

# LEWIS, Gwenneth (WR 2399 Women's Royal Australian Naval)



Image 1 © Anne Basham family collection  
2010  
*Studio portrait circa 1946,*

<b>Name</b>	<b>LEWIS, Gwenneth Driver</b>
<b>Service Number</b>	WR 2399 WRAN
<b>Date of Birth</b>	13th July 1909
<b>Died</b>	5th November 1994
<b>Place of Birth</b>	Brighton SA
<b>Resident</b>	Inman Valley SA
<b>Cemetery</b>	Victor Harbor Cemetery

Gwenneth (Gwen) Lewis was born at Brighton, SA, on 13 July 1909, the youngest of three children of Harris Morgan Lewis and Evelyn Annie Lewis (nee Riddle). Her parents owned land adjoining Sturt Road at Marion where they grazed sheep and established a vineyard. She was educated at Brighton Primary School and Methodist Ladies College.

The Lewis family moved to Inman Valley in March 1925 and purchased the Illoura property and began mixed farming. On leaving school she worked at a number of jobs including employment by the Hawker pastoral family at Quorn, and the Young Women's' Christian Association.

Gwen enlisted in the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service at HMAS Torrens, Port Adelaide, on 10 October 1944, age 35. She undertook her basic training at HMAS Cerberus at Crib Point on the Mornington Peninsula and HMAS Lonsdale in Port Melbourne where she did her driver training.

The WRANS was a non-combat branch of the Royal Australian Navy that recruited women, and like many of its sister services created during World War Two, it alleviated manpower shortages resulting from men being assigned to combat roles. The WRANS was established in April 1941 when the Royal Australian Navy enrolled 14 women at HMAS Harman, the wireless telegraphy station near Canberra. Two women were stewards, and 12 trained as telegraphists. At the time, the formation of this civilian unit was not publicised, but this changed when the war in the Pacific was perceived as a growing threat to Australia.

On 1 October 1942, the WRANS were sworn in as enlisted personnel in the Royal Australian Navy. In December 1942, newspaper coverage was used to promote the existence of the WRANS and encourage applications. The first 16 WRANS officers were trained at the Flinders Naval Depot in Melbourne, and by February 1943 their numbers had increased to 1,000. By the end of the war, their numbers had increased to over 2,500. WRANS performed a variety of duties, including working as telegraphists, coders, clerks and also as drivers. Women in the WRAN also responsible to be education officers, mechanics, harbour messengers, cooks and sick berth attendants. Some

WRANS worked for the Allied Intelligence Bureau, in the Censorship Office, and in the Allied Translation Section of General Douglas MacArthur's U.S. Order of Battle unit.

After Gwen completed her driver training she remained at Port Melbourne and was assigned to drive senior naval officers around Melbourne. She recalled one instance in Melbourne on Christmas Day 1944 just after she delivered a senior officer to naval headquarters. Whilst waiting for the officer, she was asked if she had lunch and on replying "no", she was blindfolded and whisked away to a dining room where she enjoyed a sumptuous lunch. On finishing, she was again blindfolded and returned to her vehicle.

In early May 1945, she was posted to HMAS Leeuwin in Fremantle and continued her driving duties. HMAS Leeuwin was a busy naval base and she was assigned to drive top-ranking naval officers to and from the port. Gwen's older brother, Harris Vivian (Viv) Lewis served in the army and had enlisted on 24 July 1941. He served with the 2/9th cavalry regiment. He was demobilized on 9 January 1946. On 26 March 1946, Gwen was posted back to HMAS Torrens, where she was demobilised on 16 April 1946.

Returning to civilian life, Gwen looked after her father. She married Phillip Lancelot Basham and they had a daughter called Anne.

Gwenneth Basham died on 5 November 1994 and was buried in the Victor Harbor Cemetery.

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*Compiled by the Victor Harbor RSL History Research Team, February 2010. Updated by T.Young 01/09/2025*

# Appendix



Image 2© *Anne Basham family collection 2010*  
Informal portrait of Gwen checking under the bonnet of the service vehicle.





# Victor Harbour Times

VOL. XXVII. No. 1,667

"The Victor Harbour Times"

Friday, November 3, 1944

SUBSCRIPTION: 7/6 PER YEAR IN ADVANCE. SINGLE COPY, 3d.

Registered at the G.P.O., Adelaide, for transmission by post as a Newspaper.

