

British War Brides

There were an estimated 100,000 marriages between British women and American soldiers during the Second World War. Over 70,000 women sailed to America to start a new life with their husbands in 1946. The majority of women did make successful lives in their new homes. For some though the reality of life with husbands in peacetime was not what they expected. Many had not even seen their husbands in civilian clothes. For others their partners were still in Europe so they travelled to meet and live with strangers, not always facing a warm welcome. There are no figures available on the amount of brides that returned to Great Britain or those that found the price of leaving everything familiar behind was too high.

In order to marry, the American soldiers had to get written permission from their Commanding Officer at least two months in advance of the wedding. The Commander's decision would be based on interviewing the prospective bride. Occasionally senior officers disapproved of war marriages and would make a couple wait several months before granting an interview. For mixed race couples the obstacles that were put in their path often prevented marriage altogether. In some states in America inter-racial marriages were illegal, and would not be recognized when the soldiers returned home.

The American War Department paid for some 60,000 of these crossings some had families paid their way to the U.S and travelled by plane.

Families were not even allowed to travel on the special trains put aside for transport of War Brides to say goodbye. Aware that they might face a frosty reception, with short notice and hasty goodbyes, women packed their bags for transportation camps around the country, prior to sailing on one of the 30 vessels dedicated to the purpose.

Tidworth Transit Camp on Salisbury Plain was made an assembly point for brides and babies to be processed and shipped to the United States. Women came from all over Great Britain to this base prior to leaving from Southampton on one of the ships. In the early days conditions at the camp were terrible. Some American soldiers resented this because they were eager to get home themselves. There were German and Italian prisoners of war working at the camp. Many war brides complained about the humiliating and unnecessary medical examinations. No facilities were available to help with the care of babies such as a laundry or hot water. Many women and babies contracted 'camp fever', diarrhea and sickness. Few babies did die on a few ships or after arriving in New York.

The first official sailing of a 'war bride' ship was on 26th January 1946 on the S.S. *Argentina*. She sailed from Southampton with 452 women aboard. For the women of Tidworth Camp it was a relief to be away from the harsh conditions. They had no idea of the harsh conditions that would follow. The *Argentina* ran into an enormous storm and very cold conditions, camp sickness had travelled with the passengers and the ship had not yet been refitted for civilian passengers. The accommodation was very basic, but did improve with later travel. The food on board though was a very welcome break from years of rationing for those that still had the stomach to eat it! Large famous liners also participated in these crossings, including the *Queen Mary*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Aquitania* along with many Military Transport ships.

The war brides had taken a chance on uncertain futures in America. So had very happy lives others so happy.

Miss Betty Millard
c/o Chevron Hotel
519-St. Kilda Rd.
Melbourne, Victoria

24 May 1943

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

1. As evidence of my desire to become married to Cpl. Edward L. Hawks 37078324 Btry. "F" 147th Field Artillery and knowledge of existing regulations, the following information is furnished:

(a). I am not married or involved in any former marital status or allegiance.

(b). I understand that, should authority to marry be granted, the United States Government is obligated in no way to transport the wife or dependents to the United States during the present emergency.

(c). I understand that personnel who marry, with or without approval, will not be given special consideration of any sort on account of family duties and responsibilities. Personnel on duty will be required to live with their organizations.

(d). Military personnel who have been authorized to marry and who are entitled by law to quarters, will not be furnished with quarters in kind.

(e). Dependents of military personnel who marry in Australia are not entitled to medical or dental services, baggage or transportation allowances or to post exchange or commissary privileges.

x *Betty Millard.*

Miss Betty Millard
c/o Chevron Hotel
519-St. Kilda Rd.
Melbourne, Victoria

I certify that I am the father of the prospective wife, that she is Twenty one (21) years of age, and that I have ample income for her support in the event of death or other incapacity of the husband.

xx *W. H. Millard*

100
100
APO 301
9 June 1943

SUBJECT: Request for permission to Marry.

