

Biography of Nancy Bentley

Nancy Bentley was born on October 6, 1914. She was the third eldest child of seven children, (six girls and one boy) born to Frank and Beatrice Bentley.

Nancy and her siblings were raised in Smith O'Brien's cottage in the small, ex Penal Colony of Port Arthur.

In 1920, the H.M.A.S Sydney was docked in Port Arthur harbour after routine fleet duties in the Pacific.

After listening to the Navy band, Nancy was bitten by a highly venomous snake. The closest Doctor was in the nearby town of Sorell, a journey Nancy would not have survived. Her parents were left with little choice but to seek help from the ship.

In 1913, the *King's Regulations and Admiralty instructions* didn't allow for women to be onboard a naval ship. In order for Nancy to remain onboard, she had to be officially enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy. On November 15, 1920, a month after her sixth birthday, Nancy Bentley became the first female sailor in Australia.

The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS), wasn't established until April, 1941 during the commencement of WW11, some 21 years later.

Nancy was officially discharged from the Navy eight days later because she was 'required by her parents'.

The crew of the H.M.A.S Sydney kept in touch with Nancy for many years.

Nancy was never forgotten, and was awarded life membership of the H.M.A.S Sydney Association in 1986, as part of the Navy's 75th anniversary celebrations.

Nancy Bentley married Allan Jones, was the mother of three children, and the grandmother of many grandchildren and great grandchildren. She lived in Penguin, Tasmania until her death on August 5th, 1999.