

Surname: Bagnall	First Name(s): Norah Elizabeth Surtees - 'Dick;	Army Number: W/22377	
Maiden name (if applicable): Turpin	Name used during service: Bagnall / Turpin	Rank: Sgt	
Main base:	Training base:	Enrolled at: The Drill Hall, The Green, Sunderland	
Platoon/Section: 2 nd Durham Coy A.T.S.	Company/Battery: Attached to 213 (M) Z Battery 176 177 178 269	Group/Regiment: 63 rd T.A.	Command: A.A. Command
Year(s) of service: 2/10/1939 to 25/12/1944	Reason for discharge: Para II Kings Regulations (ie pregnancy)	Trade: Clerk	
Uniform Issued: Cap Tunic Skirt Shirt Shoes Greatcoat (all second hand) new stockings- underwear issued later	Photo:  Seaburn Camp – July 1943		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My duties in the Battery Office involved typing general information – Part I Orders, Daily Part II orders, various details and instructions up to Brigade and down to Platoons, plus all the little jobs which office work entails. Part I Orders were mainly copies of various info from Brigade, but I had to collate all the details for Daily Para IIs. Names of Officer of the Day, Guard Commander and guard members, times and officers, i/c gun drill, promotions, charges etc etc. At one point I had to re-type the first page of a Court Martial charge sheet; one of our officers was a lawyer in civie-street and there were some amendments to be 		

made. Obviously, the Court Martial was being held at a very high level and I was unconnected with the accused or witnesses. The charge sheet AF252 was not used in this instance and to the best of my memory started with the accused's number, rank and name (underlined in red) "... is charged with an offence against good order and military discipline IN THAT HE" (in red block caps) and then went on to list his alleged offence.

- Later as Sergeant, my duties involved general admin re the A.T.S. Group.

Pay book:

Memorable moments:

- I enlisted at Sunderland on 2nd October 1939 - when I enlisted the A.T.S. were considered part of the Territorial Army. My rank then was Volunteer not Private, the N.C.O. ranks above that being the same as the Army. We did not come under King's Regulations, being considered a voluntary unit attached to the local T.A. Much later on, I believe after Dunkirk when there was a scare of invasion, the powers that be decided for security's sake we should take the Loyal Oath and become 'real' soldiers. I suppose they could then shoot us if we gave away secrets!! At that time, we were given the choice of taking the Oath and some girls elected not to. They were given ration books and discharged, much to the delight of some. You know the old saying "I won't even join two pieces of string when I get out of this Army!" So my Army career continued.
- Our Company was never part of a mixed unit but was attached to our local Territorials 63rd A.A. Regiment R.A. T.D. part of the 7th A.A. Brigade R.A. Indeed our Company (2nd Durham A.T.S.) Commander was sister of the Terrier's Brigadier. Our A.T.S. girls were Clerks (of which I was one) Cooks and Orderlies. The T.A. soldiers manned the various gunsites in the Tyne and Wear area and a few of us girls were attached to some of these sites.
- When I was enlisted, as I was under 21, my father had to give written permission for me to join, much to his sorrow for his only daughter was a quiet, well-behaved girl. Many were the warnings I was given; he had of course, been a soldier in WWI and was speaking from past knowledge I think. Looking back, I realise how very lucky we were to be attached to our local T.A. unit because there was always someone who knew your father or had been at school with your brother. In fact despite all Army rules and K.R.s etc we were cosseted, we came next to the Officers in importance and I think most of the chaps thought the world of us.

- I worked in the Battery Office as the Major's typist and I remember feeling very poorly after my T.T. and T.A.B. booster injections. The B.S.M. took one look at me and said "Come with me" – we went to the Sergeant's spider-hut, he put me into his personal quarters, told me to take off my jacket and skirt and get under the blanket. He would lock the door so no-one would disturb me and he would tell the Major where I was. I was so grateful to be able to lie down but can you imagine this happening today – and this was in war time!
- I didn't have any initial training, and there were too few of us at each gunsite to have parades etc. I just seemed to pick things up as I went along. My first real training was when I went on a Senior N.C.O.s course at Lichfield Barracks in February 1942 where we were drilled and drilled by men N.C.O.s in the Staffordshire Regiment. Strange to say I later married a Staffordshire man in the R.A.S.C., 9th Armoured Division. My common sense and observation must have seen me through as I passed the course O.K.
- One of my most memorable days was my first day in the Army. I had been issued with tunic, skirt, shirt and tie, all second-hand but which fitted more or less. My cap had a tuck in the back, much to the disgust of my needlewoman mother and shoes were also second hand though stockings were new. Greatcoat, gas mask and tin hat, cap badge, button stick, housewife (which I still use) shoe brushes completed my initial issue. I reported to the drill hall and was taken by car with Commander McRoberts and B.S.M. Beattie to a nearby gunsite. It was pouring with rain and as we entered the site which was on a farm, we stopped so Miss McRoberts could speak to someone in a tin hat and mackintosh. Well, I didn't know if it was an Officer or not, and whether I should salute or not – what a start! I was then put in the charge of the quartermaster as his clerk/assistant; his office was upstairs in a barn and the form I was to sit on disappeared into a pile of grain. I couldn't cross the farmyard to the Q.M.s store unless I was accompanied as there were geese in the yard and being such notable 'watchdogs' they attacked anyone who wasn't the farmer or family.
- The A.T.S. were billeted in nearby houses but the men were in bell-tents and I remember as we drove in on my first day seeing them baling out their tents with 7lb jam tins! If the A.T.S. needed the lavatory we had to use the farmhouse – the door was always standing open, we left our wellies in the porch and went upstairs. The people I was billeted with were very kind, though I only came from camp in time to clean my kit and go to bed. The bedroom was nipping clean but oh so cold, especially the lino floor. So ended my memorable first day.
- My maiden name was Turpin, hence my Army nickname of Dick; even now I am 'Auntie Dick' to the children of one of my Army friends.
- Another happy memory at another gunsite on Tyneside. Our Padre was also our entertainments officer and we knew he had persuaded Evelyn Laye to come to our camp and give a little performance before her appearance at Newcastle Empire. You have to be about my age to appreciate how important this was. Evelyn Laye was a star of theatre and films and was also a most beautiful lady. She was married to an actor who was serving in the Royal Navy and as she told our Padre, she only gave voluntary shows for Navy personnel. However, Padre Bell must have been very persuasive because she was coming to us one afternoon. The first I knew of anything untoward was when the Major asked me if I had a forage cap – the A.T.S. had recently been allocated a green and orange trimmed, brown forage cap which we could buy and wear when not on duty. I said I had but it was at the billet. A Tilly (utility truck) was commandeered and I was sent for my cap and was told I was to present a bouquet to Miss Laye. When the time came I was standing at the side of the stage behind the curtain clutching a massive bouquet of golden roses with long trailing golden ribbons. The person detailed to look after me was 2nd Lt Simmons and he held one of my arms and his other hand was

