

The RSL and Christmas.

Each year the Kedron Wavell Sub-Branch of the RSL gives out about 150 Christmas Hampers (see below) to elderly ex-service men and women who are members of that branch. Although this is a very generous and thoughtful thing for the sub-Branch to do, not a lot of people realise the amount of work that goes on in the background to enable it to happen.

Preparation usually takes a week. It all starts by going through the list of elderly members and cataloguing the probable list of recipients into males and females (there are some items in the hamper that are different for men and women) then when that is done the shopping list is prepared and out go the buyers to get 150 chocolates, 150 Christmas puddings, 150 shortcakes, pens, soap, tooth paste etc and then 150 bags in which to hold the "goodies".



When all the items are purchased, they must be loaded into the bags and individually stored in male and female lots, the female bags have a pink ribbon tied to the handles.

Then all the recipients' addresses are catalogued into areas so the delivery people can go from one to the other seamlessly and not have to travel back and forth, here there and everywhere, after which each recipient is rung and a date/time for the delivery is agreed upon to ensure the recipients will be home to accept the hamper.

It's a lot of work, and it takes a big army of people to do it and each year a bunch of wonderful (current) year 11 kids from 4 local schools (Mt Alvernia College, Padua College, Kedron State High and Craigslea State High) give up about a week of their annual holiday and under the guidance of the Pres, Greg Peake, toss in and do the lot.



Then a few old blokes with driver's licenses just rock up with a car to do the easy bit, all the hampers are loaded, the kids hop in, directions are given and the hampers are delivered to the very appreciative elderly.

Just 2 of the many young people who eagerly gave of their time are:



L-R: Thomas Sherman and Ethan Carey – both from Padua College.

Just to see and meet some of these elderly people, most of them now live alone, their partner of many years having died leaving them a bit lonely and looking forward to a chat, is a great feeling. It's a great way to spend a few mornings.

Most have interesting stories to tell too, all served in either the Army, Navy or Air Force during WW2 and the pride and inter-service rivalry is still there. One such lady we did meet was Helen

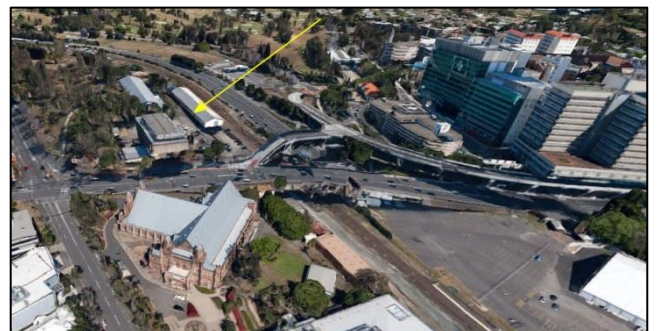


Rosbrook (below). Helen joined the WAAAF back in 1942. We weren't cheeky enough to ask her her age but she would have been at least 18 when she joined so you can work it out easily enough.



Helen Rosbrook and Emily Dart. Emily is another of those great kids who gave of their time to help – Emily goes into her final year at Craigslea State School next year and hopes to one day graduate as a doctor. She'll do it too!!

Like a lot of RAAF people who lived around Brisbane back then, Helen did her rookies at Sandgate, a northern suburb of Brisbane. (We did a story on Sandgate RAAF Base earlier, see [HERE](#)). After Rookies she was trained as a Clerk Accounting and was posted to 3 Stores Depot which was on the corner of Bowen Bridge Rd and Gregory Terrace, Brisbane, just over the road from the Royal Brisbane and Women's



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Hospital and the Ekka show grounds (see the pic above).

3 Stores Depot (3SD) was formed in Brisbane under the command of Squadron Leader I.G. Watkins. It was initially intended to establish it on the Ekka ground but it was decided instead to set it up in the old Brisbane City Council (BCC) Electricity Supply Departments Workshops and Stores building. The pic below shows the large wooden building (middle left) which was the main building. The building being built (next to the rail line) is still there today.



An advance party moved into the old BCC building on 22 May 1941 and it opened for business on the 2nd June 1941 with a compliment of 5 officers and 94 airmen/women.

The building next to the railway line, which was used by the 5 Transportation and Movements Office RAAF and the US Liaison Office, is now used by Energex, (see below) though the old wooden two story building has long gone.



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The other building to the right of the wooden 2 story building is still there, though it has had quite a lot of “cosmetic” work done since the war. After 3SD moved out in June 1947 it was taken over by the PMG (Telstra) for some years then Energex had it for a while and finally the Queensland Government Biomedical Technology Services moved in. Apart from “niceties” like air conditioning and modern day plumbing, not a lot has changed on the outside, you can still see part of the old loading dock that was used when 3SD had it.



Below, the insides of the building above – during the war years.



