



**Emma Melvena Butt (Pye)**  
**World War II**  
**Royal Air Force (WAAF)**

Emma Melvena Butt was born on November 14, 1925, to parents Arthur and Emma J. Pye of Flatrock, Carbonear (the community of Freshwater today).

Early in the second world war, Melvena volunteered and enlisted in the Women's Auxillary Air Force (WAAF) and as such was part of the Royal Air Force (RAF).

Here's a section of her service record from the U.K. record:

**First Name:**

E M

**Surname:**

Butt

**Rank:**

Assistant Section Officer

**Service:**

Royal Air Force

**Primary Unit:**

Women's Auxiliary Air Force

**Unit:**

Administrative and Special Duties Branch

**Seniority Date:**

02/05/1945

Emma liked to go by her second name, Melvena and it is that name most everyone called her.

In her role as part of the RAF, Melvena was assigned the rank of Assistant Section Officer



Here's what her shoulder slip-ons looked like and its proper rank name: RAF pilot officer's sleeve/shoulder insignia

**Background on the WAAF WW2**

The WAAF was created on 28 June 1939, absorbing the forty-eight RAF companies of the Auxiliary Territorial Service which had existed since 1938.<sup>[1]</sup> Conscription of women did not begin until 1941. It only applied to those between 20 and 30 years of age and they had the choice of the auxiliary services or factory work.



The first WAAF nursing orderlies selected to fly on air-ambulance duties to France, 1944

Women recruited into the WAAF were given basic training at one of five sites, though not all of the sites ran training simultaneously. The five sites were at West Drayton, Harrogate, Bridgnorth, Innsworth and Wilmslow. All WAAF basic recruit training was located at Wilmslow from 1943.

WAAFs did not serve as aircrew. The use of women pilots was limited to the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), which was civilian. Although they did not participate in active combat, they were exposed to the same dangers as any on the "home front" working at military installations. They were active in parachute packing and the crewing of barrage balloons in addition to performing catering, meteorology, radar, aircraft maintenance, transport, communications duties including wireless telephonic and telegraphic operation. They worked with codes and ciphers, analysed reconnaissance photographs, and performed intelligence operations. WAAFs were a vital presence in the control of aircraft, both in radar stations and ironically as plotters in operation rooms, most notably during the Battle of Britain. These operation rooms directed fighter aircraft against the Luftwaffe, mapping both home and enemy aircraft positions.

Air Force nurses belonged to Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service instead. Female medical and dental officers were commissioned into the Royal Air Force and held RAF ranks.

WAAFs were paid two-thirds of the pay of male counterparts in RAF ranks.

According to her service record, Melvena was entitled to receive the following medals.

### **Campaign Medals:**

#### 1939-1945 Star

This star was awarded for service in the Second World War between 3rd September 1939 and 2nd September 1945. The recipient was awarded this star if their service period was terminated by their death or disability due to service. Also, the award of a gallantry medal or mention in Despatched also produced the award of this medal.



The War Medal 1939–1945 was a British decoration awarded to all full-time service personnel of the Armed Forces wherever their service during the war was rendered. Operational and non-operational service counted provided personnel had completed 28 days service between 3rd September 1939 and the 2nd of September 1945.



Melvena returned to civilian life following the war. She met and settled down with George Pye of Barneed, himself a veteran of the Merchant Navy.

George passed away in 1975, he was just 51. Melvena would follow him in June of 2014. They are buried side by side in the Barened United Church Cemetery.



Melvena with some of her Legion Comrades at an Awards Ceremony. From L to R – Comrade Lucy Dicks, Comrade Philip Wood, Comrade Evelyn Mullett, Melvena, Comrade Minnie Badcock and Comrade Ernie Mugford. Obviously a very happy occasion.