M.</td>
<td>Warrant-Officer 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orderly Room</td>
<td>1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, 2 Privates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q Store</td>
<td>Staff/Sgt., 1 Corporal, 1 Tailoress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers' Mess</td>
<td>Corporal Cook, 2 Orderlies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeants' Mess</td>
<td>Cook, 1 Orderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ranks' Mess</td>
<td>3 Orderlies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Sgt. Cook, Corporal Cook, 2 Orderlies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.A.P. (A.A.M.W.S.)</td>
<td>1 Corporal, 1 Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks in Adelaide River and Darwin, one of the above Privates was in charge of the native women and men, who were employed by the Army to work in these barracks. They were accommodated at a nearby compound and were transported daily to the barracks, working from 0900 hrs. to 1630 hrs. with breaks during the day. They were rationed by the Army and were issued with khaki working dresses or overalls. Up to 15 native women were employed with at least 10 on duty each day. Their main work was comprised of cleaning ablution blocks and officers' quarters, and the ironing of officers' outer garments and generally keeping the barracks clean and tidy. Up to 5 native men, with at least 2 on duty each day, were employed to chop wood for stoves for cooking and for the Soyer stoves, which provided hot water for washing up and the washing of clothes. They also cleaned the latrines - these being of the incinerator type which were burnt out every second day with crude oil.

In the barracks area, these native men and women had a tent set aside for their use during the day, where they could have their lunch and spend their rest periods. Their outstanding
traits were their love of music, and they could be heard singing in the trucks as they arrived, and they had a wonderful sense of humour. Very few problems were experienced and they seemed very content. The women made one very special request and that was, that they be taught to "walk like good Army soldiers".

At 53 A.W.A.S. Barracks in Alice Springs, native men and women were employed occasionally to help around the barracks. These were mostly of the Arunta tribe and the big surprise was that a lot of the women had blonde hair. When they saw the A.W.A.S. combing or brushing their hair, they had to be given combs and brushes and, during their rest periods, could be seen sitting in the sun combing and brushing their own hair. They were a very happy group and also had a great sense of humour. If some amusing incident took place in the barracks — if someone tripped over, for instance — the scene would be enacted by men who saw the incident, amid a great deal of laughter from the other members of the working party.

MESSING AND RATIONS

Mess gear was not issued to A.W.A.S., but crockery and cutlery were provided in mess huts. No fresh milk, fresh vegetables or fruit were supplied in the ration and much of the rations were tinned. Eggs and milk were powdered as a rule but in some areas preserved eggs or fresh eggs were available. In Alice Springs an occasional contribution of goat's milk would be provided. Fresh fruit could sometimes be bought in the shops in Alice Springs but the most popular buy was a long, cold drink of orange or lemon juice. Tropical fruits were not in season for long and were not plentiful. Water melon was available in most areas and paw-paw, mango, fruitsalad plant, bananas and pineapple were enjoyed when available. Eventually vegetable gardens were established in some areas including Adelaide River and Wycliffe Well (situated between New Barrow Creek and Banka Banka Staging camps, by the side of the North-South road. Bread and rolls were baked by the Army Field Bakery in each area and Army rations were supplemented by gifts of wild goose, scrub turkey, fresh fish and kangaroo steaks, when available.

Drinks consumed were mainly "Lolly Water" which was made in a cordial factory run by the Army. The only trouble was that in the very hot season the odd bottle of lolly water would explode, so it was not advisable to store them under beds! Cordial was also plentiful. Personnel were encouraged to drink large quantities of fluid and take their ration of salt tablets, because of the tropical conditions. All water had to be boiled before drinking.

Two bottles of beer per person per week were on issue to servicewomen until November 1945 when the issue was increased to three bottles. A large number of ice-boxes and mobile refrigerators were issued to provide sufficient cold storage accommodation.
At Adelaide River, A.W.A.S. were supplied with fresh eggs, fresh or tinned meat, cabbages, sweet potatoes, potatoes and apples. There was a vegetable garden and pine plantation not far from the camp.

Rations became short at times, owing to transport problems connected with climatic conditions. When the rain came (usually once and sometimes twice a year in Alice Springs) the Finke River, some miles south of Alice Springs, would flood and disrupt the train line. The trains carrying supplies could be stranded for up to a week. All the rivers would flood and transport to Larrimah would be at a standstill until the water subsided. The resulting shortages of food often broke the monotony of meals and did little harm.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

In addition to the standard scale of clothing for A.W.A.S., the issue had to be altered to allow for the hot and humid conditions as it was necessary to have several changes through the day. The issue of frocks and working dress was increased to provide for the working dress to be worn during the day and the frock to be worn in the evening. In some areas the uniform jacket and the tie were dispensed with and khaki drill skirts and safari jackets were on issue. Tropical raincoats and ground sheets, rubber boots and large hats were on issue - the men's normal slouch hat was worn creased in pork-pie fashion with ribbon band and the Rising Sun Badge at the front, and the brim turned down all round. The smaller normal A.W.A.S. hat was worn at sunset. Cooks were issued with extra caps and aprons.

If an Army Mobile Laundry was available, A.W.A.S. were able to use it for working dress and the uniform frock, but some preferred to launder their own. In other areas they had to launder their own. However, the ironing of these items of clothing had to be done by the women themselves and this was often felt as a real problem as the clothes were made of cotton jean and, with the numerous changes involved, the ironing of starched dresses added to the chore.

Dress regulations were altered allowing civilian clothes to be worn within the A.W.A.S. barracks area, at pictures, and while playing sport; also on the Darwin Harbour. Stockings were not worn unless specified.

Equipment for A.W.A.S. in the N.T. was satisfactory and in good supply, including wardrobes. Beds were wire stretchers and palliasses. Extra straw was provided to build up the mattress if it became too flat. Ordinary mattresses were provided in some areas. Pillows were supplied. Two sheets and one pillow-case were on issue and blankets where required. No blankets were issued north of Adelaide River as they were not necessary. Stretchers in the far north had iron posts attached to each corner to take the mosquito nets. A steel cabin trunk, Army kit bag, water bottle, steel helmet and respirator were on issue, and in some areas a mosquito net was provided.
Sleeping huts were each provided with an ice-box which was necessary to keep drinks at a suitable temperature, as tap water was too warm to drink.

**SPIRITUAL WELFARE**

A.W.A.S. attended unit Church Parades if they wished and, in some barracks, Weekly Prayer Meetings were held by padres. In Alice Springs, because there was a civilian population and churches had been established for some years, A.W.A.S. walked on Sunday mornings to the various churches in the town to attend services. There, in 1944, Christmas Carols were sung by an A.W.A.S. choir in numerous places. In the Darwin area, A.W.A.S. sang Christmas Carols to hospital units and, from launches, to Naval personnel on vessels in the Harbour, during Christmas 1944 and 1945. A Nativity Play was produced in Darwin, Christmas 1945. This play was "The Cradle King" which was re-written by a Padre to comply with local conditions. The cast was all A.W.A.S. except for two members of the A.A.M.W.S. It was produced for two consecutive nights in Winnelli Camp and approximately 1,800 male soldiers attended on the two nights. Costumes and lighting were flown from Melbourne and amplifying equipment was supplied by A.A. Amenities Service.

The A.A. Army Chaplains' Department Libraries were set up in each unit and were well patronised. It is of interest to note that there was a liaison officer for Army Women's Services with the Chaplains' Department at L.H.Q. - Major Kathleen Deasey - who visited N.T. when A.W.A.S. were posted there.

**St. Georges Chapel**

In Adelaide River a church was built beside the barracks by N.T. Force Officers of all religious denominations, during their free weekends. Church of England, Catholic and other denominations worked together in a common cause and each Sunday men and women of these various faiths attended services in this same chapel.

**WELFARE AND MORALE**

There was no Welfare Officer appointed to the N.T. The Assistant-Controller and the Administrative Officers carried out this work, or referred any particular case to a Welfare Officer at A.W.A.S. H.Q. in other states.

Very good morale existed among the women; they were happy in their work and did it well. They made good use of their off-duty hours and there was a great deal of laughter and good fun. Of course, there were the moments of home-sickness but they helped one another to overcome this.

**HEALTH**

Health was generally very good in N.T. Force and A.W.A.S. usually gained weight, probably because of the large quantities of liquids consumed. No cases of malaria were reported, but there were some cases of Dengue Fever.
The main cases reported to the R.A.P. were:-

Tropical ear, conjunctivitis, impetigo, dermatitis and prickley heat. Insect bites from sandflies, mosquitoes, scorpions and centipedes, were common. Tinea was also common but was effectively treated. In Alice Springs there were a few cases of redback spider bites which required hospital treatment. In Darwin a few cases of bites from sea animals, mainly Portugese Man-of-War jellyfish, were reported and these cases needed hospital treatment of approximately one week. Insect repellent and instructions were issued for use after sunset.