TO : COMMANDING GENERAL, I CORPS, (USA) APO 301

1. It is requested that I be granted permission to marry an Australian girl, Miss Betty Millard, age 21 years, of, c/o Chevron Hotel, 519-St. Kilda Rd., Melbourne, Victoria

2. Both Miss Betty Millard and I have read and understand the provisions as outlined in USAFFE Regulation 10-10, dated March 1943.

(a). I am not married or involved in any former marital status or allegiance.

(b). I understand that, should authority to marry be granted, the United States Government is obligated in no way to transport the wife or dependents to the United States during the present emergency.

(c). In addition to my army pay, I have no other income at present. I have \$10,000 NSL insurance to which the prospective wife would be made beneficiary if permission to marry is granted.

(d). I understand that personnel who marry, with or without approval, will not be given special consideration of any sort on account of family duties and responsibilities. Personnel on duty will be required to live with their organizations.

(e). Military personnel who have been authorized to marry and who are entitled by law to quarters, will not be furnished with quarters in kind.

(f). Dependents of military personnel who marry in Australia are not entitled to medical or dental services, baggage or transportation allowances or to Post Exchange or Commissary privileges.

3. Although both parents are living they are not now, or likely to become, dependent upon me. Attention is invited to attached certificate.

Edward L. Hawks
EDWARD L. HAWKS 37078324
Cpl. Btry. "F" 147th F.A.

1 incl: Certificate, Miss Betty Millard

1st Ind.
Btry. "F" 147th Field Artillery APO 301
TO: COMMANDING OFFICER, 147th Field Artillery APO 301

10 June 1943

1. Having investigated the circumstances involving the request for marriage of Col. Edward L. Hawks, this organization, I recommend that this permission be granted. His character rating is Excellent.

James S. Critz
JAMES S. CRITZ
Capt. 147th FA
Comdg. Btry. "F"

291.1
HQ 147th FA APO 301 14 June 1943.

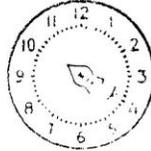
2nd Ind

WJD/jkr

To: CG I Corps US Army APO 301.

Approved.

JUN 14 1943



Leslie Jensen
LESLIE JENSEN
Colonel 147th FA
Commanding

1 Incl: n/c

RECEIVED
CG I CORPS

291.1 (Hawks, Edward L.)(Enl)
HEADQUARTERS I CORPS, US ARMY, APO 301, 17 June 1943.

3d Ind.

LO/lt

TO: Commanding Officer, 147th Field Artillery, APC 301.

Approved.

By command of Lieutenant General EICHELBERGER:

MAILED HQ. I CORPS JUN 18 1943

Charles Williams
CHARLES W. WILLIAMS
Captain
Asst. Adjutant General

1 Incl.
n/c

291.1 (Hawks, Edward L.)(Enl)
HQ 147th FA APO 301 19 June 1943.

4th Ind

WJD/rmv

To: CO Btry F 147th FA

RECEIVED
CG I CORPS
JUN 19 1943

WJD
W.J.D.

1 Incl:
n/c

JUN 19 1943

To sail to America a G.I. bride needed:

- A visa, passport, 2 copies of birth certificate, 2 copies of police record and marriage certificate
- Sworn statement from husband that he could support her, with details of salary
- Statement from husband's Commander supporting salary details

- £10 in cash and no more
- Statement from husband's family if he were not yet home that they were willing and able to house her
- Discharge papers if she had served in military
- Evidence that she would get a train ticket to final destination on disembarking

<http://www.plimsoll.org/SeaPeople/womenandthesea/womenandwar/warbrides.asp>



GROUP _____

TRAIN NUMBER _____

W _____

NAME Stubbs, Joan. G _____

YOUR STEAMSHIP ACCOMMODATION IS

DECK B. _____

32 ROOM - 124-6 _____

BERTH _____

This Label to be worn in a prominent position at all times - at Embarkation and during Voyage

EMBARKATION CHECK

W _____

NAME _____

GROUP _____

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