

# The Australian Women's Register

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Entry type: Person  
Entry ID: IMP0248

## Irving, Sybil Howy

(1897 - 1973)

Born	18970225, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Died	19730328, South Yarra Victoria Australia
Occupation	Servicewoman

### Summary

Sybil Irving was the founder and Controller of the Australian Women's Army Service. On 2 January 1939 she was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire, for social welfare services in Victoria. Throughout her life Irving was a faithful member of the Church. Her Funeral Service on 30 March 1973, and a Memorial Service on 23 February 1975 were held in Christ Church, South Yarra, Victoria.

### Details

The eldest child of army officer Major General Godfrey George Howy and Ada Minni Margueritha (née Derham) Irving, Sybil Irving's education was conducted at the various postings her father obtained. This included attending Lauriston Girls, School, which had been founded by her aunts Margaret and Lillian Irving.

During World War I Irving was a Voluntary Aid Detachment member with the Australian Red Cross. From 1924 until 1940 she was secretary of the Girl Guides' Association, Victoria. In 1940 she was appointed assistant-secretary of the Australian Red Cross Victorian Division. Invited in 1941 to establish and head the Australian Women's Army Service, Sybil Irving held this position until 1946. She later became Honorary Colonel of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps. After the war Sybil Irving became general secretary of the Victorian Division of the Red Cross. Upon her retirement in 1959 she was made an honorary life member of the society.

Sybil Irving died on 28 March 1973 and was buried at Fawkner cemetery with full military honours.

## Events

### **1939 - 1939**

Appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

### **1940 - 1941**

Assistant Secretary of the Australian Red Cross, Victorian Division

### **1961 - 1971**

Consultant to Elderly Citizens Clubs, with the Old Peoples Welfare Council, Victoria (later Victorian Council on the Ageing).

### **1941 - 1946**

Controller of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS). Appointed to establish and administer the Service which subsequently numbered 26,000.

### **1935 - 1973**

Foundation member of the Victorian Society for Crippled Children (and Adults). Sybil Irving's was one of the two original signatures on the Articles of Association, and she continued to work for VSCCA all her life.

### **1947 - 1959**

General Secretary of the Australian Red Cross, Victorian Division. Awarded Honorary Life Membership and the Medal for Meritorious Service.

### **1951 - 1961**

Honorary Colonel of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC)

### **1943 - 1943**

Promoted to Colonel

### **1942 - 1942**

Promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel

### **1924 - 1940**

Secretary of the Girl Guides' Association, Victoria. Tragic results of Poliomyelitis led Miss Irving to use her talent for needlework to teach the physically handicapped through the Girl Guide Extension Branch.

## Published resources

### **Edited Book**

Who's Who in Australia 1962, Alexander, Joseph A, 1962

### **Book**

Australian women at war, Adam-Smith, Patsy, 1984

Sybil Howy Irving, M.B.E. : 1897-1973, Irving, Sybil Howy, [1979]

Soldiers of the Queen : women in the Australian Army, Bomford, Janette, 2001

Colonel Best and her soldiers: The Story of the 33 years of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, Ollif, Lorna, 1985

A Stroll down memory lane, WRAAC Association, 2001

You'll be sorry!, Howard, Ann, 1990

### **Resource Section**

Irving, Sybil Howy (1897-1973), Bassett, Jan, 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A140610b.htm>

IRVING, SYBIL HOWY, Department of Veterans' Affairs,  
<http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/script/veteran.asp?ServiceID=A&VeteranID=584987>

### **Resource**

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### **State Library of Victoria**

Papers, ca. 1941-1946 [manuscript].

Papers, ca. 1932-1984. [manuscript].

### **National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra**

IRVING FREDA MARY HOWY : Service Number - VF398095 : Date of birth - 16 Sep 1903 : Place of birth - MELBOURNE VIC : Place of enlistment - MELBOURNE VIC : Next of Kin - IRVING SYBIL

IRVING SYBIL HOWY : Service Number - V143893 : Date of birth - 25 Feb 1897 : Place of birth - MELBOURNE VIC : Place of enlistment - MELBOURNE VIC : Next of Kin - IRVING F

### **Australian War Memorial, Research Centre**

[Papers of Lieut Gen Sir Iven G Mackay:]

[Inspections - General - Report on Australian Women's Army Service visit by Colonel Sybil H Irving - Letter to Major-General E C P Plant]

Group of Australian Women's Army Service officers from the Victorian Land Headquarters on the steps of the Shrine of Remembrance

Two senior members of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) taking a wreath into the Shrine of Remembrance during the Armistice Day ceremony

### **National Archives of Australia, Various Locations**

Christmas message from Colonel Sybil H IRVING (honorary Colonel of the Corps HONCOL) and Colonel Kathleen BEST (Director, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps DWRAAC)

Speech by Colonel Sybil H Irving (honorary Colonel of the Corps) made at the opening of the Kathleen Best Memorial Gates, Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) School, Mosman, NSW, 6 November 1959

### **National Archives of Australia, Melbourne Office**

[Letters to Miss Sybil Irving congratulating her upon her appointment as Controller of the AWASS]

### **State Library of New South Wales**

Sibyl Howy Irving scrapbooks relating to the Australian Women's Army Service, 1941-1946

### **Author Details**

Anne Heywood

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## Digital resources



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