

## ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

This is my first magazine report as Co-ordinator of the Archives Committee. This is an opportunity to thank Mrs Vivienne Rowney for her years of skilled leadership as Co-ordinator. I also thank the State Management Committee for giving permission for her, along with Beverley Duckett, our wonderful Secretary who keeps tabs on everything, Gloria Armstrong and Tupp Biggs, both of whom have amazing knowledge of 'the bush' to continue as members of Archives. Maureen Barker, who has previously served on the Committee, and Margaret Moore each of whom brings her special skills, comprise the rest of the current team with me. We can be found 'beavering in the basement' at CWA House, every other Friday and at various other times when required for research. We also have the benefit, albeit long distance, of the great support of Mrs Pam Batten OAM in Geraldton who is a computer whiz and former member of the Archives team. The Committee was fortunate to enjoy the company of the new State President, Mrs Heather Allen at a recent meeting in order for her to hear first hand the work undertaken for the Association's Archives.

The prime role of the Archives Committee is that of custodian of the Association's archival records. The Committee monitors and safeguards the collection on behalf of the Association and advises State Office and State Management Committee of any concerns it has in this regard. The collection includes State, Division and Branch minute books, Branch histories, documents regarding projects of the Association such as Holiday Homes and Retirement Units, provided records of members' service and ephemera such as banners, table cloths and memorabilia. Some of the latter is not stored in Archives, but can be found throughout CWA House.

*Minute Books:* Branches are encouraged to forward any completed minute books to the Association's archives following the compilation of the current 10 year history of the branch. A set of minute books recently received included some which had been 'visited' by insects during their stay in the branch. If you have a number of minute books in your branch, please check them regularly. Dust, insect activity, mildew, foxing etc can cause irreparable damage to the records and this damage can pass cause damage to an entire collection if remedial work is not done. Minute books can be securely sealed in plastic and placed in the freezer for a week. This does not harm the paper, but kills any insects and ensures residual eggs do not become viable.

*Digitising Minute Books:* To reduce the possibility of loss of precious records it is requested that, where branches have decided to keep their minute books in the branch, members consider having the information within them digitised. A digital copy could then be forwarded to the Association's Archives as a safeguard.

Archives does not have funding for this process. There may be a member of your branch or a family member with the skills and time required to undertake such a task on behalf of the branch. For country branches this is perhaps something with which your local telecentre might be able to assist. It is realised that it would be necessary for future Archives Committees to monitor changes in technology to ensure access to the digitised material.

*Minutes on Disks:* When branches send Archives their minutes on disks, please ensure that these are saved in pdf format to secure against alteration if they are sourced by anyone at any time in the future.

These records ultimately belong to the Association, reflecting as they do the very considerable community contribution over the years made by many dedicated women. This is part of the overall history of Western Australia.

*Requests for Archive Information:* Staff at State Office have little time to undertake background

research so requests are regularly forwarded to Archives. The Archives Committee is happy to receive requests for information, research background material or look into history of particular events, membership details, branches etc. Time needs to be allowed for this research because members of the Archives Committee are not always available to go to CWA House due to other commitments, distance from CWA House etc. The research itself can take considerable time, depending on what is required, so if you are planning a particular event and require additional information from the Association's Archives, please allow time for this research. Mrs Pam Batten has digitised more than 5,000 items, including newspaper cuttings and photographs and this work will be continued by the Archives Committee. This is a marvellous resource of information.

A friendly reminder to those members who have not completed a *Member's Profile Form*. These are available from Meg, our wonderful receptionist at CWA. Please complete a form and provide a small photograph if you can. Your service to CWA is greatly appreciated and an archival record of this is needed. Many members have worked for years and years on different special projects and there is little written record of this commitment. You know who you are – *please complete a form*. For those who have already done so, please ensure that your form is kept up to date. Meg can also help you with this.

Do not forget the magazine for Branch and individual project activities. An article in the magazine is a way of ensuring that there is a written record. Recently doing research a member of the Archives Committee found a gem of a Branch report for a year during the war. This information had not been included in the Branch's really wonderful history because there were no minute books extant for that period of the Branch's service – which was not only for their community, but also at world level as reported in the magazine for 1942.

*Archival Treasure:* Another gem from the Association's Archives for members to ponder over prior to the Christmas season is attributed to Mrs Frances Craig MBE, State President of CWA of WA 1939 – 1944:

*CWA world is dotted with little lights held aloft by its members. Mostly they are unrecognised, except as lights; no one knows who holds them, but they form one beautiful globe, which lights all the work of the Association with a soft and mellow radiance. This light is made by the kindness and right thinking of the women who are making the CWA a medium for their practical service to God and their neighbour. In our CWA we owe a great deal to the simplicity of our work, its womanliness and its faithfulness to friendship. Let us try very hard to keep it like that.*

It was in Mrs Craig's years as State President that major Association contributions to the war effort were undertaken. Projects included the Women's Land Army, the making of camouflage nets, sheepskin vests, gloves, the War Relief Fund, use of rest rooms as canteens and the organisation of accommodation for soldiers in transit. These are well documented in *Her Name is Woman*. Awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Association in 1944, Mrs Craig also was involved with many other community groups, including Save the Children Fund of which she was National President in 1968 – 69. She also served on the Board of St Mary's Anglican Girls School which has named Craig House after her. St Mary's celebrates its 95<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2016 and students annually collect gifts for Mothers Day for the Association to disperse to women in rural communities where there is agricultural difficulty. Mrs Craig passed away on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1974 aged 78, but her light still shines in diverse ways.

I wish all members a happy, healthy and safe Christmas season.

*Jocelyn Mitchell,*  
*Co-ordinator.*