



**Major Jann McCABE MBE, RFD, ED**

[1935 – 2013]



**Major McCabe is notable as the first female elected to membership of the Club in her own right.**

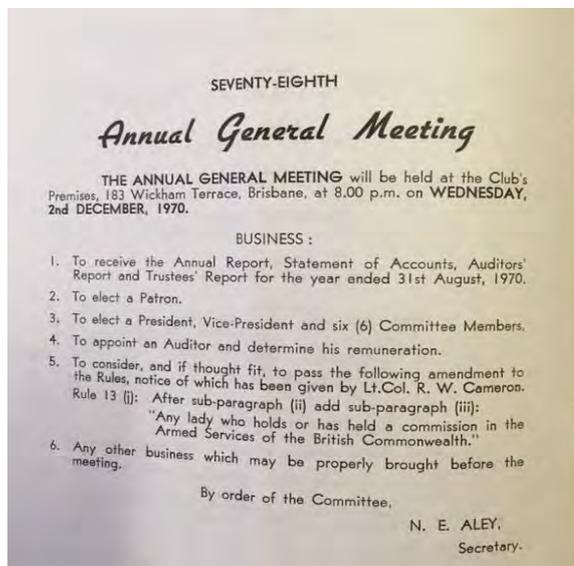
*Associate Membership was established (by unanimous vote) at the 23 November 1966 Annual General meeting – the wives and widows of Members over 21 years of age being eligible.*

*The 1970 Annual General Meeting approved a Rule change to admit commissioned ladies as Associate Members in their own right [notice below]. While having restricted rights as Associates, this Rule change is taken to indicate the date of the first female member elected in their own right.*

*Major McCabe led the charge and was admitted on 1 October 1975 as an Associate Member - number S12. She was proposed by LTCOL Norman Hansen and seconded by Captain D.J. Brough. It is interesting to note the time lapse between the approval (1970) and the first member admitted in that category.*

*We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.*

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*Club records are incomplete, and it is possible that a member may have joined in 1971 after the Rule change and left before 1973 – the first year with a full listing of members in the Annual Report and showing no Associates with a military rank. A difficulty is that the Minutes accepting new members are not definitive as to gender or name – only rank, initials and surname– for example “Dr” could be either gender. Similarly, a member could have joined in 1974 and left before 1977 and not be recorded.*

*1977 is the next Annual Report with a full member listing. It appears to be unreliable – it notes Associate MAJ S.J. Coghlan as having joined in 1975 and being the longest serving, but there is no record of her joining in the Minutes of that year. It also shows MAJ McCabe as joining in 1976 – not 1975. However, 1976 saw some 13 female officers join – next after McCabe were CAPT Syer in December 1975 and then SBLT Walden in January 1976. It is reported that this influx was the result of recruiting activity by the President (and later Life Member), the then Colonel Colin Wilson ED – and at least 6 were serving in 1 WRAAC Company.*

*A purist may seek to define the First Female Member as those granted Full (as opposed to Associate) Membership. This Rule change occurred at the Annual General Meeting in 1988.*

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Janice Margaret McCabe was born in Aramac on 26 February 1935. She was the daughter of Truce Ellen Margaret (nee Trimble) (1904 - 1990) and (John Patrick) Glen McCabe (1899 - 1975). Truce was so named as she was born on the second anniversary of the signing of the truce treaty of the Boer War. Glen and Truce were married on 12 February 1925. Janice had three older brothers Michael, William (who pre-deceased Jan) and John.

Glen McCabe was employed by the Post-Master General's Department and after their marriage he was a telegraphist at Fitzroy, a postal clerk at Gladstone, the Postmaster at Aramac, the Postmaster at Sandgate and then Wynnum. After suffering a stroke, he was invalided out in 1962, and died in 1975.

While christened “Janice”, and widely known as “Jan”, she long preferred the spelling of “Jann”.

