
Florence Wade (nee Larke)

It was whilst I was working in Barrack Street, Perth that I joined the W.A.N.S. (Women's Australian National Service), which was started by Florence Hummerston. The girls had to purchase navy blue overalls, and the only kind I could buy was a man's.

One particular day we were requested to march through the City, so I hurriedly pulled on my overalls which I had just bought, and unknown to me, I had my price tag hanging down the back all the way through the streets of the City.

The group I was with was housed in the R.A.A.F. building in Stirling Highway Claremont. This group was close to where I lived at No. 27 Stirling Highway, Claremont (this number was later changed to 227).

There were two Canteens in Bay View Terrace, and one was used by the W.A.N.S, and the other by the Church of England Christ Church Congregation.

The W.A.N.S. was used as a dance hall, and we had to avail ourselves each week to attend the dances.

Off I went as a 16-17 year old, to attend the dance. The rule of the day was, the girls had to dance with who-ever asked us. My first partner was quite drunk, and he was staggering around the hall, when a hand was put on my shoulder. "Come on darling, you're coming home with me, I'm not having my daughter dancing with just anybody." I was my dear Father and I was not allowed to go again.

After that I just concentrated on the marching and meetings.

Also, during the war I was also an Air Raid Warden, and had my tin hat and gas mask allotted to me. I was stationed at the Claremont Council Chambers, and my job was to keep track of where Ambulances, Fire Brigades and Police were. This I did by putting coloured drawing pins on the Chart. I also had to attend the Claremont Practice School to learn all about the different gases, and I knew my gases by heart.

We had a practice Air Raid one night, and someone was going to ring me sometime during the night, and I had to make my way down to the Claremont Council. Next morning when I awoke, the 'phone had not rung', so I went down to see why I was not called out.

I was in big trouble, and I could not convince them that I had not left the 'phone off the hook'. No, I hadn't, but my dad had unbeknown to me. He was not having his daughter walking around at 3 o'clock in the morning during blackouts. Thank you dad.