Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0289

Stark, Amy Gwendoline

(1910 - 1994)

Born	19100403, Australia
Died	19941231
Occupation	Aviator, Servicewoman

Summary

Gwen Stark gained her pilot's licence shortly before the outbreak of World War II and was one of the first women appointed to a position in the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force. She served in the first instance as assistant section officer and later as recruiting officer for New South Wales. Before the war, she was active in the Australian Women's Flying Club, which became the New South Wales branch of the Women's Air Training Corps, and was its commandant in 1940. After World War II she went to Europe and worked with the Berlin Air Lift at a Royal Air Force station in Germany for several months. In 1964 she became the federal president of the Australian Women's Pilots' Association and was appointed to the Order of the British Empire on 8 June 1968 for her services to aviation.

Details

Gwen Stark, a kindergarten teacher who played 'A' grade hockey and basketball as well as being a member of the Girl Guide movement, obtained her pilots 'A' licence (No. 3132) on 10 July 1939 from the Royal Aero Club of New South Wales. A member of the Australian Women's Flying Club, Gwen was a commander of one of the squadrons and president from 1940 until 1941.

She volunteered to enlist in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) and was appointed as assistant section officer on probation from 10 March 1941.

Joyce Thomson writes in her book *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia* that after supervising the recruiting of the first airwomen enrolled in Sydney, Gwen was posted to WAAAF Training Depot to join the short administrative course given to the initial group of officers. She returned to Sydney as WAAAF staff officer, RAAF Headquarters, Central Area, Point Piper. Gwen was posted to various senior appointments, including staff officer, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Headquarters, North-Eastern Area, during Japanese air raids on Townsville.

Gwen Stark was discharged from the WAAAF on 8 August 1946 having obtained the rank of Wing Officer. In that year she helped establish the WAAAF branch of the RAAFA (NSW Division). She was the first president and from 1961 until her death in 1994 was patron of the branch.

On 8 June 1968, under the name Amy Gwendoline Caldwell, she was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (Civil) for her services to aviation.

Published resources

Book
The girls were up there too; Australian women in aviation, Mann, Sheila, 1986

The WAAAF in Wartime Australia, Thomson, Joyce A, 1992

Resource Section
STARK, AMY GWENDOLINE, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2002, http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/script/veteran.asp?ServiceID=R&VeteranID=1070254

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia
[Biographical cuttings on Amy Starkie Caldwell, Pioneer in WAAAF, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
STARK AMY GWENDOLINE : Service Number - 351010 : Date of birth - 03 Apr 1910 : Place of birth - Unknown : Place of enlistment - Unknown : Next of Kin - STARK WILLIAM

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre
[Miss Gwen Stark's flying days Camden Aerodrome 1937-1938]

The Women's [Australian] Flying Club

Miss Nancy Bird, Aviatrix with Flight Lieutenant McKillop and Gwen Stark

Mrs Nancy Bird-Walton with Lady Wakehurst, wife of the Governor of NSW, in front of Squadron Leader F.C. Mackillop and Gwen Stark

Lady Wakehurst, wife of the Governor of NSW, Squadron Leader F.C. Mackillop and Gwen Stark

Miss Nancy Bird Walton, wearing the uniform of the Australian Women's Flying Club, with Squadron Leader F.C. Mackillop, Gwen Stark and Lake Wakehurst, wife of the Governor of NSW

Director of WAAAF, Clare Stevenson (middle), and Warrant Officer Gwen "Starkie" Stark (obscured) on inspection of No. 5 Operational Training Unit, RAAF.

Portrait of Wing Officer Gwen Stark, Staff Officer WAAAF at RAAF HQ

Group portrait of four "original" WAAAF officers with the Director WAAAF Group Officer Clare Stevenson after a WAAAF Staff Officers conference at Air Force Headquarters, Victoria Barracks.

Group portrait of a number of WAAAF officers who attended the first annual conference of WAAAF staff officers.

Her Excellency Lady Gowrie, Honorary Air Commodore, WAAAF, inspects photographs on the wall at St Anne's Barracks

Portrait of Squadron Officer Gwen Stark, WAAAF, Staff Officer, North-Eastern Area Headquarters RAAF

Probably Brisbane, Qld. c. 1943. Formal group portrait of officers of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) on the steps of a building, possibly while attending a training course.

Probably Sydney, NSW. 20 March 1941. Assistant Section Officer Gwen Stark (centre) giving last minute instructions to Miss Clarice Taylor (left) and Miss Monica Bullen (right), both members of the …

Author Details
Rosemary Francis and Anne Heywood

Created 20 November 2002
Last modified 5 June 2009

Digital resources



Title: Wing Officer Gwen Stark, Staff Officer WAAAF
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023



Title: Australian Women's Flying Club
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023



Title: IMP0289gc.jpg
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023