There were few gastric complaints but, as the drinking water affected a number of A.W.A.S., the use of cordial drinks, etc., was encouraged. Some cases of nervous debility were reported and it increased at the end of 1945, in Darwin, when there were numerous prowlers in the area.

Mt. Isa personnel reported eye trouble caused by glare, and sunglasses were issued on approval of a Medical Officer. Dental treatment was given by Mobile Dental Units. Personnel who were unable to withstand the rigours of the climate were transferred away from N.T.

DEATH AND ACCIDENTS

Two serious accidents occurred in N.T. Force involving members of A.W.A.S. In May, 1944, a staff car crashed, killing one A.W.A.S. - VF389753 Signalwoman M. M. Baglin - who was buried in Adelaide River Cemetery. Two other A.W.A.S. were injured in the accident. In September, 1944, another staff car crashed on the same road from Adelaide River to Darwin, injuring four A.W.A.S. In April, 1945, an A.W.A.S. was seriously injured when knocked down by a vehicle in Darwin.

PHILANTHROPIC ORGANISATIONS

The Y.W.C.A. had two representatives in N.T. - one in Alice Springs (Joan Cocks), and one in Adelaide River and later in Darwin (Jo Fox). They did excellent work, arranging picnics, trips, etc., encouraging and helping with handcrafts, mainly tapestries and leather work. Recreation rooms were mainly furnished by the Y.W.C.A. as well as the Australian Comforts Fund. The Country Women's Association also contributed in other ways.

The Lady Gowrie Club Leave Hostel was opened in Alice Springs in 1943 by the Y.W.C.A. It was situated outside The Gap, just south of Alice, not far from the dry river bed where enormous gum trees growing in and along the banks of the river course provided welcome shade on hot days. This Club was used extensively by the A.W.A.S. during rest periods of one or more days. It was a lovely, peaceful atmosphere in which to relax.
MOVEMENTS

From August 1941 until March 1946, movement of A.W.A.S. to and from the Northern Territory was by air, rail and road, with the exception of the final draft of A.W.A.S. out of Darwin, which travelled by sea, embarking on H.M.A.S. "Westralia" on 28th February, 1946. They sailed on 1st March and arrived in Sydney on 8th March, 1946.

First Stage

The first A.W.A.S. posted to N.T. Force in 1942 travelled by train from Adelaide to Alice Springs, a distance of 1094 miles. The journey was, normally, of 3 days duration but in the rainy season the train could be held up by floods near the Finke River and the journey could be longer.

In June and October, 1943, Sydney and Melbourne personnel were sent to N.T. Force, travelling by train to Adelaide where they were accommodated in the A.W.A.S. Barracks at Keswick for a time before moving on. Many of them took a quick trip into Adelaide to see the sights. The trip from Sydney to Alice Springs was 2,054 miles and from Melbourne to Alice Springs, 1,554 miles.

From Adelaide the track passed through Terowie and Quorn, and there was a change of trains at these two places - rather a feat with the gear, luggage, water bottle, respirator and steel helmet. Members of the Catholic Women's Association met the trains at Quorn and either provided a meal for the A.W.A.S. or arranged for small groups of women to go to various hotels for the evening meal. At Quorn the A.W.A.S. boarded the North Australian Railways train - The Ghan. The Ghan was a very comfortable train compared with those from Sydney and Melbourne which were crowded with servicemen and women (some servicemen slept on the floor and a few even made themselves comfortable in the luggage racks overhead); The Ghan had sleepers for all A.W.A.S. and there were two-berth compartments with wash basin and electric fan. The train had a well-equipped dining car and served really good meals. There were small observation platforms at the ends of each carriage where passengers could stand and watch the scenery. The country was very flat, stretching away as far as the eye could see to, sometimes, a range of low hills. The ground was covered with small pebbles in one area and by larger pebbles in another. An occasional sandstorm would blow up and the windows had to be shuttered. It was stifling inside the train with the windows closed and it didn't stop some sand from coming into the carriages.

The train made a few stops on its way to Alice, where the only thing in sight would be one building about 50 yards away from the train track. Everyone would get down from the train - quite a step without a platform - and converge on the building for cold drinks or a glass of beer. Further along the route there were patches of low growing vegetation and, if it was springtime, there would be patches of wild flowers - the colours mostly cyclamen or yellow. Nearer to Alice Springs the track travelled through low, flat-topped ranges. On arrival the A.W.A.S. were taken to 53 A.W.A.S Barracks.
In January, 1944, permission was given for A.W.A.S. to be posted to Adelaide River. On completion of the First Stage of their journey, the troops had a break of four nights at the Alice Springs Barracks. These days were happily and busily spent with much hospitality and sight-seeing; then they were moved on to the Second Stage of their journey.

Second Stage

This stage from Alice Springs to Larrimah was a distance of 621 miles. The North South Road, known as The Track, had been completed from Alice Springs to Larrimah and the journey was made in a convoy of trucks or semi-trailers. There were routine stops every two hours. The road stretched ahead like a long, straight ribbon, leading into the far distance. This road was in the Dead Heart of the Red Centre and the sand was really red, as it had been in Alice. There were no occupants of this vast, hot, dry area but the ants in their 18" anthills. Staging on the first night was at New Barrow Creek. The next day's journey was to Banka Banka Staging Camp. Nearing Banka Banka the scenery changed and became more hilly and there were a lot of trees, a lovely green sight after so much red sand.

These Staging Camps were very isolated, being hundreds of miles from any habitation, and the staff were very happy to have company and hear all the news from the south. After another day on the Track the convoy reached Larrimah. At this Staging Camp the A.W.A.S. had their first experience of sleeping under mosquito nets and they thought they would suffocate!

Brush fences en route in N.T. attained significance - indication of the Staging Area for A.W.A.S., with tents and ablutions.

Third Stage

Larrimah to Adelaide River - 254 miles. This part of the journey was by rail. The train was affectionately or otherwise, known as "The Spirit of Protest" or "Leaping Lena". It lurched along, arriving late everywhere. On arrival in Adelaide River, there was a short truck drive to 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks.

The total trip from Sydney to Adelaide River, with breaks at Melbourne, Adelaide and Alice Springs, was a total of 2,929 miles. This was, in itself, a strange and very new experience for a large number of young women full of a sense of adventure. It could be said that many enjoyed it, but for others it was quite the reverse, as there were many hardships and discomforts along the way. At the end of the journey at Adelaide River, however, there was a sense of achievement. In retrospect, it is the good things about the journey which are remembered - the fun and the comradeship in sharing a unique experience. This only applied up to 28th October, 1944, when 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks moved to Darwin.
Last Stage

After 28th October, 1944, A.W.A.S. travelling to Darwin went direct from Larrimah to Darwin without staging at Adelaide River, a distance of 325 miles. Most of this distance was by train and often the final 72 miles was by truck.

The journey to units in N.T. was tedious, long, hot and dusty. From Adelaide to Darwin it was 2,041 miles and most A.W.A.S. posted to Darwin had already travelled from Sydney or Melbourne, distances of 960 and 460 miles respectively. En route to Darwin by road the trucks had to pass through a gate. If the gate was closed they had to stop and wait. The gate had been erected to enable the road to be closed off and used as a runway for the small fighter planes which, on closer inspection, could be seen parked under trees and camouflage on either side of the Track. At night, if the gates were closed, lights were hung on them to prevent accidents.

The time taken for the journeys to N.T. Force locations varied from as little as 5 days from Melbourne to Alice, and 12 days to Adelaide River, depending on Movement Control and weather conditions. One trip recorded took a total of 18 days from Sydney to Adelaide River in the wet season. It is interesting to read, as follows:-

The trip to Adelaide River, October 1944, was made by train and truck, taking 18 days to get there because of floods. At Alminga, by the Finke River south of Alice Springs, the draft was held up at a siding. In this area the railway line was flooded and the train could not proceed. On the fifth day the A.W.A.S. were put on flat-top rail trolleys, four at a time, with their luggage, and the railway workers pushed the trolleys through the flooded river to where a train from Alice Springs was waiting. The group also had to turn back while on convoy to Larrimah because of the floods.

Other Movements

A.W.A.S. travelled from Sydney, via Brisbane and Townsville by train and then flew via Cloncurry to Mt. Isa and Darwin. Other drafts from Queensland to N.T., posted to Adelaide River or Tennant Creek, travelled by air and road. All A.W.A.S. were withdrawn from the N.T. by November, 1945, with the exception of the last draft from Darwin in March, 1946.

