

LEGACY IN EUROPE

Legacy has assisted the families of Australian servicemen from the 1st world war right through until today when we still give help where needed. After the 2nd world war it became even more necessary to have a Legacy outpost in Europe and particularly in the UK, as assistance coming from Australia to widows and families still living in Europe was to say the least difficult to administer which led to the foundation of London Legacy.

Although Europe is a smaller area than Australia the sheer numbers of people in Great Britain, Ireland, France & Belgium have set Legacy a large administrative challenge.

Australian servicemen during WWI based in England, and who served in France, and those at sea, were all eligible for Legacy benefits directly from Australia. WW2 heralded the arrival of the Australian Sixth Division who trained on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire (the West Country) and were then despatched to the Middle East. Many married British girls. Likewise a very large number of RAAF personnel served in the European theatre and were based in England and again married British girls. It is estimated 5000 plus were killed obviously leaving widows. RAN personnel served in European/Atlantic theatre were based in England and also married European girls.

The more fortunate wives joined their husbands in Australia when they returned to their bases and many girls went to Australia to marry their fiancées. Many of these ladies have returned to the UK as widows.

Post war many UK servicemen and their wives emigrated to Australia and upon widowhood the wives received Legacy benefits in Australia and on returning to the UK, Legacy was there to help them.

Legacy in London was initially formed on the inspiration of the Moss brothers in 1947. The elder John was a solicitor in WWI and the younger Frank a civil servant during WW2. Their father was at one time Agent General for Western Australia and although both Australian by birth were brought up in the UK. After the end of the war Frank saw the need for help to be given to the above mentioned widows of Australian servicemen and being aware of Legacy in Australia founded the first Legacy club in the northern hemisphere.

The basic premise is that Legacy is here to care for widows, children and dependants of deceased Australian War veterans not only those killed in hazardous service but those serving in peacekeeping service and those killed in training for war.)

At present London Legacy provides support for over 60 widows in Europe and the UK, keeping in contact is difficult from a sheer geographical point of view since they are spread throughout Europe. Additionally and uniquely to London Legacy, New Zealand widows are allowed eligibility in Europe.

London Legacy is funded solely by donations and fund raising events, raising funds for the direct support of the widows and families in the UK and Europe. Support provided by London Legacy comes in many forms, including practical assistance in such matters as accommodation, medical, legal and general welfare. London Legacy is dedicated to enhancing the lives and opportunities of widows and families with the aim of:

-Protecting individuals and families basic needs;

- Advocating for their entitlements, rights and benefits;
- Assisting families through bereavement; and
- Helping people thrive despite their adversity and loss.

There have been some very hard times finding members and funds, however over the past few years, Legacy in London has evolved and has refreshed its approach, becoming an official Registered Charity in 2001, re-writing its Constitution and becoming autonomous.

Our people are all volunteers and in some cases are from families who have received Legacy support themselves. The people who provide the direct support for widows and their families are called Legatees. Legatees were returned servicemen although today Legacy welcomes membership and participation from any person who shares the ideals of Legacy. One of the important changes London Legacy has made has been that women and outside organisations were welcome to join as Legatees.

We have many volunteers who help with fundraising and other important activities. Many of our volunteers are travelling Australian and New Zealander's who are extremely aware of the sacrifices made for our countries by our service personnel over many decades. These travellers are only too willing to lend a hand whilst here in the UK and Europe, providing their time and effort to making a small contribution to the well being of widows and families in this part of the world.

London Legacy enjoys the support of many Australian and New Zealand businesses and industry associations here in Europe. We also enjoy very strong support from the High Commissions of both countries in London and the Australian High Commissioner is usually our Patron.

London Legacy meets quarterly at the Australian High Commission in London every second Thursday in the month i.e. January, April, July and October and welcomes any visiting Legatee from Australia.

Once a year London Legacy holds a Reception at Australia House usually mid year to thank all the wonderful people without whose help and patience have made the support of widows and families in Europe and the UK possible.

On ANZAC Day all Legatees attend Services throughout Europe and the United Kingdom.