

FIRST AID NURSING YEOMANRY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS *by Derek Leone*

In 1907, the FANY was formed and became involved during the First World War driving ambulances and assisting in the field hospitals troops canteens. This was under dangerous conditions. At the end of the War they received 1 Legion d-Honour 27 Croix de Guerre and 17 Military Medals.

When the Second World War began, they were to become The Motor Driving Companies which was part of the A.T.S. Many of them went into top secret work in coding and supplying administration and support at the Special Training Schools. They also joined the Special Operations Executive where they served in various parts of the world. A large number were sent to France and some were captured and died in the concentration camps. Three of them, Noor Inayat Khan, Violette Szabo and Odette Hallowes all received the George Cross, the first two posthumously. It was Violette Szabo who was made famous in the film *Carve her Name with Pride*.

On the wall of St. Paul's Church Knightsbridge is a memorial which lists 54 names of these brave women. On 27th October 2007 The Annual Remembrance Service will be held at the church and The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled are proud to have been asked to supply transport to take them to their Headquarters in Horseferry Road.

On 28th June 2007 military and civilian vehicles were driven to Buckingham Palace where the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry were inspected by HM Queen Elizabeth and HRH Princess Royal. They left the Palace and made their way to Whitehall where they laid a wreath at The Memorial to the Women in the Second World War. They then continued on to The Royal Hospital Chelsea where a service was held in the Chapel, before they attended a reception in The Great Hall of the Hospital.

The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled was asked to assist by supplying a cab to convey a retired member of the Corps to the Royal Hospital; I went to The Royal Overseas League and met Mrs Hester Higgins who at 91 years of age had travelled from Australia to attend this



important ceremony. During the course of our journey, she told me that she had joined the FANY when she was 24 years old and she had served as a driver to the Commander of the Anti-aircraft Batteries and was at Primrose Hill, billeted in a nissen hut. In 1947 she married a doctor in the Australian Army and then moved to Australia.

The Corps is still actively working today and they are called upon to man the casualty communications in the aftermath of serious incidents. They were on duty on 7th July 2005. The London Taxi Benevolent Association for War Disabled are happy to assist with transport for these ladies both now and into the foreseeable future.