Distances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney to Melbourne - rail</td>
<td>500 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne to Adelaide - rail</td>
<td>460 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide to Alice Springs - rail</td>
<td>1,094 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By S.A. Railways to Quorn and then by Nth Aust. Railways - The Ghan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Springs to New Barrow Creek - road</td>
<td>194 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overnight at Staging Camp.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New Barrow Creek to Banka Banka - road 181 miles
Overnight at Staging Camp.
Banka Banka to Larrimah - road 246 "
Overnight at Staging Camp.
Larrimah to Adelaide River - rail 254 "
Adelaide River to Darwin - road 72 "
Sydney to Darwin 3,001 miles
Melbourne to Darwin 2,501 "
Adelaide to Darwin 2,041 "

DISCHARGES AND DEMOBILISATION

No A.W.A.S. were discharged in the Northern Territory. All personnel were returned to either their state of enlistment or an elected state for discharge.

At the cessation of hostilities, special arrangements were made for the immediate release of wives and fiancées of repatriated prisoners-of-war.

Demobilisation commenced in October, 1945. The strength of A.W.A.S. in the N.T. at that time numbered 250.

The order in which A.W.A.S. were demobbed was carried out on a points system, which had been set up to decide the priorities depending on personal grounds, army requirements and the needs of the civilian work-force, etc.
In August 1942, when Alice Springs was under the administration of S.A. H.Q., two members were posted there with a Movement Control Unit. A small group was sent later on, to staff various H.Q. Offices and they were all accommodated in the A.A.M.W.S. camp, opposite the 109 Aust. General Hospital until 53 A.W.A.S. Barracks was completed in the first half of 1943. The new barracks was built to accommodate 100 women with a strength of 1 Officer and 24 Other Ranks, which included a tailor and 2 A.A.M.W.S., and a hairdresser who was attached from the Amenities Pool.

Other groups of A.W.A.S. then started arriving from Sydney and Melbourne. In June, 1943, there was a group of 1 Officer and 45 Signalwomen and on 1st November a group of 20 A.W.A.S. arrived, some of whom were attached to H.Q. 11 L. of C. Area to work with Intelligence, Legal Services, A.A.O.C., Canteens and other departments of the Army.

53 A.W.A.S. Barracks was built of wood, and the sleeping quarters were of asbestos cement, partitioned into rooms. The shuttered and louvred windows helped to keep out the cold winds and the sand, and the floors were of concrete. In the winter the temperature was low enough to freeze the water in the fire buckets outside the huts. The sandstorms were at times very severe, getting into eyes and noses and reducing visibility to practically nil. When the temperature reached 100°F, and sometimes up to 118°F, it was routine for the A.W.A.S. to beware of huntsmen and redback spiders and centipedes. The spiders were in the latrines and in the roofs of the huts and the usual procedure was to burn them out with a lighted taper. There were also many other pests including wasps, sandflies, snakes and goannas. One woman, in transit, was bitten by a snake while sleeping in the barracks. However, strangely enough mosquitoes were not a problem but the bush-flies made up for them! Hot and cold water was laid on to the mess, ablutions and laundry, and irons were provided. Two coppers were set up outside the laundry for the boiling of clothes. The barracks had a recreation hut, a tennis court and a few large, old gum trees which provided lovely shade. It was surrounded by the well-known brushwood fence.

The A.W.A.S. camp was situated at the south of the town of Alice Springs. 11 L. of C. Area H.Qs. were in the centre of the town, Anzac Hill (where some of the stenographers and clerks worked) was at the north of the town and the Signal Units were across the Todd river. Signalwomen, who worked three shifts, were taken by truck to work as required except when the river was flowing when other arrangements were made. The other A.W.A.S. walked to H.Q. or Anzac Hill, a fifteen or twentyfive minute walk respectively, and on the way home to camp the most frequent treat was a long lemon squash, very cold, which was bought at a little shop in the town. The barracks was staffed by A.W.A.S. and 2 A.A.M.W.S. and occasionally native men and women would come in to do chores and clean up the grounds.

The meals provided by the mess were quite good. There was no fresh milk, but everyone learned to drink their tea black
or use the powdered milk or even goat's milk when available. There was a large mobile refrigerator in the grounds to keep food cold and for storage of perishables. A local farmer grew watermelons for some months of the year. These could be bought and, after being chilled in the refrigerator, were a delicious treat to add to the rations.

In their leisure time, A.W.A.S. were well occupied with washing, ironing, mending and sewing. With the help of the Amenities Service and the Y.W.C.A. representative, they made dyed hessian bedspreads to make their huts more attractive. Garden beds were prepared for growing flowers and there were lawn areas between the huts. Water had to be carried in buckets nearly every day to keep the flowers growing, but it was very rewarding to see plants growing so quickly in the heat.

On Sundays, A.W.A.S. personnel could attend church services at the various churches in the town. There was an A.W.A.S. choir which sang Christmas Carols in season. In the town there was an open air picture theatre with deck-chair type seats and one or two open-air dance areas with concrete floors, surrounded by 6 ft. fences.

Recreation was well catered for and there was plenty of variety, which included dancing and picnics in the Todd river when the river bed was dry, which was most of the year. In normal times, who would have thought or even heard of a camel picnic! Two A.W.A.S. per camel, and off they went in a party to suitable spots and cooked steaks around a camp fire. These, of course, took place in the cooler months. There was gardening, sewing, reading and decorating the rec. hut for a special occasion, and trips to some of the scenic spots. The Army had built an open air theatre with stage and a screen and wooden seating. Films were shown there (as well as in the town's theatre), and concerts were put on by Concert Parties and well-known artists who gave of their time to entertain the troops. Members of the A.W.A.S. also took part in two concerts held at the theatre - "Why not To-night" in 1944 and another in 1945. Music was popular and there were a number of good musicians stationed in Alice Springs. There was the L. of C. Area Band, an orchestra formed by Army personnel to play for the dances, a group who played Hawaiian music on guitars, and pianists who played music ranging from classical to modern. Some of the A.W.A.S. played the piano and many sing-alongs were held in the rec. hut.

There were invitations from the various Unit messes and these were always enjoyable evenings. Permission had to be given to attend these functions, and also to permit friends to visit A.W.A.S. at the rec. hut in the barracks.

A Race Meeting at a rough track outside the town was held in the colder months of the year. This was a memorable day when townspeople, hundreds of Army personnel in the area, and Aborigines got together to have fun. Horses were brought in from various Stations in the Centre and were a very odd looking lot.
There was football and cricket, played by Army personnel, for those who liked to watch spectator sports. A.W.A.S. joined in playing tennis, went swimming at Emily or Simpson Gap or played basketball. The scenery in and around Alice Springs was beautiful and sight-seeing trips were of great interest. Sunsets and sunrises were a moving experience to see and letters written home usually contained one comment about the beauty of the Centre. Albert Namatjira had been painting for some time and his work was available for sale in a shop in the town. They ranged in price from around two pounds ten shillings to five pounds. Some were taken south by returning personnel and most people thought the colour was exaggerated. Garnets could be picked up off the ground in the outlying areas and lumps of crystal quartz were sometimes brought back for use as door stops.

It was included in the Conditions of Service for N.T. that A.W.A.S. were to take leave every twelve months away from the Northern Territory. They were granted 24 days plus travelling time. They were permitted to return to the area for a further 12 months, after which they had to be re-posted to another area. Many of the women were quite happy to return for this tour of duty.

In October, 1944, a group of Alice Springs A.W.A.S. was selected for a basketball team to play matches against A.W.A.S. and A.A.M.W.S. in Adelaide River. This entailed being away from their units for some days, which time was voluntarily taken in lieu of the six days granted for each six months in the Territory, normally spent at the Recreation Centre in Darwin.

Two events of importance to the civilian population as well as Army personnel were - the arrival and departure of the Ghan, and the flowing of the Todd River. One event was a weekly occurrence and the other took place once - or if lucky twice - a year. Civilians would be going or returning to or from the south for holidays on the Ghan and Army personnel would be in transit for posting or on leave. When the "wet" came, it was a new experience for the majority of the A.W.A.S. Those who were lucky enough to witness it, saw a wall of water 3 - 4 ft. high go past in 12 seconds down the dry bed of the Todd river. From Anzac Hill a wonderful view would be had of the flooded areas.

Despite the heat, the humidity, and the feelings of homesickness, the A.W.A.S. worked hard and at all times morale was high. The adventure they shared made for a great feeling of comradeship among the women, which still exists to-day.

These A.W.A.S. in Alice Springs were the pioneers in the Territory and were a great source of encouragement to the other A.W.A.S. personnel who were posted further north, as they spent a few days at 53 A.W.A.S. Barracks in transit.

All A.W.A.S. were withdrawn from Alice Springs by November, 1945.
TENNANT CREEK 1943-1945

In June, 1943, six A.W.A.S. were posted to 20 L. of C. Signals at Tennant Creek. This number increased as A.W.A.S. became available to a total of 1 Officer and 24 Signalwomen in 1943, and decreased to 1 Officer and 10 Other Ranks in May, 1945, when they were all withdrawn.

The Signal Office was in the centre of the town, on the Sturt Highway. The signalwomen worked in three shifts, in charge of a male Sergeant; the A.W.A.S. included lineswomen, wireless operators and signal clerks. In the early stages the shifts were of eight hours each but later, when more staff arrived, this was altered to allow a rest-day after the 2400-0800 hrs. shift.

