Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0470

Doyle, Jess Scott

(1921 - 1988)

Born	19210412, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Died	19880708
Occupation	Servicewoman

Summary

Jess Prain was one of the first fourteen women to join the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in 1941 and was stationed at *Harman.* From here she was drafted to *Kuttabul* where she was the first Petty Officer in Sydney. She did an Officer Training Course and returned to *Harman* as Third Officer. After her discharge in 1946 she was a welfare officer for Berlei and was recalled to the Navy in 1951 to train new recruits. Prain was Officer-in-Charge Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) at Flinders Naval Depot until 1954 and retired as First Officer. Married to Denis, Jess Doyle became Appeals Officer for Legacy (Sydney). [1]

Details

The following is from the Ex-WRANS newsletter *Ditty Box*

Mrs Jess Doyle (Prain), WR8, died very suddenly on 8 July 1988, aged 67. Jess served from 1941-1946 and 1951-1955, and was a First Officer on discharge.

A WRANS telegraphist, who tapped out the message to RAN ships at sea that Australia was at war with Japan, has died suddenly in Sydney. She was Mrs Jess Doyle (née Prain) who was aged 19 when she joined as one of the first 12 telegraphists in the WRANS in 1941. [2] By war's end, there were more than 2,500.

She died in Sydney on July 8, aged 67. Burial at Botany followed a service at the Naval Chapel, Garden Island, conducted by Principal Chaplain Bill Rosier. Late of Clovelly, she leaves husband Dennis, sister Hazel and Jack, Carol and Michael.

Jess Doyle's naval involvement began in 1941 as one of the "Mrs Mackenzie's girls". She was commissioned in 1944 and served until the completion of World War II when the WRANS were disbanded.

In 1951, with the Korean crisis looming, she was invited back as Duty Director WRANS with the appointment of Officer-in-Charge, WRANS at the Naval Training Establishment at Flinders Naval Depot. She began to re-establish the Administration, Recruit and Officer training programs which set the foundations of training in the first years and established the service as a permanent and integral part of the Royal Australian Navy.

In 1954, she was offered the position the Director of WRANS but because of family illness felt it her duty to return home. She retired with the rank of First Officer.

After leaving the service she was employed as publications manager with the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, working with various voluntary groups of that organisation. Motivated by her service background, she joined Sydney Legacy as Director of Appeals – a position she held for seven years. In 1969 she was invited by the president of the Post Graduate Medical Foundation to raise funds to build the Sir Victor Coppleston Post Graduate School of Medicine, Sydney University.

Jess was on the committee of the Ex-WRANS Association from its inception in 1961 and represented the association in many capacities. She also lead the WRANS contingent every year in the Anzac Day march.

In most recent years she undertook the WRANS Window project. Her drive and organisation skills proved to be tireless. Her vision was that the window had to represent every WRAN, irrespective of rank or branch.

The window was unveiled at the Garden Island chapel on September 21, 1986 – her last great naval achievement. [3]

[1] *Ships Belles* p. 69
[2] There were 14 women in the first intake – all were qualified telegraphists but 2 offered to serve as cooks.
[3] Ex-Wrans *Ditty Box* August 1988 p. 7-8

Published resources

Resource Section
PRAIN, JESS SCOTT, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002, http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/script/veteran.asp?ServiceID=N&VeteranID=1194905

PRAIN, JESS SCOTT, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002, http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/script/veteran.asp?ServiceID=N&VeteranID=1156899

Book
Ships belles : the story of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service in war and peace 1941-1985, Fenton Huie, Shirley, 2000

W.R.A.N.S. : the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, Curtis-Otter, M, 1975

Journal Article
Vale - Mrs Jess Doyle (Prain), 1988

Book Section
Willing volunteers, resisting society, reluctant Navy: The troubled first years of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, Spurling, Kathryn

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
PRAIN JESS SCOTT : Service Number - WR/8 : Date of birth - 12 Apr 1921 : Place of birth - SYDNEY : Place of enlistment - SYDNEY : Next of Kin - PRAIN ROBERT

PRAIN JESS SCOTT : Service Number - WR8 : Date of birth - 12 Apr 1921 : Place of birth - Unknown : Place of enlistment - Unknown : Next of Kin - PRAIN ROBERT

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre
Senior WRANS from HMAS Harman Naval Wireless Station at the fourth birthday of the service

Panorama group portrait of members of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) at HMAS Rushcutter and two Navy officers.

Author Details
Anne Heywood

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Digital resources



Title: Senior WRANS from HMAS <I>Harman</I>
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023



Title: Four members of the WRANS.
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023



Title: AWE0470gc.jpg
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023



Title: AWE0470gd.jpg
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023