Jann attended primary school at Sandgate and Manly and went to Lourdes Hill College at Hawthorne – matriculating in 1952. She later served for several years on the college's board. She then studied at the University of Queensland and qualified in 1957 as a pharmaceutical chemist. Training to be a pharmaceutical chemist in the 1950s consisted of being indentured to a pharmacist accredited by the Pharmacy Board for a 3-year apprenticeship and to also attend instruction and examinations over that period at Central Technical College, George St. Brisbane. She worked as a

pharmacist in hospitals, government and retail for most of her working life, and was a Life member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

Jann's long-standing companion was Noela Bartlett – herself a former Major in the WRAAC. Noela joined the Club in 1976 and remains a member.

Jann and Noela travelled to the United Kingdom in 1970, where Jann lived and worked until returning to Australia in 1973. While there she also served in 31 Signals Regiment (TA), including some periods of full-time duty with the WRAC in exercises with SHAPE in Belgium, and in Malta and Cyprus.

On return to Australia Jann lived at the family home in Carlton Terrace, Manly (apart from her time in Canberra), then at St Lucia and lastly at Kenmore.

By 1976, Jann was working in the Commonwealth Department of Health as a pharmacist engaged in pharmacy inspections throughout Queensland.

Her interest in military law (in which she lectured students studying for promotion exams for many years), and as a Justice of the Peace (appointed in 1962), prompted her to enrol in law at the University of Queensland as a part-time student. She graduated in law and was admitted to the Queensland Bar in 1982.

In 1986 She moved to Canberra as a civilian in the Department of Defence – in the Inspector General's Department of Army; and was engaged in military investigations. On her return from Canberra she was employed as a civilian pharmacist at 2<sup>nd</sup> Health Support Battalion at Enoggera. She retired in 2002.

Major McCabe's military service was distinguished and long. As an 18-year-old (as F11430) she enlisted in the CMF in the newly formed Women's Australian Army Corps in Brisbane in 1953. Moving through the ranks, she was commissioned as a Lieutenant (Probationary) in April 1959. In 1962 she was promoted to Captain at HQ Northern Command; followed by promotion to Temporary Major in 1964 (to command 1 WRAAC Company) and was made substantive in that rank in 1965. Her command of 1 WRAAC Company concluded in 1968, and the following year she was awarded the Efficiency Decoration.

Her command of the WRAAC Company earned an award as a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the 1970 New Year's Honours. By this time, she was living in London and in February 1970, accompanied by Noela Bartlett, she received her honour from Queen Elizabeth II at a Buckingham Palace investiture.



It is of interest that she was not the only family member to be decorated for military service by the reigning monarch of the day. In World War I, her uncle Robert Trimble was awarded the Military Medal by King George V in the field at the Somme. In World War II, her cousin Victor Herbert Trimble was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by King George VI at Buckingham Palace.

On her return to Australia she continued to serve in staff and instructional postings in South-East Queensland (at Reserve Command and Staff College, 1 Training Group) and Canberra (2 Training Group). A clasp to her ED was awarded in 1976 and in 1991 she was awarded the Reserve Force Decoration – for which she also received 3 clasps before her retirement.

In 1984 the WRAAC was disbanded, however senior officers such as Major McCabe did not transfer to other Corps but remained “on strength” and served out their time with WRAAC Corps insignia. She was selected for, and attended, the Senior Officers Tactics Course (Tac5) in 1988. Major McCabe was placed on the Retired List in 1990 after 37 years’ service, however she continued to be engaged in project work for Training Command until 1998.

Jann was a person of wide interests. She took flying lessons at Archerfield, culminating in her qualification and solo flight in the mid-1970s. She was a keen squash player, and enjoyed the live theatre, and her participation in Probus. She loved cooking and completed an advanced cooking course at TAFE. She also completed several courses to upgrade her computer skills.

Jann also volunteered for several state and national events – such as the 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane.

Many of her interests had a military connection. She was a member (and the first female Chairman in 2012-13) of the Tribunal of the RSL Queensland Branch; and an active member of the WRAAC Association; the Kedron-Wavell Ex-Servicewomen’s’ Association; the Ex-Servicewomen’s’ RSL Sub-Branch; and the Royal United Service Institute.

Major McCabe died on 11 April 2013 at Canossa Private Hospital after a battle with cancer and was buried with her mother at Hemmant Cemetery.



Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents
- Interview and documents with Major Noela Bartlett, March 2019.