The accommodation was within the Army Barracks near the Army Nurses' Quarters. The area was restricted to A.W.A.S. with sleeping huts of unlined galvanised iron with four beds to a hut. These were very hot in summer and very cold in winter. The A.W.A.S. had their own kitchen and mess and a recreation hut, for which the women made curtains with materials supplied by the Y.W.C.A.

Recreation was limited but, nevertheless, the A.W.A.S. enjoyed themselves. They played table-tennis and also cards, the latter on the floor where it was coolest. In the hut was a rather tired piano which was used for sing-songs by an Army man who had at one time been an accompanist to Noel Coward. They also attended films in the town.

Swimming was enjoyed at the 6A Bore en route to Camooweal where they met signalmen from the Banka Banka camp. They also swam at the Attack Creek Pool up the Track. After their swim they felt relaxed and refreshed, only to be covered by dust on their way back to Tennant Creek!

The town was a small one, with few people and few houses. It boasted a general-store, an hotel, a milk-bar, church-hall, picture-theatre and a hospital, which had been taken over by the Army and was staffed by members of the Australian Army Nursing Service.

The townspeople comprised those civilians and their families who ran the businesses and the men who worked at the Eldorado Gold Mine, 15 miles from Tennant Creek. These people were all very friendly and made the A.W.A.S. welcome.

The A.W.A.S. who went to Tennant Creek as visitors, have all remarked what a good happy crowd the servicewomen were. They worked hard and uncomplainingly and when the town was busy, they joined in activities and helped the local people.

All A.W.A.S. were withdrawn in May, 1945.
In September, 1944, members of the A.W.A.S. were posted to 20 L. of C. Signals to release men for forward areas. The number was 1 Officer and 24 Signalwomen in September which was later reduced to 1 Officer and 15 Signalwomen. They carried out such duties as: telephonists, wireless operators, signal clerks, heavy wireless and cypher operators. The work was done in three shifts with four or five women per shift.

The Signal Camp was situated two miles from the town of Mt. Isa and the accommodation for A.W.A.S. was established near the Signal Office. There were sleeping quarters, kitchen and mess room, recreation hut and ablutions block - the latter being constructed of galvanised iron. This was out-of-bounds from 1000 hrs. to 1600 hrs. because the heat of the iron became sufficient to burn the skin and, at that time of day, the redback spiders were a menace.

In the mess hut there was always an ice-bucket containing lemon drinks to refresh the thirsty in the hot, dusty and uncomfortable climate - the heat of the sun beat down relentlessly and one had to be careful to avoid heatstroke or dehydration.

For recreation the A.W.A.S. enjoyed physical training and sports and particularly swimming in the local sandy rivers. Picnics were a very popular past-time.

The town of Mt. Isa was small with few civilians and very few amenities, but had an hotel, a general-store and a picture-theatre. The hospital, which had been taken over by the Army, was staffed by Army Medical Officers and the Australian Army Nursing Service.

The town had been under Martial Law earlier, but this had been lifted. At first the townspeople were a trifle suspicious of the service personnel, but later became very friendly and would invite Army men and women to attend their dances in the Mechanics Hall. The local pictures were shown under the stars, sitting on benches. On one memorable occasion they were entertained at a concert given by the singer Miss Strella Wilson and her accompanist, Miss Mabel Nelson. This was a very popular evening with the audience being invited to join in at times.

The A.W.A.S. were there for Christmas, 1944, and the O.R's. were very impressed by being waited on at dinner by the Officers, which was the normal custom in those days.

It was unfortunate that the Mt. Isa Mine was out-of-bounds to Service personnel, probably for security reasons, but it was naturally of great interest to them as they passed it regularly travelling from the town to their unit.

The lasting impression of Mt. Isa has been the ruggedness of the country and the magnificent sunsets of purple
through to gold, which was a wonderful sight to see. As in other places, the A.W.A.S. enjoyed themselves and made lasting friendships resulting in some re-visiting Mt. Isa since the war years. Above all, they fulfilled the mission that was given to them.

All A.W.A.S. were withdrawn from Mt. Isa in May, 1945.
ADELAIDE RIVER: JANUARY - OCTOBER 1944

The approval to post A.W.A.S. to Adelaide River was given in January, 1944, and an Assistant-Controller (Capt. Beatrice Marr) was appointed to N.T. Force (AIF) and travelled to Adelaide River that same month.

Already there were 8 A.W.A.S. working in the area - one Lieutenant with A.A.O.C. and seven Other Ranks attached to Pay Corps and Canteens. They slept in tents in the Pay Office compound and were in the charge of the Matron of the Army Hospital. It was here that Captain Marr joined them until the completion of the new barracks.

69 A.W.A.S. Barracks, to accommodate 200 women, was completed in early March, 1944. It was built on a dry, rocky hillside, the huts being in terraces with concrete paths and steps. The accommodation was designed to suit the living conditions of the area. Sleeping quarters were of masonite or iron, open at each end and down the sides which were fitted with louvres. Ablutions were fitted with partitions and there were ironing rooms with electric irons provided. The barracks area was surrounded by a brushwood fence and a large notice was displayed at the entrance - "A.W.A.S. Barracks out-of-bounds to all troops, except when on duty or in possession of a pass". Two M.Ps. patrolled the area at night.

The first draft of A.W.A.S. personnel for Adelaide River departed Melbourne on 1st February and arrived in Adelaide River on 18th February, 1944, the majority of these women being staff for the new barracks, with a few staff for the H.Qs. The group was made up of 1 Officer, 26 Other Ranks and 2 A.A.M.W.S. to work in the R.A.P. They moved into the new barracks and prepared for the drafts to follow. In March, 1944, drafts started arriving in numbers of 17 to 50, although the usual draft was 30 A.W.A.S. The women settled into their new quarters and duties at N.T. Force H.Qs. which was across the road from the barracks. They walked back to their own mess for lunch and at the end of the day. The time taken to do the journey by the first draft - 1st to 18th February, 1944 - was longer than usual due to the wet season and the flooding of areas south of Alice and near Larrimah.

The A.W.A.S. Barracks was completely staffed by A.W.A.S. with the addition of some native women, up to 15, and 2 to 5 native men. The women cleaned the ablution blocks and cleaned the officers' quarters and ironed their uniforms. Their simplicity and cheerfulness won all hearts. They asked their white 'Missa' to teach them to walk like good soldier girls, and were very happy to line up and walk in with a dignified posture. Under supervision, they were willing and conscientious workers and they actually enjoyed scrubbing and ironing. The men attended to the latrines which were burnt out every few days, and chopped wood and stacked it adjacent to the cook houses for the stoves and boilers.

There was no fresh milk or fresh fruit or vegetables supplied in the rations. Tropical fruits such as paw-paw, bananas, mangoes and water melons were in season for only a short time.
and were not plentiful. However, the A.W.A.S. fared fairly well according to the cooks. There was a vegetable garden run by the Army near the Adelaide River township and a certain amount of trading of foodstuffs took place. Also, the U.S. troops were rather keen on the baked beans supplied in the Australian rations and were always ready to do a deal with some lemon cordial, which was used to good effect in lemon meringue pies! Fresh eggs were often available.

The Recreation Hall within the barracks was built by voluntary male Army labour on their rest days. It was built of bamboo with a very smooth concrete floor which could be used for dancing, with the capacity to hold 200. It was an exceptionally good recreation building and was much appreciated by all A.W.A.S. and their male guests. The women also played their part, where suitable, in the completion and finishing touches of the building.

A Church was built beside the barracks and named St. George's Chapel. It was built by officers of all religions during their free weekends. Women played their part in its completion by adding the finishing touches. To quote from an A.W.A.S. Barrack Booklet of 1944 -

"Loving hands built it and loving hearts prayed in it. Each Sunday men and women of all denominations attended services in the same chapel. The builders worked together in a common cause. The result is, we think, as close to perfection as it could be hoped to attain."

There was no shortage of recreation and sport. There was hockey, basketball and tennis. The tennis court had been made by the A.W.A.S. themselves from ant-hill material. Swimming parades were held from 1700 hrs. to 1800 hrs. at the Lily Ponds, a short trip by truck, and many availed themselves of a refreshing dip in these tropical pools after the work of a hot day. Off they would go with their green canvas buckets packed with swimsuits and towels. A little further afield there were outings for swimming at Robin Falls and Berry Springs. It was important that all swimming finished before dusk, because of the danger of crocodiles which frequented these waters.

On special occasions, there were chop or steak picnics to the Lily Ponds held between 1800 hrs. and 2000 hrs. There were visits to various Stations, such as Mt. Bundy, Stapleton, Elsey, Humpty Doo and Tipperary Cattle Stations. On other occasions, A.W.A.S. went riding on horses at Humpty Doo.