## PORT ELLIOT NEWS.

A very successful indoor exhibition was held in the Institute on Saturday, when a record number of people were present. Entries were not quite up to the usual number, but the quality was good. Messrs. Dodd and Page had all preliminary work well in hand before Saturday. The exhibition was officially opened by the President of the Institute, Mr. M. J. Meyer. Mr. H. C. Dunn was also on the platform. A jumble stall, supervised by Misses Nancy Marshall, Rita Vorwerk and Nancy England was well patronised. Miss Burford, convenor of the afternoon tea and was assisted by Messdames Clarke, Foster, Roney, Dwyer, Hawke, Chapman and Basham. Miss Hagley was treasurer. Fancy work (Stewards, Misses Leung and Baird) was judged by Messdames Dunn and Rice. The best piece of work was an embroidered apron entered by Miss N. Henderson, Victor Harbour. Prizetakers included Messdames Whelan, Benton, Thorn, Les Kneing, Cliff Barton, A. S. M. Lovell, Misses Burford, Dorothy Parish, Lorna Smith and Mary Harding. In this section as in each other one, there were numbers of entries made in the name of the R.F.N.U., approximately 48 being made by that association. Flowers—Stewards, Messrs. Kirby and A. W. Williamson. Judges, Messdames Knight and Burzacott. The champion bloom was gladiolus exhibited by Mr. A. W. Williamson. He was the chief prizetaker in this section, other awards going to Mary Hornsby, Mrs. R. Rose, Miss Bayly, Mrs. S. Harding, Rev. G. Cornish, H. Kirby, June Burzacott and R.N.F.U. Vegetables—Stewards, Messrs. Gray and Graham. Judge, Mr. H. E. Halliday. Champion award to Mr. A. W. Williamson with chutney. Prizes were distributed among Messrs. Williamson, Gray, Walton, Major, and J. Sneyd, Mr. Compass. Sweets entered by the last-named weighed nearly 12 lbs. Schoolwork—Stewards, Mr. F. G. Gann and Mrs. Jolly. Judges, Mr. and Mrs. V. Genn. The entries in this section were greater than at any previous show, and the judges remarked that the work was of a higher standard. There were over 350 entries, all of which were made by the Port Elliot School. Prizes were fairly evenly distributed among the scholars. Cookery—Stewards, Messdames Deed and Williams. Judge, Mr. E. Bird. Entries in this section were also greater than last year. The champion prize was awarded to Miss Burford with sponge cake. Other prizetakers were Mrs. T. Smith, Miss Kenny, Mrs. Benton, Mrs. Hornsby, R.N.F.U., Mr. H. Handy, Miss Dorothy Parish.

The Life-saving Club is being reformed, and should have a strong membership, as juvenile branches are being formed as well as the adult one. Messrs. Dan and Cherie Green, Cliff Barton and Joe Sibby are among the older members. Practices are being held regularly and a demonstration with two city teams has been arranged for early in December. President of the Club, Mr. H. Fraser, and secretary, Mr. Eric Gann.



Experience as well as quality counts in the satisfactory dispensing of a prescription. Here you receive the benefit of qualified experience as well as prompt and accurate service.

**R. W. Goldsack, M.P.S.**

CHEMIST  
"CORNER" PHARMACY  
VICTOR HARBOUR  
Phone Victor 20

## OPENING OF SCHOOL LIBRARY.

The public are cordially invited to attend the official opening of the primary school library on Tuesday next, 7th November, at 2.30 p.m.

The ceremony will be performed by the Hon. J. L. S. Bice, M.L.C., and Mrs. Riddle, Organiser of School Libraries, who will also be present and speak. After the inspection of the library the scholars will give a demonstration of physical exercises and games. Afternoon tea will be provided and members of the Primary School Mothers' Association are asked to bring a basket.

## NEWS IN BRIEF.

Miss Gwen Lewis, who has been secretary of the local branch of the Royal Naval Friendly Union since its inception, recently joined the W.R.A.N.S., and has been appointed to a station in Melbourne.

The engagement is announced of Loren Patrick, youngest daughter of Mrs. A. Doran, Kew, Vic., and the late Mr. A. Doran, to F.O. Kevin Nightingale, R.A.A.F., son of Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Nightingale, Victor Harbour.

Mr. R. G. Wisbey, who has been manager of Ozone Theatre at Victor Harbour for almost two years, has been transferred to Adelaide. Mr. Howard Williamson, who was formerly manager here, will take over the management of the local theatre as from Monday next, 6th November.

In aid of the local branch of the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association, a Paddy's Market will be conducted in Ocean Street on Friday next, 10th November, and gifts of produce, cake, and any saleable goods or monetary donations are very urgently needed and may be left at the stall.

A Paddy's Market is to be conducted at "Seaford" today in aid of St. Joan of Arc's Catholic Church.

## POLICE COURT, VICTOR HARBOUR.

Before Messrs. S. H. Bruce and W. J. Shaughnessy, J.S.P., Arthur William Eddy was sentenced to 24 hours in the police cells on a charge of drunkenness. On the following day, before Messrs. Bruce and Caleb Lovelock, Eddy was fined £2 with 7/6 costs (in default seven days) for being idle and disorderly.

John Farquhar (Cluth, R.A.A.F.), who appeared before Messrs. Bruce and Lovelock, was fined 5/- with 9/- costs, for being drunk in Ocean Street. He was also fined £1 with 7/6 costs, for resisting the police when being arrested. Further charges of disorderly behaviour and refusing to give his name and address were withdrawn.