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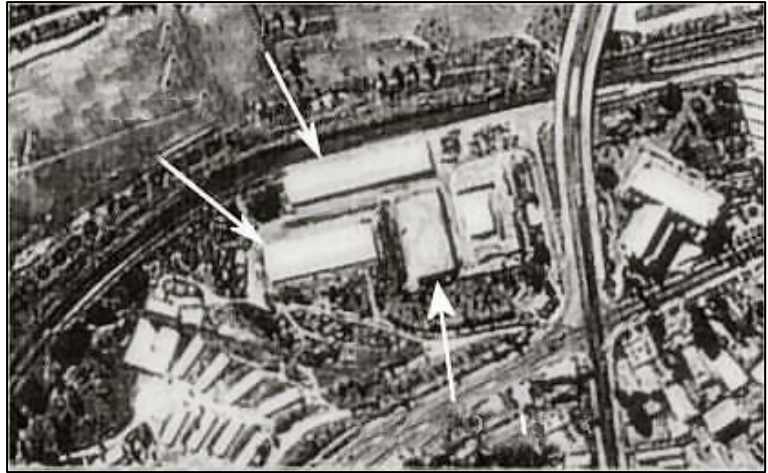


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The aerial pic at right shows the area with the 3 buildings arrowed.

The WAAAF's who worked in the depot lived in a large house called "[Wybenia](#)" in New Farm while the airmen lived in another large house on Gregory Terrace called "Grangehill" (below right) which is still there today. This building was built in 1860 by prominent Brisbane businessman and pastoralist, Alexander Raff and is one of the earliest surviving substantial stone residences in Brisbane.



It has since been added to the Heritage List.



As the war moved into the Pacific just north of Australia, Brisbane became an important staging centre, which necessitated 3SD expanding rapidly. It needed more space, so in September 1941 the RAAF took over Austral Motors' mechanical workshops, a 1,500 square metre building in Wellsby Street, New Farm and this gave them more storage space and office accommodation.



The building today is now the fashionable Powerhouse Apartments complex.

In June 1944, 3SD took over a large house called "Hamilton" (right) at Breakfast Creek to become their Officer's Mess. The house had previously been used by an Army Anti-aircraft unit.



Then in late January 1945, the Headquarters group of 3SD moved into the John McGrath building in Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley.

This building had previously been used by the Depot Supply section of the 81st Air Depot Group.

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Today this building is used by Lamborghini Brisbane (below), though going by the large hanging banners its days are numbered – it too is destined to go and make way for a large commercial and accommodation building.





The Old Mill Building in the background at 111 Constance Street was used by the US 5th Air Force Service Command during WW2.

But Helen wasn't to see these later developments, in 1943 she was posted to 6AD which had been established at Oakey, west of Toowoomba.

The original plan, approved on 25 May 1942, called for 6AD to be located at Chinchilla but in December 1942 the RAAF Development Program was reviewed and 6AD was approved for establishment at Oakey. The proposed personnel establishment for 6AD was as follows:-



RAAF: 70 Officers, 5 nurses, 218 Sergeants and above and 1,458 Corporals and below.

WAAF: 5 Officers, 7 Sergeants and 236 Corporals and below.

Total Establishment 1,990 persons.

Work on the construction of 6AD was started by the Civil Construction Corps on 15 March 1943. The Aircraft Depot's primary function was to relieve, repair and carry out overhaul work then being done at No. 3 Aircraft Depot at Amberley and to act as a forward depot for aircraft operating from New Guinea and northern Australia. The Depot serviced, assembled and conducted test flights of Beaufort, Mustang Norsemen, Wirraway and Spitfire aircraft and also serviced large quantities of communications equipment and radio compass receivers.

Nine American type workshop hangars originally consigned from the USA to the Admiralty in Singapore were obtained from the [USASOS](#) for 6AD at Oakey. The airfield site (RAAF Property No. 2520) was 934 acres which comprised a landing strip and 2 hard surfaced runways

15 Stores Unit was also formed at Oakey in 1945 as a lodger unit of 6 Aircraft Depot. The first and only Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant Douglas C. Dyson. After equipping it was intended to re-locate the Unit to [Morotai Island](#) as part of the new 11 Group, absorb 22 Air Stores Park and take over the main equipment functions for the area, however, before the Unit was properly supplied and manned the War finished.

All further operations were suspended on 1 September 1945 on direction from 5 Mntce Group HQ and all stock received to that time was returned to the issuing stores depot.

The RAAF maintained the Base at Oakey until it was handed over to Army Aviation in 1969.

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In 1944 Helen met and married Sergeant Leslie Royal Rosbrook, who was also at 6AD in the Clerical game and shortly after she had to leave the RAAF because of family health matters. After the war, Leslie and Helen moved back to Brisbane with Leslie starting to specialise in computers. After some years with SGIO, Les went on to be the head of Golden Circle's IT department. He passed away about 4 years ago.

Today Helen lives in a northern Brisbane suburb, not far from the centre of town, and like all the other recipients of the RSL Christmas Hampers, was very appreciative and made a point of thanking Emily for thinking of the “oldies” and for willingly giving up some of her holiday time to help out.

She, like us, feel that we don't have too much to worry about, with people like Thomas, Ethan and Emily and many many others soon to take over, Australia is in good hands.