The Tank Attack Race Meeting was held at Humpty-Doo Station, Snake Creek, each year. It included a Ladies Race and A.W.A.S. participated in it. Despite the heat and the dust, it was all part of the fun and there was always a barbeque to follow.

The Northern Picnic Club held an Anniversary Meeting on 17th June, 1944. The racecourse was situated in a clay pan completely surrounded by trees and scrub; it was bounded on the northern side by a lagoon with white and blue water lilies. There had been constructed out of bush timber, two grand-
stands, a totalizator, two canteens, a judge's stand and several minor buildings. Saw-dust had been spread about to settle the dust and there were two saddling paddocks. Flags of the Allied Nations towered above the stands; there were vans of the combined Amenities Services in strength and they distributed free drinks and biscuits throughout the afternoon. There was a band in attendance and music was relayed through loudspeakers.

There were programmes which cost one shilling in which the eight races were listed. The horses had the most amusing names - The Army Women's Services were represented in the fifth race, The Herbert Juvenile, by a horse called "Fairer Sex" (by Welcome out of South). All the horses were kindly lent by Herbert Bros. of Koolpinyah and Humpty Doo Stations. It was a splendidly organised meeting and a grand day's outing. A large percentage of the totalizator's takings, as well as the proceeds from the sale of programmes, went to swell Prisoner-of-War Funds.

Pictures were shown at least once a week, in the open, and there was a separate area allotted for A.W.A.S. The seating was on hard seats made from two saplings, about 18 in. from the ground. The Comfort Fund supplied each member with a canvas chair which they took to films and other entertainments, as permanent seating was either not available or very uncomfortable.

Rest Days were enjoyed every Sunday and in many ways they were busy days - there were always personal chores, a service in the Chapel, perhaps a swimming picnic which would be ready to take off at 1100 hrs., returning at 1830 hrs., and in the evening dancing in the Rec. Hall from 1930 hrs. to 2200 hrs. There were regular dances after the hall was completed about the middle of 1944.

There were always other forms of recreation and, to be mentioned with pleasure and gratitude, were the facilities offered and given by the Y.W.C.A., A.C.F., and the Army Amenities and Education Services. The Y.W.C.A. provided handicrafts and, as in other areas, the Amenities Pool produced the material for bedspreads. Amenities also supplied an A.W.A.S. hairdresser and this service was free of charge to members of the Women's Services. However, each person subscribed one shilling, which was paid to the Prisoner-of-War Fund.

As there were no shops available, the Canteen was a popular place for bits and pieces needed for sewing, mending and cosmetics, and also cigarettes, sweets and many other items.

Gardening was a hobby for some and there were stone-edged gardens among the huts, which displayed a variety of colours with the zinnias, gladioli, portulaca and phlox.

The Education Service produced drama groups and classical concerts on the lawn.
On 28th October, 1944, 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks was transferred to Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin, and on that day all the A.W.A.S., plus their equipment, left Adelaide River by truck with the H.Q. N.T. FORCE (AIF). Here they were re-established and continued with their duties as they had at Adelaide River.

The Q.M. Sergeant of 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks later said that it had been simpler to move 200 women a distance of 72 miles in trucks from Adelaide River to Darwin, than her previous experience of moving 700 A.W.A.S. – including 450 raw recruits – the same distance by Army truck, train and Army truck again, from one side of a capital city to another camp on the other. These moves took place under very different conditions, but both were carried out smoothly and efficiently.
KATHERINE AND BERRIMA 1944-1945

A.W.A.S. on strength of 20 L. of C. Signals were posted to Katherine in February, 1944 and to Berrima in October, 1944. Six Signalwomen worked at each location; the work was divided into shifts and their duties were carried out as required.

They were accommodated with the A.A.M.W.S. lines adjacent to the Aust. General Hospital in the area. They shared the messing arrangements and joined in recreation and team games with the A.A.M.W.S.

When visiting A.W.A.S. basketball teams played matches at either of these places, they were always welcome and many old friendships were renewed.

All A.W.A.S. personnel were withdrawn by November, 1945.
DARWIN 1944-1946

On 25th October, 1944, H.Q. N.T. Force (AIF) and the A.W.A.S. with 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks moved from Adelaide River and were established at Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin. The A.W.A.S. contingent was commanded by the Assistant-Controller, Major Beatrice Marr.

The A.W.A.S. Barracks in Darwin overlooked the Darwin Harbour. Its strength was 2 Officers and 23 Other Ranks, and provided accommodation for 10 Officers and 180 Other Ranks. In addition to the A.W.A.S. personnel, it also housed four members of the W.R.A.N.S. who were posted to Darwin. Between October, 1945, and February, 1946, Dutch Internees, women and children from the Islands, were quartered at 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks. Approximately 800 were staged, usually overnight, but some were held for longer periods because of sickness and lack of air transport. They arrived in batches of anything from 2 to 70 and were quartered in the two Sydney Williams huts, sharing the Other Ranks' ablutions and mess. The barrack staff had to be increased to cater for these extra people.

Huts were provided for administration, mess and kitchen, and recreation. As a temporary measure, personnel slept in Army huts until the two-storied concrete building was completed. The usual female touches such as curtains and bedspreads did much to make the quarters attractive. It is interesting to record that this particular building was being built during the last period of air raids in Darwin when Army men were in the process of laying a concrete floor. A great heap of wet concrete was abandoned at the sound of the air raid siren and the men fled to safety in great haste. The result! A dried pile of rough concrete in the middle of the building and the dried imprint of speeding feet, where the concrete had already been laid. The writer actually saw it this way in early October, 1944. It is understood that this building is now the main administration building at H.Q. 7th Military District.

A.W.A.S. were not only employed at H.Q. N.T. Force Larrakeyah Barracks, as at Adelaide River, but also there was a small group of Canteen workers at Fanny Bay and a group at Winnelli with various units, who were transported each day to and from the barracks. The A.W.A.S. working at H.Q. marched to work each day in a group.

In 1945, when the released Prisoners-of-War arrived in Darwin, special work was undertaken voluntarily by the A.W.A.S. and was of great value. The camp at Winnelli was used as a P.O.W. Reception Camp for the staging of repatriated men; each draft remained for 48 hours with a total of 8,000 passing through the unit. These men had no personal records, so a complete set of documentation was made by A.W.A.S., under the supervision of the A.W.A.S. Assistant-Controller, Major Dora Madden. The A.W.A.S. worked unceasingly and cheerfully, over and above their normal duties, making beds, filling in forms, typing and helping to entertain the men in Red Cross Huts,
and arranging picnics and swimming parties for those who were fit enough. Also, there were sewing jobs to be done such as altering ill-fitting uniforms and adding colour-patches and chevrons to jackets and/or shirts.

Signal personnel did special work putting through trunk calls to numbers throughout Australia at all hours of the day and night, to enable returning Prisoners-of-War to talk with their families. Repatriated Prisoners-of-War who were too ill to leave the ship were visited by A.W.A.S. bringing books and magazines and talking with those so inclined. Most of these men had been away for a long time and our women in uniform were a novel sight and were the first women they had seen, except for the women of the Australian Army Nursing Service.

The Servicewomen were kept busy during their tour of duty and at times worked at night. The normal working hours were 0745 hrs. - 1600 hrs. Monday to Saturday and on Sunday, usually a Parade at 0900 hrs. and the rest of the day was regarded as a rest day.

Darwin was no longer functioning as a town in 1944. There were no civilians north of Pine Creek - 156 miles south of Darwin down the Track. The Darwin Administrator had moved down to Alice Springs with his staff and other civilians. The area was entirely occupied by Defence Forces, not only Australians but also U.S. and Canadian troops.

As in other areas of N.T., discipline for A.W.A.S. was strictly enforced, particularly important in view of the fact that the only women in this area were members of the Women's Services who numbered approximately 400 - a small proportion of the Defence Forces. From sunset to sunrise guards were posted at the Barracks gates, another guard patrolled the A.W.A.S. area and a guard was on duty at the A.W.A.S. Orderly Room phone during these hours. The guards were mainly a deterrent against male prowlers - both black and white. These were common in Darwin after V.P. Day and were an unnecessary nuisance, creeping into A.W.A.S. Barracks area and, in some cases, attacking some of the women. Fortunately no one was seriously hurt in these incidents, but it became a constant worry to the young women. The C.O. of 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks at Larrakeyah showed tremendous courage on many occasions. She was a strict, fair and very understanding person, very popular with the women and greatly admired for the manner in which she cared for all the personnel in her charge.