On Monday last, before the same justices, Florence Mary Harrap was fined £4 with 10/- costs, for refusing to give her name and address when requested by the police.

In all, 1,500,000 tons of artificial harbours were towed across the Channel and assembled on the open beaches of Normandy in the early days of the invasion.



RESERVATIONS DAILY, 1 to 5 p.m.; SATURDAYS FROM 10 a.m.

**TONIGHT, SATURDAY, MONDAY**  
MATINEE, SATURDAY, 1.40.

RITA HAYWORTH, GENE KELLY, IN BEAUTIFUL  
TECHNICOLOR FILM,

**"COVER GIRL"**

GORGEOUS GALSI! MUSIC! ROMANCE!

ALSO

JANE WYMAN

**"CRIME BY NIGHT"**

FOX AND PARAMOUNT NEWS.

**Tuesday ... Wednesday ... Thursday**  
PROGRAMMES COMMENCE NIGHTLY AT 7.40.

BETTE DAVIS

**"OLD ACQUAINTANCE"**

ALSO COMEDY WITH ADOLPH MENJOU IN

**"HI - DIDDLE - DIDDLE"**

METROTONE NEWS.

## PRIMARY SCHOOL NOTES.

Particulars in regard to the opening of the school library are given in another column of this issue. Indications point to a very good attendance as much interest is being shown.

Miss Inspector Campbell has completed her domestic arts examination. Inspector A. W. Pitt, M.A., staff inspector, has commenced the detailed examination of the school.

At present Dr. Sheehan is conducting an examination of all the children. This will continue into next week.

## Honour List.

Grade I: Ross Cox, Mervyn Hawden, Peter Wood, Christine Field, Margaret Ewen, Patty Thompson, Bill Swain, Lionel Griffiths, Robert Gossell.

Grade II: Elaine Poinston, Patty Richardson, Jennifer Giddack, Beryl Thompson, Coralie Ewen, Laurel Crosby, Phyllis Rumbelow, Alan Thorpe, Peter Rumbelow, Neil Cox, Neil Rowett, Bob Frost, Barry Lewis, Barry Thorne, Ross Fisher, Peter Wearne, David Jenkins.

Grade III: Pam Gossell, Helen Lewis, and Jim Overall (special mention), Donald Overall, Malcolm Chick, Graham Field, Dan Hammond, Brian Fisher, Brian Cox, Fred Lewis, Janice Jagger, Barbara Jagger, Dorothy Penarick, Marlene Wood, Margaret Pretzell, Judy Kirby.

Grade IV: Keith Prout, Marie Kirby, Una Feuerherdt, Ruth Tugwell, Heather Tregonning, Barbara McLean, Dorelle Pearsons, Kath Howard, Don Hammond, Barbara Chambers, Bettine Morrow.

Grade V: Eric Poinston, Bob Haywood, Colleen Collins, Doug Jenkins, Nancy Cobb, Helen Thompson, Lilian Everett, Shirley Joy, Jill Blackwell, Judith Senior, Jose Hutton, Fay Sinton, Pat Sweetney, Nancy Cox.

Grade VI: Bill Ridge, John Thornley, Pauline Wallace, Jim Larking, Lin Pearsons (special mention), Tony Young, David Crane, Douglas Sweetman, Brian Poinston, Gordon Warland, Robert Ferguson, Glenda Morris, Shirley Richier, Eileen Preece, Rosalie Crosby, Graham Tugwell, Ron Ewen, David Rumbelow, James Mayfield.

Grade VII: Margaret Spicer (special mention), Jill Hutton, Bruce Ellis, Pat Lewis, June Schumacher, Bob Morrow.

## FUTURE UNITY.

In describing the last two years as a period of "uninterrupted vicissitudes" against the common foe, Mr. Churchill on his recent visit to Moscow pointed to the strength that had arisen from the complete unity among the great Powers. He went on to emphasise the need for a continuance of this spirit in the post-war world.

"I come here with the hope, nay, the certitude, that victory will be achieved, and with the hope that when it is achieved we shall all try to make the world a better place for the great masses of the people to live in," he said.

This is a task in which all people must play a part. Unity can come only from goodwill among all. The plea for the co-fraternal of the Atlantic Charter for an outlook which will make peace nothing less dynamic than war, must commend itself to all thoughtful Australians.

We, as a nation in our own right and as a unit in the British Commonwealth of Nations, will have a part to play in building up total British strength so that, in concert with the other peace-loving nations of the world, we might guarantee in peace the security we have won in war.

## WAR FACTS IN BRIEF.

More than 8,700 Air Training Corps cadets have passed to the Royal Australian Air Force, including more than 5,400 as air crew and 3,300 as ground staff. A further 12,000 are in training. Australian airmen have been serving for two and a half years. Their strength has grown from 250 in 1942 to more than 1,000 at the end of August, 1944.

DEFECTIVE ORIGINAL