


Surname: Peters	First Name(s): Doreen Joan	Army Number: W/14305 (1939-42) W/260881 (1942-45)	
Maiden name (if applicable): Davies	Name used during service: Davies / Peters (Married 27.06.42)	Rank: Corporal – 1942 Subaltern – 1943-45	
Main base: Truro Bristol Bristol London Antwerp	Training base: T.A. Pre-war No 1 ATS O.C.T.U., Edinburgh	Enrolled at: Balham SW12	
Platoon/Section: See details below	Company/Battery: 15 th City of London 3 A.A. Group ATS Coy 681 (M) H.A.A. Battery 489 (M) H.A.A. Battery 531 (M) H.A.A. Battery	Group/Regiment: 5 A.A. Group 3 A.A. Group 150 (M) H.A.A. Rgt 155 (M) H.A.A. Rgt	Command: A.A. Command
Year(s) of service: 1939 to 1945	Reason for discharge: Pregnancy	Trade: Cook Clerk Plotting Officer H.A.A.	
Uniform Issued: S.D. – jacket and skirts 1 cap 3 shirts with detachable collars and studs 2 ties 3 pairs of stockings 2 pairs of shoes 2 Brassieres 2 suspender belts 3 vests 3 pairs woollen panties – white 3 pairs knitted rayon khaki knickers (directoire type – passion killers!) 2 pairs of pyjamas 1 Greatcoat 1 pair knitted gloves 1 shoulder bag Plus £50 allowance on commission		Photo: 	

Description of daily tasks:

- As cook, firstly in the cookhouse, then Officers' Mess cook and N.C.O. in charge of the cookhouse.
- As clerk, firstly Messing, then M.O.'s clerk and finally personal clerk to the Commandant of Group A.A. Training School. When personal clerk to the Commandant of the Group A.A. Training School, I typed his letters – indeed for most of the time, I composed them for him. I was in charge of circulation of secret documents, such as equipment details and new drills for them. I compiled Daily Orders Part 1, which is the Unit's programme for the following day – reveille time, guard room personnel, parades, mealtimes etc. This I assembled from various sources – the RSM – the Adjutant etc. I was also responsible for finding civilian billets for officer students attending courses at the school.
- Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) was very different from a working unit. Very relaxed, few restrictions, and plenty of opportunities to overstep the mark! The work was easy for me, having a firm background in Army procedures learned over the previous three years. Experience begun on 3 September 1939 when I worked in the Orderly Room of the Fusiliers.
Sgt Thompsett taught me so much that was to provide a grounding for the future. Mysteries like Kings Regulations, Army Council Instructions, Regimental Orders, Daily Orders Parts 1 and 2. This, together with the time I had spent in the cookhouse (in charge much of the time) messing clerk and as an M.O.'s clerk meant that I was lucky and had an easy time in training. Phone calls were limited to six minutes and I frequently had to wait 2 or 3 hours in an icy cold hallway to get through to my husband, Alec.
- As a Plotting Officer, parade after breakfast and then 24 hours duty alternating with 24 hour Orderly Officer.

Pay book:

(1) SOLDIER'S NAME AND DESCRIPTION ON ATTESTATION

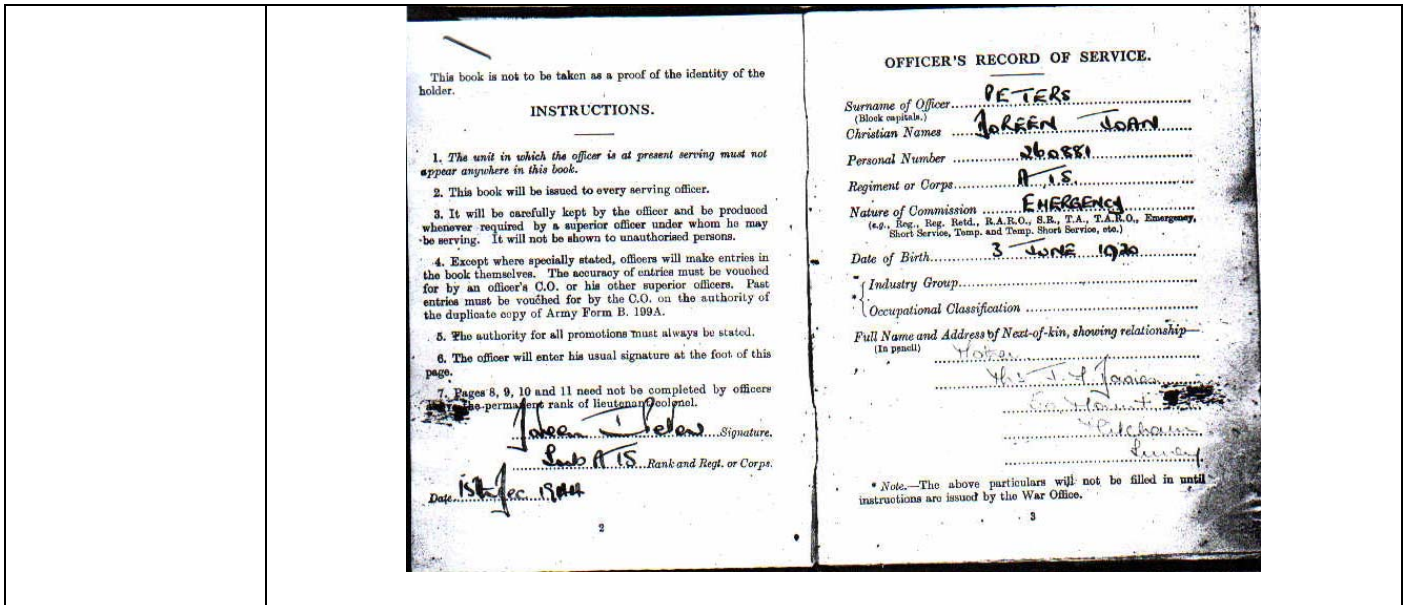
Army Number W/14305
Surname (in capitals) PETERS
Christian Names (in full) JOCKEEN JOAN
Date of Birth 3 JUNE 1920
Parish BALHAM
Place of Birth: In or near the town of LONDON
In the county of LONDON
Trade on Enlistment CLERK
Nationality of Father at birth BRITISH
Nationality of Mother at birth BRITISH
Religious Denomination C. OF E.
Approved Society
Membership No.
Enlisted at BALHAM On 12.5.39
For the:—
* Regular Army. * Supplementary Reserve.
* Territorial Army. * Army Reserve Section D.
* Strike out those inapplicable.
For years with the Colours and years in the Reserve.
Signature of Soldier Jockeen J. Peters
Date 4th July 1942

DESCRIPTION ON ENLISTMENT.

Height 5 ft. 7 ins. Weight 134 lbs.
Maximum Chest ins. Complexion
Eyes BLUE Hair FAIR
Distinctive Marks and Minor Defects

CONDITION ON TRANSFER TO RESERVE.

Found fit for
Defects or History of past illness which should be enquired into if called up for Service
Date 19.....
Initials of M.O. i/c.....



Memorable moments:

- I applied to join in March 1939 (I was 18 at the time) but was not 'attested' until May 1939. Due to lack of vacancies in the unit, I enrolled as a cook but, after we were embodied in August, I acted as a clerk as well.
- My first experience of Army food and accommodation was at a T.A. camp in July 1939 near the Guards at Pirbright, Surrey. We were under canvas – brand new tents – erected immaculately in lines by Guardsmen. Each tent had a wooden floor in 4 segments to fit round the tent pole. I learned that the tiny little “walls” are called the “brailing” and much of our time was spent adjusting this according to the weather. A few spots of rain and out came the order “Roll the brailing down”, rain stopped “Roll the brailing up”. I spent my time in the cookhouse where the equipment was primitive. Coal burning ranges and Soyer stoves. The latter invented by a Frenchman, Alexandre Soyer in the mid 1850s (perhaps the Crimea) and basically a large copper heated by a coal fire underneath. Camp kettles (Dixies) buckets, tin plates and mugs and very ordinary rations even though it was peace-time. Being “cooking illiterate” I don’t recall much actual cooking, but a lot of time washing-up. No detergents then! A lump of soda was all we had, and very limited hot water. Long before we finished there were large lumps of congealed grease floating around. Horribly unhygienic but we’ve lived to tell the tale.
- Speaking of hygiene, sanitation was as basic as everything else. 12 seats in a long undivided row with khaki toilet paper (called Army Form Blank) hanging here and there. One spent time trying to match bodily functions with times when there were no others or very few occupants. Fortunately, we didn’t have to empty them. Whilst there, a few days were spent at the Guards camp. With other ‘cooks’ I stood in the cookhouse – immaculate and better equipped – beside a massive Sergeant cook who called us “Ladies” – that changed very quickly once war came – and proceeded to teach us how to make Beef Olives! A lot of use that would be later.
- In response to a telegram received on 25 August 1939, I reported to the Drill Hall of the Royal Fusiliers in Balham, S.W. London.
- It soon became obvious that women attached to an Infantry unit could not stay there, so after one or two moves, including posting to Woolwich Arsenal, we were posted to Truro, Cornwall where we were the staff of a Searchlight Training School – acting as cooks, orderlies and clerks. We were accommodated in what had been a Diocesan Training College. Here, I became a cook. I had no proper experience of cooking. My stream at school did Latin, but lack of training cuts no

ice in the Army so into the Cookhouse I went!