Certain parts of Darwin were out-of-bounds to A.W.A.S. unless the women were part of an organised group for purposes of recreational activities. Recreation took a variety of forms. Sport was popular and included swimming, tennis, basketball and, for some, hockey in the cooler months. There were six tennis courts available and the women played among themselves, with members of the A.A.N.S. and A.A.M.W.S., or with Army men. They often played in competitions. There were day trips on the Harbour and picnics.
Swimming was popular in the sea at Darwin and in rivers in nearby areas. They swam at Catalina Beach, Casuarina, Lee Point, Night Cliffs, Mendil Beach and Myilly Point. Some of these were restricted at times. They also swam at Knuckey's Lagoons, Howard Springs and Rapid Creek. After November each year, warnings were given against swimming in the sea because of the danger of sharks, crocodiles, portuguese men-of-war and seawasps - the latter being deadly. River swimming was always subject to danger from crocodiles.

There were films screened several times a week, sometimes at the Astor Theatre in Darwin when it was necessary for safety that a minimum of six A.W.A.S. attend with a male escort. This theatre was in the open air with permanent built-in seats or small stools made from rough saplings. The Army Education Service also arranged for films which were shown in the barracks, as well as concert parties and drama groups. Well remembered and appreciated by the servicewomen were two concerts - one given by Miss Gracie Fields and her husband Monty Banks, the other given by the Australian singer, Miss Sterrell Wilson and her accompanist, Miss Mabel Nelson.

Dances were held every Saturday night, either at 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks or at another unit by invitation, and with the usual permissions and special arrangements. It must be noted that the social invitations received were often excessive and there were times when the servicewomen were too busy, or too weary, to accept. The A.W.A.S. Barracks were out-of-bounds to all male personnel, except with the C.O's permission. However, the women were encouraged to invite their male friends to dances at the barracks where they were entertained in the recreation room, or in the area adjacent to it where there were tables and chairs, and where they could relax between dances, with a glorious view from the cliff overlooking the Harbour.

The leisure time was easily filled with the making of bedspreads for their quarters, the material coming from the Amenities Pool, or attending the A.W.A.S. hairdresser who was also from the Amenities Pool. There was also the inevitable washing, ironing, mending and writing letters. Washing could not be left out on the line overnight or the clothes would be torn to pieces by flying foxes.

Some were interested in handcrafts and it was the Y.W.C.A. representative who supplied the wherewithall and showed how. She was always ready to talk or listen to any lonely woman. Enjoyed by some was gardening, which decorated areas around the various huts, and it was not only an added attraction to the area but gave great satisfaction when there was success with cuttings of tropical plants. Newspapers, magazines and letters received via Army Postal Service, were always looked forward to. Mail was usually delivered by air to Northern Territory three or four days per week.

On two particular occasions special celebrations took place. On 8th May, 1945, the end of World War II against Germany officially ended and on 9th May V.E. Day was declared with the unconditional surrender of Germany. In Darwin a Victory Ball was held in the Y.M.C.A. Hall at Larrakeyah Barracks.
On 5th August, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the largest island of mainland Japan. The second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on 9th August, 1945. A Japanese offer came on 11th August, with the condition that "The Declaration should not comprise any demand which would prejudice the perogatives of His Majesty as Sovereign Ruler of Japan". 14th August saw the unconditional surrender of the Japanese to the Allies. V.P. Day was declared throughout Australia on 15th August, 1945. This victory was celebrated in Darwin where the Australian Army Canteen Service, N.T. Force, held a combined Unit Dinner.

It is frequently said by those who served in Darwin and elsewhere, that the experience was fantastic. Some enjoyed the heat, others didn't, but nevertheless they all worked very hard and never felt clean because of the dust. Despite this, there was much fun and laughter and the comradeship was tremendous. Many friendships among A.W.A.S. have carried on through the years and re-union lunch meetings take place. When colleagues need help or encouragement there is always someone to go to their aid.

Demobilisation commenced in October, 1945. No one was discharged in N.T. The numbers of A.W.A.S. had been gradually reduced over a period and by June, 1945, A.W.A.S. were only in Alice Springs and Darwin; by November 1945 the only A.W.A.S. remained in Darwin and by December, 1945, the number was 106 and, finally, they were reduced to 67.

On 28th February, 1946, these 67 A.W.A.S. marched out from H.Q. N.T. Force (AIF), the officer in charge being the Asst.-Controller Major Elizabeth Ratten. They embarked on H.M.A.S. "Westralia". The ship sailed on 1st March, 1946, for Sydney where it docked on 8th March. From there all personnel returned to their own States or the State of their choice for demobilisation.
The first A.W.A.S. posted to Darwin in August, 1944, were sent to raise and provide staff for the new 2 Aust. Recreation Centre situated at Myilly Point. This unit consisted of five civilian houses and could accommodate 40 personnel. The object of raising this unit was to provide recreational leave and/or convalescence for all Army Women's Services, and some other women.

It had been found, from experience in Queensland, that A.W.A.S. stationed in tropical and semi-tropical areas benefitted from a short stay at a Recreation Centre. These women, serving under hot and arduous conditions, far from home and normal recreation, and who were entitled to leave only after long intervals, were greatly helped in regard to health and morale by the facilities of sport and recreation offered at these Centres. These Centres were furnished with the help of Amenities Service, Australian Comforts Fund and the Y.W.C.A.

The Darwin Centre proved to be as valuable as the others and was used to its capacity by many women in N.T. Force. The absence of barrack routine enabled those quartered there to forget the daily regimental life, with the endless washing, starching and ironing of uniforms, overalls, safari jackets, etc. They could relax from wearing uniform, being able to wear civilian clothes while in the Centre; they were able to enjoy swimming, fishing, reading and tennis.

No one who passed through the Rec. Centre will forget the delightful and peculiarly Australian atmosphere, with the large bowls of frangipani and gardenias on the tables, the native spears and murals, and the view across the thick foliage to the cobalt blue of Darwin Harbour. There were tablecloths and napkins on the dining tables and as little routine as possible to contrast with unit and barrack life.

There were organised outings, such as swimming and dancing parties, and lugger trips on the Harbour, where many remains of sunken ships were still obvious. These outings were always strictly supervised. In the town itself there remained much evidence of shattered houses and, in many streets, just a crater where a home had once stood.

Personnel who were accommodated at this unit were mainly Service women convalescing, or on 6-day recreational leave which was granted to them each six months, civilian women who needed special care, and transit Service women. As well as the A.W.A.S., the Centre was also used by the following: R.A.N., A.A.N.S., R.A.A.F., R.N., F.A.N.Y.S. and R.N.V.A.Ds. Nursing Services, plus secretaries from N.Z., A.T.C., U.S.A., and International War Correspondents. Others who used the facilities were U.N.N.R.A., civilian women and children from the Islands (pre-natal and post-natal hospital cases) and English and Dutch internees from Singapore, Hong Kong and Batavia.
In the Rec. Centre unit there was a detached cottage known as "The Honeymoon Cottage", which was used by several members of the Army Women's Services who had married at the Garrison Chapel in Darwin. The couples were able to spend seven days at the cottage and then, in the case of A.W.A.S., they would be posted south in accordance with the Regulations. Prior to 1945, honeymoons had been spent by invitation at Humpty Doo Station.

Following the surrender of Japan, A.W.A.S. staff at the Rec. Centre did outstanding work in the hospitality they offered to civilians passing through. In addition to their normal hours of duty, they worked at any hour of the day or night - receiving, feeding and farewelling women and children in transit from internment camps in Hong Kong, Singapore and Borneo and those from Missions in the Islands, also Red Cross personnel passing through en route to Manila. Cut lunches were provided for the travellers plus toys for the children. This magnificent task was undertaken and accomplished by the A.W.A.S. staff of the 2 Aust. Recreation Centre, which consisted of 1 Officer (Lieutenant Pauline Leggo) and seven other Ranks. They worked tirelessly, despite the heat, and were a very happy group.

Many who spent time at the Rec. Centre said that the discipline was strict but, nevertheless, they enjoyed themselves, they felt rested and refreshed by the break and were ready to return to their units hoping to be able to enjoy another spell at the Centre later on.

The Recreation Centre was closed down in January, 1946.
It is said that a home without a garden is not a home and that an Australian home has at least one pet. All the Barracks had their gardens and their pets - perhaps unofficially.

53 A.W.A.S. Barracks at Alice Springs had a few pets. There was Butch the dog, and another dog Beau, who gave the women love and affection. Peter and Paul were two cats and they had a chameleon lizard with a horny skin who lived on ants; the ants disappeared in hundreds but no movement of his fast tongue could be seen. Hamilton was a baby kangaroo; he was fed with a baby's bottle and slept upside down in a rucksack hanging on the wall of a hut in the sleeping quarters.

At 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks there were at least three dogs - Gunner George, Bundy and Pluto, and the cats were known as Wimpey and Ginger. Josephine, the wallaby, had been part of 69 A.W.A.S. Barracks since its installation and on one occasion it attended a Church Parade.

