

## **Anne Radys**

### **Margaret River C.W.A. War Effort**

As a member of the "Australia Remembers" Committee I was curious to find out what our Country Women's Association branch did during the war years. I was delighted to find that all our minutes were still held by the branch at our present premises.

In 1939 Margaret River C.W.A. was meeting in a small building in Bussell Highway opposite the Caltex Service Station. The President of the branch was Mrs Joselyn Tunbridge, wife of the town's local doctor after whom Tunbridge Street is named. The Secretary was a Mrs Urry, the Station Master's wife, whose records were a pleasure to read, and the past was brought back to life. The first mention of the war was in the minutes of 28/06/39 where it was recorded "Mrs Riddle, who was organising officer for the Voluntary Registration of Women, attended the meeting, and gave an explanatory talk, about the registration and filling in of forms. As it is important that the Commonwealth Government should know just what resources, in the way of help from the womenfolk it could call upon in time of need. It is hoped that all C.W.A members would enrol in whatever capacity they felt they could serve their country."

It is interesting to note that in the same year the electric light was installed to the C.W.A rooms, with electricity supplied and connected by Mr Jack Nixon from our own Margaret River Power House.

The first record of the Branch's donations, which was one of many over the following years, was a donation of £2/2/0 (2 guineas) to the Polish War Victim Fund.

Members collected reading matter for soldiers in camp, and magazines were donated to various soldier comfort funds. They also assisted the Red Cross with hand sewing and knitting. On 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1940, it was recorded "in regard to Trench Comforts and Naval welfare, this branch has decided to give all help possible in the way of making socks, scarves etc and providing much needed comforts for our soldiers, sailors and airmen, in camp either at home or abroad. Funds to be raised to provide wool, etc for above work."

In May 1940, Mrs Alma Whitewood (owner of the local tearooms) and Mrs Dorothy Peirce moved that the C.W.A purchase 1lb Navy wool to be knitted into articles.

By June 1940 Margaret River C.W.A was a registered branch of Australia Comfort Funds and 4lb of wool had been knitted into socks. The articles most needed were socks, scarves, 54 inches by 12 inches (no fringes), unbleached calico bags 24 inches by 12 inches, handkerchiefs – 4 out of 1 yard (36 inch) material.

It was also moved that all presentations to members be discontinued in wartime.

Monthly social afternoons became a regular occurrence. In June 1940, "many busy fingers were at work, fashioning socks, pullover etc for the Comfort Funds (CDF)." Mr Forrester told of the necessity for comforts for the fighting forces, and urged members to help this fund. Secretary Mrs Urry spoke on the War Saving Certificate Groups – Certificates cost 16 shillings and were purchased by members contributing 2 shillings at each meeting over eight meetings.

By July money for the ACF was spent on wool as fast as it was received.

At the "Win the War Rally" on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1940, C.W.A. sold afternoon tea to raise further funds, and in August C.W.A. decided to hold Whist drives every month in aid of ACF. At the time C.W.A was the largest women's organisation and a focal point of social life in the district.

In October and November warm clothes were dispatched to England for the C.W.A. War Relief Appeal and a garden Fete was held at the home of Mrs Tunbridge. At the ACF Dance on December 14<sup>th</sup> the C.W.A. provided supper. The posters for the dance were sent out in the cream cans on the "cream run".

It was interesting to discover that a Platoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> Garrison Battalion was formed in the Margaret River and Cowaramup district. They paraded in Margaret River on alternate Sundays and Margaret River Branch of ACF provided tea and biscuits after the parade.

By March 1941, 50 certificates to the value of 40 pounds (16 shillings a certificate) had been purchased in the 9 months since the groups were formed. Mrs Urry was responsible for keeping the records.

At the April 1941 AGM, the Secretary, Mrs Thomter summed up the mood of the President's report; "At times, she (Mrs Tunbridge) has been downhearted over things, but she always got fresh courage to carry on, and she hoped the members would give the same support to her successor (Mrs Peirce) as they did to her. It had been a very long and hard year as the branch had been called upon to support so many war aims, which had been done willingly and would continue to do so."

At the April AGM 1941, Mrs Peirce became the new President. In 1942 Mr Tunbridge was again elected as President and there were 32 members on the roll.

In February 1943 a Popular Girl Dance was held. Margaret River C.W.A's entrant was Miss Kath Nixon. In March a Paddy's Market was held to raise funds for Miss Nixon.

At the AGM 1943, it was reported that during that year, 59 war certificates had been purchased, an outstanding effort.

Throughout the rest of the war years the C.W.A continued organising social activities. Dances were held regularly in the Old Road's Board Hall and suppers were catered for. Notices for coming events were advertised on the screen at the weekly picture shows. Regular beach picnics were organised for women and children of the town and some of the beaches visited were Redgate, Riflebutts and Busselton. Transport was organised using Mr Nixon's truck and sweets were donated by members for the children. Some years the picnic had to be cancelled due to petrol rationing.

On reading the minutes one cannot help being impressed by the Herculean efforts of the group during these difficult years considering most of the women were from farming families and their generosity in financial assistance and in kind (butter, eggs, cream, cakes etc) was exceptional. In their untiring efforts to assist the war effort they truly lived up to the C.W.A. motto of "HONOUR TO GOD, LOYALTY TO THE THRONE, SERVICE TO THE COUNTRY, THROUGH COUNTRY WOMEN, FOR COUNTRY WOMEN, BY COUNTRY WOMEN".

Their service was even more remarkable as it was all on a voluntary basis.