

<b>Surname:</b> Gilkes	<b>First Name(s):</b> Elizabeth Alice (Betty)	<b>Army Number:</b> W/260545	
<b>Maiden name (if applicable):</b> Hewitson	<b>Name used during service:</b> Hewitson	<b>Rank:</b> L/Cpl	
<b>Main base:</b> Oxford Bovington Brussels Germany	<b>Training base:</b> Harrogate	<b>Enrolled at:</b> Preston	
<b>Platoon/Section:</b>	<b>Company/Battery:</b> Officer's Tactical School HQ	<b>Group/Regiment:</b> Royal Armoured Corps British Army of the Rhine (NAOR)	<b>Command:</b> Southern
<b>Year(s) of service:</b> 26/03/1943 to 31/05/1946	<b>Reason for discharge:</b> End of Hostilities	<b>Trade:</b> Shorthand Typist / Secretary	
<b>Uniform Issued:</b> (List of items issued)  Jacket Skirts Tie Shoes Stockings (lisle) Pyjamas, Underwear Peak cap Greatcoat Shoulder bag Beret	<b>Photo:</b> 		
<b>Description of daily tasks:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In England - The Tactical School was situated first in Brasenose and then Oriel College, Oxford, then at Bovington Camp, Dorset. My hours of duty were primarily of the 'nine to five' type, but I had to be prepared to work at any time as, when and where required by the senior officers in charge and the instructors, including typing the students' final examination submissions. Each week day in Oxford, before lunch, the members of the unit (who lived in a converted private house) did P.T., but at Bovington Camp we had 'Company Night' each Tuesday when lectures, drill, kit inspection etc. were compulsory.</li> <li>• At HQ BAOR – Firstly I was employed on routine shorthand typing duties in the administration of the HQ, then I was transferred to more specialised work of a confidential nature, ending as secretary to the officer in charge.</li> </ul>		

Pay book:

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(1) SOLDIER'S NAME AND DESCRIPTION OR ATTESTATION.

Army Number W/260545

Surname (in capitals) HEWITSON

Christian Names (in full) ELIZABETH ALICE

Date of Birth 23.12.21

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth. In or near the town of \_\_\_\_\_  
In the county of \_\_\_\_\_

Trade on Enlistment \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality of Father at birth \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality of Mother at birth \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Denomination C.P.E.

Approved Society Prudential

Membership No. 105 29887

Enlisted at \_\_\_\_\_ On 20.3.43

For the: ATS A.T.S.

\* Regular Army. \* Supplementary Reserve.  
\* Territorial Army. \* Army Reserve Section D.  
\* Strike out those inapplicable.

For 7 1/2 years with the Colours and \_\_\_\_\_ years in the Reserve.

Signature of Soldier E. A. Hewitson

Date 18.5.43.

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DESCRIPTION ON ENLISTMENT.

Height 5 ft 8 1/2 ins. Weight 162 lbs.

Maximum Chest \_\_\_\_\_ ins. Complexion \_\_\_\_\_

Eyes Blue Hair Brown

Distinctive Marks and Minor Defects \_\_\_\_\_

A-5-922. 49 C Wounded

CONDITION ON TRANSFER TO RESERVE.

Found fit for \_\_\_\_\_

Defects or History of past illness which should be enquired into if called up for Service \_\_\_\_\_

AFW3149 Completed

Cap Army

Date 23.1.5.19.46

Initials of M.O. i/c. H. Howard

Memorable moments:

- At the age of 21 I was called up for war service and had no hesitation in choosing the A.T.S. as the service I wished to join.
- Initially, I spent about six weeks at the Queen Ethelburga's School in Harrogate (which had been commandeered for the purpose of training recruits); we lived in Nissen huts with double bunks and our days were filled with lectures, examinations (medical and intelligence) drill, P.T., interviews etc, and a great feeling of comradeship emerged. Eventually, after a period of sickness due to a bad reaction to a compulsory vaccination, I was posted to Oxford as a (non-combatant!) member of the Royal Armoured Corps, where I spent 18 interesting and happy months working in two of the colleges which were given over to the further training of serving officers. My work was chiefly secretarial but many of our unit were drivers who ferried the teams around the countryside on TEWTS (Tactical Exercises without Troops).
- Before I was conscripted into the ATS I worked as a clerk/typist in local government, so it was fairly obvious what kind of work I would be given, although I expressed a wish to be a PT instructor; in this connection unknown to me, much later in Oxford, I had been 'spotted' and was offered the chance to train for PT but the man I worked for said 'No' – so that was that!
- Eventually, as events progressed and D-Day drew nearer, I was moved to what is still a peacetime army camp at Bovington on the South Coast – travelling through lanes and fields filled with all manner of transport and equipment for the impending offensive. Very soon we were to witness droves of aircraft as they droned their way across the Channel, some never to return and others to limp their way home as best they could.
- In due course, I received a further "call up" notice, this time for overseas service, and eventually found myself at the Headquarters of the British Army of the Rhine in Brussels. With the capitulation of the German forces the whole HQ was moved – according to an obviously pre-arranged plan – into two small German towns and I spent the last two years of my A.T.S. service working at the two HQ offices. Our living accommodation was in private houses which had been compulsorily vacated by the German families who had lived in the towns now occupied by the HQ staff. The perimeter of the area was bounded by barbed wire fencing with guards at

each entrance and for a long time we were subject to strict 'non-fraternisation' rules. The residents of the houses taken over for our use had been given five days to find alternative accommodation and were provided with transport to move their furniture etc.

- I realise my service was not spectacular but my life changed from the word 'go' and I can honestly say that the three and a half years I spent in the A.T.S. were some of the most interesting. Obviously life wasn't all a bed of roses but, in the nature of things, one seems to forget the bad times, remembering the interesting and amazing ones – such as listening to Winston Churchill's speech on the radio in a broken bed in sick bay, in company with three others, one of whom was the medical officer who had (inexpertly) opened a bottle of champagne, the cork hitting her forehead necessitating a huge head bandage. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry!

**Photos:**



HQ Staff BAOR



ATS Sports – Dragon School Oxford, 11 September 1943