round my waist ready to urge me on stage at the appropriate time. Well, I happened to have a crush on Lt Simmons and I don't know which made me tremble most, his arm around me or the thought of going on that stage!! I had to give her the bouquet saying it was with the thanks of the Officers and O.R.s, step back, salute and march off. All I can remember of this truly glamorous creature standing alone in the spotlight was a long black gown, some sort of long turquoise necklace and the most clear blue eyes I'd ever seen. I was later given a signed photograph of her which I treasured.

- At this same gunsite, Willington Quay on the Tyne, we had another invasion scare, all leave was cancelled and everyone was confined to barracks. My home was just a few miles down the coast and my parents decided to make the trip to see me as it was a bank holiday. I was only allowed as far as the guard hut of course, but we chatted for a while then I guided them towards the golf course behind the camp telling them they could walk down to the river that way. They intended getting the ferry to South Shields then a bus home. They told me afterwards that the ferry was held up for a long time and as they stood waiting they saw a warship slowly making its way up the Tyne. She was badly bombed and scarred and listing badly to one side. Mum and Dad wondered how she stayed afloat. We all realised afterwards that she was the 'Kelly' with Mountbatten commanding and she was crawling home to her birth yard for repairs. These were completed and she made many more sorties.
- I was not issued with battledress as we were never in a mixed battery or worked with the guns, so my uniform was always service dress. On my initial posting at the farm it was winter and I never had my gum-boots off for weeks. It felt strange wearing shoes for my first 24 hours leave.
- When I was married, I was stationed at a site on the outskirts of my home town; this was a 'Z' Battery and we fired rockets. How I hated the scream of them. I had learned to recognise the phutt, phutt of the Bofors, the crack of the 3.7s and 4.5s and further down the coast the rumbling boom of the Coastal Defence guns. It was at this site that we had a strange wooden hut on wheels delivered, together with another A.T.S. sergeant and about 6 girls. It was all very secret and was called "GL". No-one ever knew what went on inside. I think the initials stood for Ground Location and I believe it had something to do with early Radar.
- Also at this site, we had visits from an Army Education Officer (female) who got us girls interested in sewing and she suggested we make underwear to 'wear on leave'. We were given clothing coupons to buy the materials and I successfully completed a nightdress and a slip in time for my wedding. As we were so close to my home several of my girls were given leave to attend the service together with some men from my Sergeants' mess and the Major and Captain were invited to the reception.
- It is difficult now to recall the mortal fear which we experienced at times – dashing to the shelter and hearing the chains rattle on the gun breach, telling us the guns were loaded and ready to fire; dragging our bedding down to the basement of a house on the cliffs at Tynemouth while the German planes fired down the beam of a searchlight immediately outside our front door; lying in bed at Seaburn knowing there was nothing between my hut and the sea but a road and a single coil of barbed wire on the beach and wondering how I would get my girls away if the Germans landed.
- I don't consider I did anything spectacular during the war except take the place of a man, freeing him for active service.
- I was discharged on 25 December 1944 after 5 years 85 days, for 'family reasons', in other words, I was pregnant and came under the infamous Para.11 King's Regulations. I had married on 15 July 1943 and my baby was due at the end of June 1945. The Army did not discharge you until the critical first 3 months had

passed – in the event of a miscarriage happening, the Army still had you under control!

Photos:



2nd Sub Marion M Turnbull, Sgt N E S Turpin and some of our girls at Seaburn July 1943



Running the gauntlet of confetti at my wedding 15 July 1943



My mother with some of my girls outside Ven. Bede's Church, Monkwearmouth, Sunderland



Senior N.C.Os Course, Lichfield Barracks, 4-25 February 1942
Sgt Turpin second row down, 5th from right