"Emu Parades" in the Army are a form of fatigue duty which involves picking up odd bits of paper, cigarette packets, used matchboxes or other miscellaneous rubbish which has been carelessly discarded in the camp area. The occasion on which A.W.A.S. made military history was at a parade of a more formal nature. According to their normal custom, the A.W.A.S. formed up in threes at the barracks, trim in their starched uniforms and big hats, and proceeded in column of route to the office blocks at which they worked at Larrakeyah Barracks. On this occasion discipline was maintained by a narrow margin when it was found that a pet emu was out-of-bounds and was marching solemnly along with the troops. He was returned to the barracks by the embarrassed Barracks R.S.M.

On one occasion the Assistant-Controller, during her parade inspection, came across a strangely bulging pocket. On being poked the pocket seemed to jump somewhat; the wearer was told (with a twinkle of the eye) that the pocket needed attention before the next parade!!

This was the lighter side of Army life and it helped the young members of the A.W.A.S. in their daily lives, remote from family and civilian friends.
CONCLUSION

Members of the A.W.A.S. can be justly proud of their leader, Colonel Sybil Howy Irving, M.B.E., who died suddenly on 23rd March, 1973. She was dedicated to everything she undertook and, during her service in the A.W.A.S., the well-being of her troops was her main concern. There may be many who may not even have met her, although she did spend much of her time visiting Northern Territory, New Guinea and all the States.

Colonel Irving was intensely proud of the Service she led from 1941 - 1947, and always praised the women for their self-less work, often carried out under difficult and uncomfortable conditions, in the knowledge that they were serving their country in its hour of need. The esteem in which she was held can be seen around Australia in the Memorials, not only from A.W.A.S. but also from other organisations with which she worked. They are in each capital city and they take a variety of forms, and are accompanied by an inscribed bronze plaque. Perhaps it is of special interest that, in Melbourne, the Memorial Plaque from A.W.A.S. is in Victoria Barracks. Not only was it her A.W.A.S. H.Qs. at L.H.Q., but it was also her birthplace in 1897, when her father was stationed there as a junior officer.

Under the leadership of Colonel Irving, a very high standard of competence and efficiency was achieved. The object of the formation of the A.W.A.S. was to release men for forward areas and the members of A.W.A.S. fulfilled this objective. Many favourable reports were made of the service of the A.W.A.S. in Northern Territory. These servicewomen won the respect and admiration of everyone in the various units. The officers for whom they worked spoke highly of their remarkable industry and skill and their willingness to tackle any task put before them.

It was frequently reported that the fascination of the Territory seemed to grow on these women so that when their year of service was nearly completed they almost invariably applied for a second tour of N.T. duty after their leave in the south.

There was a grand spirit among the women; they considered that their conditions were very good and they were happy to be there.

After demobilisation, there were some among the southerners who returned to the North and made their homes there. Many others have returned to the Territory to enjoy a nostalgic visit.
One of the A.W.A.S. stationed at Alice Springs kept a diary of a trip made to Adelaide River and Darwin in 1944 to compete in a Basketball Competition between Women's Services teams in the area. The necessary number of girls was chosen from 53 A.W.A.S. Barracks personnel who were very eager to take up the challenge. The more interesting bits of information from the diary are recorded hereunder:-

Sunday, 15th October, 1944

At 0800 hrs. this morning we waved farewell to our mates amid much chatter and cries of "Good Luck" and clicking of cameras. Travelling along the 130-odd miles to Ti-Tree-Well, only stopping for tea twice, the scenery we saw was very colourful, if somewhat monotonous. On either side, away in the distance, a long range of mountains with their beautiful patterns of light and shade, could be seen. The anthills proved most interesting, their quaint shape and height (from 18" to 3') made them look like tombstones stretching as far as the eye could see on either side of the track. They were closely built and a rich red in colour, like the earth around. The road stretches straight ahead to the horizon, like a long black ribbon. We played cards -for matches- worked on cross-words, talked and sang to pass the time.

At Ti-Tree Well we stopped at a house - like a road-side cafe, where we were provided with a cold lunch. We had our meal in the dining room which was located in the cellar and was, therefore, a cool change from the heat outside. After lunch we were back on the track. A whirlie passed across the road at some stage and we missed it by inches, a cloud of dust swirling into the truck and nearly choking us. It was about 50 ft high, 12 ft in diameter and travelling very fast. We saw a few of these on our journey but usually away ahead or far behind us, thank goodness. We arrived at New Barrow Staging Camp around 1730 hrs., played some basketball for practice, showered and got ready for mess. At 1900 hrs. the C.S.M. called for us and we dined at the Sergeant's mess. The mobile pictures are on to-night but we are too tired to go. The theatre is the river - the projection box is on one bank and the screen on the other and the audience sits in the river bed, which is dry at this time of the year.

Monday, 16th October, 1944

It was a very hot night and it took a long while to get to sleep. We woke up dry and thirsty at 0330 hrs and ate lemons and oranges to quench our thirsts and felt so uncomfortably hot that we didn't go back to sleep. Heard a convoy leave for Alice at 0500 hrs. and got up at 0630. After a sprint around the football ground, had a cold shower and after breakfast we left at 0800 hrs. New Barrow Creek is called the Elbow by local residents. At 1000 hrs. we stopped at Wycliffe Well. Fruit and vegetables were being grown here by the Army and we were allowed to pick a few tomatoes and carrots. Bore water is used for the garden and the windmill was turning slowly in the warm breeze. The size of the fruit is astounding.
On our way again, and at 1045 hrs. stopped for tea at the Devil's Marbles. These are giant stones, or boulders, which have been tossed up out of the earth by some gigantic force to fall and settle, some one on top of another, or in clusters, like a lot of huge marbles. One stone was split straight down the middle as if it had been chopped with an axe. They are so large, they make the truck parked in front of them look like a small insect beside a pile of pumpkins. Wonder how they came to be there? Arrived Tennant Creek at 1330 hrs. in time for lunch with some Sigs. whom we had met in Alice. Tennant Creek is a very small but very friendly place, and after lunch and a good chat we left for Banka Banka. Near Morphett Creek we stopped at Churchill's Head. The roughly-hewn natural stone figurehead is on the right of the road and the front of this large stone was shaped like a face. In a fissure that looked like a mouth, someone had stuck a limb of a tree and the whole head, viewed from a distance, looked like Churchill with a cigar in his mouth. Hence the name. We got out of the truck and climbed on top of the figure's head which is situated at the top of a rise and we had a beautiful view of the valley below. This spot marked a change in scenery from merely flat country to a more hilly terrain covered with green trees, which was quite a surprise. Arrived at Banka Banka and made welcome. After mess (including pineapple and jelly) and an exchange of news we were ready for bed by 2000 hrs. We were all feeling tired as we had travelled 181 miles that day in the heat and dust.

Must record that at 1600 hrs. we met the football team on their way back from Adelaide River. The two trucks met in the middle of the desert and we all got out. We boiled a billy and made billy tea which we drank black. They had been away for a fortnight and wanted to know all the news from Alice; they were very happy as they had won the football challenge.

Tuesday, 17th October, 1944

Had a good night's sleep and got up at 0500 to have a practice and after breakfast were on our way. It was 0630 hrs. when we pulled out of Banka Banka after saying goodbye and thanking the staff for their hospitality. The baker made some fresh rolls for us to take with us - they were delicious. We arrived at Elliott for lunch by 1300 hrs - cold meal of course with the usual pineapple and jelly - and were taken to see the pig farm. We also saw one of the camp pets, a cockatoo called "George" and he didn't have a feather to fly with. He was brown in colour and looked like a cooked chook standing in the middle of the road. There was much excitement in Elliott that day, with armed guards checking south-bound trucks, as three men had escaped from Brocks Creek Prison and were seen heading south. Met the 3 Div. Concert Party there on their way back to Alice Springs. Said goodbye to Elliott and arrived Larrimah Staging Camp at 1815 hrs. We were feeling better after our good night's sleep at Banka and the weather had been a little cooler whilst we were travelling. After dinner we were given permission to attend a dance arranged for us by the Sergeant's mess. It was good fun and we flopped into bed around 2230 hrs. Two provosts were on guard outside our hut during the night.
We were up at 0600 hrs. and after breakfast we went down to the station to see "Leaping Lena" the pride of the North. It was a small train about 26 yards long, and we were told it was very uncomfortable to ride in. Left at 0830 hrs. en route to Mataranka. The scenery in this part of N.T. is very beautiful; instead of the shorter, scrub-stunted trees, the area is thickly wooded with trees like moreton bay fig, lemon and apricot trees. Anthills in the area are about 6 ft. high with a base about 4 ft, tapering up to a small mound at the top. They are paler in colour than the anthills passed on our first day. Stopped to look at 'Maluka's' grave, just off the side of the road. There were other graves nearby of familiar characters written into the book "We of the Never Never" by Mrs. Gunn. The 'Maluka' was the name given to her husband by the Aborigines. Mr. and Mrs. Gunn had managed Elsey Station in the N.T.

