

The Wagga VAD served as ambulance drivers every second Sunday in the early 1940s. Pictured from left are J Everett, J Wallace, M Dunn, D Erskine (Commandant), D Gillman, and L Kirk. [RW1647/1]

The valuable VAD

at the archives
Wayne doubleday



Our next article highlighting women's voluntary services during World War II looks at the contribution of the Wagga Voluntary Aid Detachment (the VAD).

The aim of a Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment was to have "a trained body of women who could take their place among sickness or accidents in times of peace or war".

Formation

IN SEPTEMBER 1939, as the Australian Red Cross was put on wartime alert, the mayor of Wagga, Mr H Glissing, called a public meeting in the town hall.

The NSW Red Cross commissioner, Mr G C Graham, addressed the meeting and spoke of the essential work of the Red Cross during war time.

A decision was made by women volunteers who were present to form a Wagga Branch of the Voluntary Aid Detachment and the office bearers were elected: commandant, Mrs Erskine; assistant commandant, Miss J Rentoul and quartermaster, Miss B Wunsch.

The first meeting of the detachment was held in St John's Hall on Baylis Street, on September 22, 1939.

Mr Loth, superintendent of St John's Ambulance, lectured members in first aid and

home nursing lectures were delivered by Dr N J Solomon and by Dr R A Lewis.

An Armistice Day service was held on November 14, 1939 and 28 girls in the VAD made their first public appearance by marching to the monument in Baylis Street.

By December 1939, the detachment was divided into sections, the leaders being Misses Riedell, Milne, McDougall and Commins; however, in view of increasing membership, by June 1940 more sections had to be formed, led by Misses Gillman, E Williams, and Walker.

Aiding the war effort

IN JULY 1940, the VAD began work at the AIF Tent Hospital at the Wagga Showground.

They used their acquired knowledge by improving the conditions of the sick men and, with the assistance of Sisters Kingston, Wild, Williams, Cowdry and Thomas, 374 patients received help from the detachment.

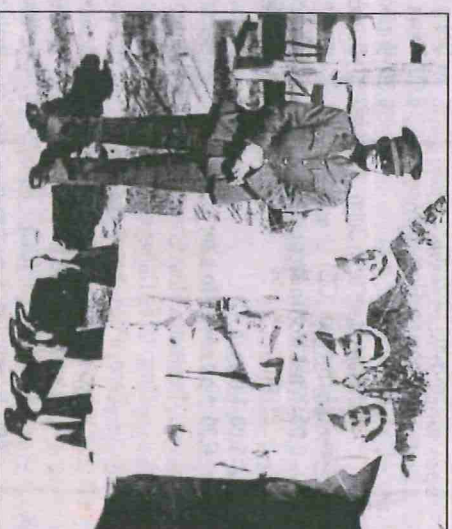
Assistance was given by the VAD to the Wagga Base Hospital.

The local girls who did not enlist for full-time service continued to work at the showground military hospital and later at the new Kapooka Military Hospital, when it commenced operation in 1943.

Mrs Erskine, commandant from inception in 1939, resigned her position in December 1943 but, because of requests from the detachment, she returned in May 1944 and remained until 1946, when Miss Jean Everitt was appointed. Miss Everitt remained commandant until the detachment went into recess in 1948.

After the war

WHEN the VAD re-formed, serving commandants included Mrs C Dixon (1952-1956), Mrs P Bateman (1956-1958) and Mrs M Duff (1959 - 2000).



Dr Wright, Mesdames Eskine, Forrester and Waterston at the AIF tent hospital, circa 1942 [RW1647/3].

Members continued service throughout the years at the Wagga Blood Bank, driving disabled ex-servicemen on Anzac Day and participation in Telcross and CosmeticCare.

They also conducted first aid lectures and co-ordinated the annual Red Cross appeals in Wagga. The Wagga VAD held its 60th anniversary in October 1999. Two veterans who joined in 1942, Mrs Mary Dunn and Mrs Lila Meech, were present.

The VAD is now part of the Voluntary Aid Service Corps (VASO) in NSW.

It was an emotional occasion when Mrs Mavis Duff, officer in charge, presented her last annual report in 2000 and the Wagga Branch of the VAD disbanded. She had been commandant and a member for over 40 years.

References: CSURA: RW1647, RW2729; Wagga Wagga A History, Sherry Morris; The Daily Advertiser: October 1941, October 1942. Compiled by: June Dietrich

What you should know

- The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.
- Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.
- For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

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FORUM

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77 Trail Street
Wagga Wagga

CINEMA DOORS
OPEN DAILY 9:45AM

SESSION TIMES

Bran Nue Dae 89 min **PG**
New This Week — No Free Tickets
Sat to Wed: 12:30pm, 4:00pm, 7:45pm, 9:30pm

The Tooth Fairy 112 min **PG**
New This Week — No Free Tickets
Sat to Wed: 10:15am, 2:30pm, 7:00pm

It's Complicated 130 min **M**
Sat to Wed: 12:15pm, 4:45pm, 7:00pm, 9:15pm

The Princess & The Frog 107 min **G**
Sat to Wed: 10:30am, 2:00pm, 5:45pm

Saturday January 16 — Wednesday January 20

Sessions correct at time of printing. Subject to change without notice.

The Lovely Bones 145 min **M**
Sat to Wed: 10:30am, 4:30pm, 9:00pm

The Fantastic Mr. Fox 97 min **PG**
Sat to Wed: 12:00pm

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel 98 min **G**
Sat to Wed: 10:15am, 1:45pm, 3:45pm, 6:00pm

Did You Hear About The Morgans? 113 min **M**
Sat to Wed: 9:30pm

Old Dogs 98 min **PG**
Sat to Wed: 10:00am, 2:15pm, 7:45pm

Sherlock Holmes 138 min **M**
Sat to Wed: 11:45am, 4:15pm, 6:45pm, 9:15pm

Avatar — 3D 171 min **M**
3D films attract a \$3 per ticket surcharge
Sat to Wed: 10:00am, 1:30pm, 5:00pm, 8:30pm

Avatar 71 min **M**
Sat to Wed: 1:15pm