Arrived Mataranka 1005 hrs. and saw a row of glowing red Poinciana trees in bloom. We turned off the road and drove through the bush (the foliage included palm trees and dutchman's pipe) to a swimming pool with cream water-lilies growing on the surface of the green looking water. The scene was tropical and the weather very hot, so we thoroughly enjoyed our swim in this oasis. After lunch we headed for Katherine to play our first game of basketball, and arrived there at 1500 hrs. We were accommodated at the A.A.M.W.S. quarters and after a shower, we played basketball against the local girls. We won. Had mess at 1815 hrs. and went for a walk to see the Katherine river. Got lost, or rather we wandered out-of-bounds somewhere and missed the river, but there was not any water in it anyway. The girls had arranged a dance for us and we enjoyed ourselves. Had pawpaw for supper, sprinkled with lemon juice, which was very refreshing. The Army Sergeants challenged us to a game of basketball on our way back. We accepted.

Thursday, 19th October, 1944.

We were up at 0600 hrs., had a sprint around the Barracks to keep fit and, after breakfast, left Katherine at 0745 hrs. Everyone was so good to us we were sorry to leave so soon. Stopped for morning tea at 0900 hrs and lunch at 1300 hrs. As we had forgotten the butter, we ate dry bread, tomatoes and pilchards, followed by tinned fruit. We stopped five miles out of Adelaide River for a wash and change of overalls and arrived there at 1515 hrs. We were interested to note that the anthills in this area are even bigger than the previous lot. They have a narrow ridge along the top which faces north and south; the anthills are a pale grey in colour. We had a warm welcome from the girls, some of whom we had known in Alice or met in transit. After mess and a shower we were ready for bed - sleeping under mosquito nets.

Friday, 20th October, 1944

We were up at 0800 hrs., had breakfast 0830 hrs and at 0900 we set out for a swim at Robin Falls. Drove a few miles into the bush and then walked along a bush track to the falls. Beautiful tropical foliage all around. It was a hilly area
and the falls dropped to a shallow pool, and dropped again to another pool and then slipped a short way down to the river. We had a swim and washed our hair under the waterfall. A green spider fell on to the arm of one of the girls and she did get a fright but flicked it off with her finger and no harm was done. We saw two shed snake skins whilst walking back to our truck so kept a wary eye out after that. After mess at 1245 hrs. we caught up with at least a dozen A.W.A.S. to have a chat while they were having their lunch break. The humidity and heat are very wearying and we all felt a bit exhausted. We were invited to the A.A.M.W.S. quarters for dinner and afterwards watched their basketball team play a team called "Spare Parts". Back at the A.W.A.S. barracks about 1930 hrs. and so to bed. In the distance was the sound of music as a dance was being held in the Rec. hut but we were too tired to attend. Gee, it's funny sleeping under a mosquito net!

Saturday, 21st October, 1944

We were all up very early to have a practice and looking forward to the match to be played at 1600 hrs to-day. At 0900 hrs. we were taken to see the Adelaide River War Cemetery. A row of small pineapple trees had been planted along each side of the road leading to the cemetery. It was a lawn cemetery and looked very beautiful and restful with the small plaques extending in even rows along the green lawn. It saddened us, however, to see so many graves. There was a section for Americans who had been killed far from home in the Pacific Theatre of War and the American flag flew over their graves. One of the A.W.A.S. Signal-women had been killed in an accident and we took a photograph of her grave to send home to her mother.

Back at the barracks, after mess, we had a rest. We had pineapple and watermelon for afternoon tea and visited some friends. We (the Blues) played basketball against the lst A.W.A.S. team and won. The Spare Parts" played another A.W.A.S. team and the standard of play was quite good. We had time for a game of tennis before mess and celebrated our win in the Rec. hut. We then attended the camp theatre to see "Honeymoon in Balu". Arrived back at the A.W.A.S. Barracks to find everything in an uproar in the sleeping quarters. A long, black snake had been found in the hut under one of the beds, and the M.P. on duty had to be called in to shoot and dispose of it. It took some time for everyone to settle down but we had been active all day and eventually fell asleep.

Sunday, 22nd October, 1944

Arrangements had been made to take us to Darwin to-day and we were excited at the prospect. Some of the local A.W.A.S. came with us on the 72 mile journey and we left at 0930 hrs. We were met in Darwin by personnel from 15 Aust. Small Ships Coy. who gave us lunch - including mangoes - and then took us for a ride on the Harbour. We saw the remains of many ships which were wrecked during the Darwin raids - one American ship went down with 600 men and another ship "The Neptune" turned on its side on the beach and is now the base.
of a wharf put up by Civil Aviation. There in the middle of the beautiful Harbour we pulled up beside the one-time Hawkesbury River Ferry Boat and were invited on board for a cold drink of lemon squash. The boys asked if we would like to sample some jungle juice but we didn't like the look of it. We went back to the Small Ships Coy. mess for a cold meal. It was situated on a cliff overlooking the harbour and we watched the sunset over the water. There were frangipani trees everywhere in the area and the perfume was beautiful in the night air. Must mention here that the stars all over the Territory look very big and close, so that you feel you could put up your hand and touch one. Such beauty shining down on our war-torn world.

Then it was time to leave. One of the boys had filled a large bottle with sea water for us to take back to Alice and also gave us a frangipani cutting wrapped in wet paper. The paper would have to be kept wet all the way back to keep the cutting alive. We thanked the very kind people who had given us such an enjoyable time. Before leaving the area we went around to see the new 2 Aust Recreation Centre where we were made welcome and shown around. It has been built in a lovely spot overlooking Darwin Harbour.

The sight of the wrecked ships in the harbour brought the reality of war closer to home and had a sobering effect on all of us, as did the sight of the graves at the War Cemetery. The thought is probably at the back of the mind all the time but has to be put aside to concentrate on doing a good job in the immediate present. Another thing that reminded us of the reality of war happened on the road up to Darwin. We came to an open gate in the middle of the road. Then, as we drove on towards our destination we noticed that there were small aircraft, hidden under trees and camouflage, along each side of the road. We were told that the Air Force used the road as a runway when taking off on raids.

On the way back to Adelaide River it was quite dark and there were lights across the road. The gate had been closed and lights were put on it to prevent accidents. We had to stop until the last couple of planes raced along the track towards us and took off on their mission. It was 0100 when we got back to A.W.A.S. Barracks, Adelaide River and we went straight to bed. We hadn't been up so late for a long time.

Monday, 23rd October, 1944

Left Adelaide River at 0900 hrs. and headed south. After saying farewell to our friends we drove down past Pine Creek, where we had lunch, and arrived Katherine around 1600 hrs. in time for our match against the Sergeants. We had won the games we had played to date, but the Sergeants beat us soundly. After mess we all went on a picnic. Watermelon and paw-paw were plentiful and we had a grand time. Katherine was one of the most relaxing places we had been to. Off to bed and much to our surprise it started raining during the night!
Tuesday, 24th October, 1944

Left Katherine at 0700 hrs. Our driver said he would take us to see Elsey Falls and have lunch there. We turned off the Track and drove 15 miles approximately over very bumpy ground, but it was worth it. We had our lunch on the bank at the top of the falls and later climbed down the steep cliff to swim in the river below. There were ropes on one of the trees which we could swing on and jump off into the water and we spent two hours swimming and enjoying the cool. The water was crystal clear and on the river bed there were hundreds of tiny shells, just like those found along the beach when the tide goes out. We knew that there had been an inland sea hundreds of years ago and it was exciting to see something that might be proof of this. It was late when we arrived at Larrimah, 1930 hrs. but a meal was ready for us and we had a relaxed evening relating the events of our trip and exchanging news. After a supper of asparagus sandwiches we went off to bed. There was a slight rainfall overnight.

Wednesday, 25th October, 1944

Departed Larrimah at 0800 hrs. We were all feeling pretty stiff and sore, probably from the swimming. We were all looking forward to getting back to Alice, by this time. Had lunch at Elliott, with more hospitality extended by the people we had met on the way up, and moved on at 1600 hrs. to Banka Banka, arriving in time for mess at 1930 hrs. Had another informal evening and met some A.W.A.S. going north who were staging overnight. Now for a good night's sleep.

Thursday, 26th October, 1944

Left Banka Banka at 0800 hrs. after a good rest and a hearty breakfast. Had morning tea near the Mt. Isa turnoff and called in at Tennant Creek for a quick visit. Here we met some Army friends who were on their way back to Alice from Mt. Isa. We had our lunch en route by the side of the road and reached New Barrow Staging Camp at 0800 hrs. A dance had been arranged after mess and our friends from Mt. Isa, who had arrived ahead of us, were invited. It was a very happy night and we went to bed about 2300 hrs.

Friday, 27th October, 1944

Left Barrow at 0800 hrs. and were happy to be on the road back 'home'. We had lunch at Ti-Tree-Well in the lovely cool cellar and arrived Alice Springs at 1700 hrs. We were glad to be back and everyone was pleased that we had won our basketball challenge.