- There were about 80 soldiers and 20 odd A.T.S. and the cooking range had been installed for 25 students at the College. Conscious of this inadequacy, 2 Soyer stoves had been installed, a supply of Dixies, Stainless Steel buckets and a lot of meat tins. Six men sat at a table and were served 3 meat tins, 1 for meat, 1 for veg and 1 for pud. The rations came from 2 sources – the R.A.S.C. depot, and the N.A.A.F.I. Staples – meat, bread, flour, tea, margarine, sugar and (I think) salt came from the R.A.S.C. and were always the same amounts as civilian rations. Everything else was ordered and bought from the N.A.A.F.I. on a budget of $2\frac{1}{2}$ d per man and $1\frac{3}{4}$ d per woman – old money remember. Dried fruit, custard powder, tinned milk tinned beans etc etc etc. Rations barely went round and we cooks worked from 7 am till after all breakfasts had been served before we had a cuppa. Meat was stewed one day and roast the next – no matter what cut it was. Hence we stewed roasting meat and we roasted stewing meat, and on the roasting days when we served some roast potatoes, the ovens were absolutely full. I couldn't lift the tins of 4 joints of meat and had to ask for help from a male orderly. Incidentally, when it came to cleaning the kitchen floors, I would get it done by one of the orderlies by giving the Bombardier in charge (a Corporal in the Artillery) a kiss – Happy days Bombardier Jeffries.
- When I was an Officers' Mess cook there were also problems with numbers and quantities. At one time I was cooking for 15 Officers on a normal 3 burner domestic stove. There were compensations however. I always managed to break the yolks of 3 eggs which could not be sent up to the mess. Two Officers' Mess orderlies and I made sure they didn't go to waste!
- On one or two occasions, I was back as a clerk – once as Messing clerk and once as the clerk to the M.O. of the local Camp Reception Station. Each time my pay of one shilling and fourpence per day was raised to two shillings and sixpence and each time I went back to the cookhouse it reverted to one and fourpence.
- In March 1941 our A.T.S. unit broke up and 6 of us went with the Searchlight School to Horfield Barracks in Bristol where a heavy anti-aircraft Training School was being formed. This consisted of five wings. In addition to Searchlight, there were Gunnery, Small Arms, Aircraft Recognition and Radar wings. Built in 1840 the Barracks was due for demolition as war started, but that was postponed indefinitely of course, and a new drill hall was being built across the way. I and 4 friends (one had decamped) were billeted in the old married quarters. These were minute homes in 2 terraces one above the other. We lived in the only habitable one in the lower row, 3 of us in the bedroom and 2 in the living room. There was a kitchen and a bathroom. How we managed for hot water I can't remember but there was a range so I suppose that was the answer. We had a separate part of the Mess hall and the food was adequate in amount but very poor quality. I didn't envy the Sgt cook as the cooks she controlled were the roughest I ever came across in 6 years. Foul mouthed and coarse in every way, so we kept out of their way and were glad to have a billet well away from theirs.
- Fortunately, just before this move I re-mustered (ie changed my trade) to a clerk and this work I did until November 1942. Most of that time I was personal clerk to the Commandant – Lt Colonel – and to the Adjutant – a Captain, in whose office I worked. About 95% of the work was for the Adjutant. At this time I was a full Corporal.
- A month after arriving in Bristol, I met my husband, Alec, then a L/Cpl, Royal Signals. We were engaged in August 1941 and married in June 1942. We discussed what the future might bring and at that time there was no sign of the war finishing, so it looked as though we would both be in the Army for some while. We decided that we would both apply for commissions – me first as the training time would be shorter.

- With mixed feelings – I had only been married about four months – I said “goodbye” to Alec on Temple Meads Station, Bristol – Vera Lynn’s song “We’ll meet again” still brings tears to my eyes and it was a miserable journey to Edinburgh. Happily, I was with my friend Mac (McKim) who had joined the ATS just as the war started and by this time we were very close.
- In November 1942 I went to Officer Cadet Training Unit (O.C.T.U.) in Edinburgh, where we were in the University accommodation. What a difference! Centrally heated, only 2 to a room and excellent food. All of this, of course, to show us how rations could be cooked and presented attractively.
- On 23 January 1943 I was commissioned and, in a smart new uniform (£50 allowance to buy) I went to Arborfield to a R.A. Training Unit to become a Plotting Officer in a Heavy A.A. Regiment. I was not happy with this posting because I felt that with my background, I could become an Assistant Adjutant. However, that’s the Army and I soon became very interested in the training. We spent a week on Gunnery, some 3 to 4 weeks on Command Post instruments, a week on Aircraft Recognition, ten days on Radar and another stretch on the Plotting Table where we would be working. This was also my first experience of being in a Mess. It was a mixed Mess as there were a number of Officer Instructors and also a Battery undergoing a refresher course, and one of these was Mary Churchill then a Subaltern (2 pips). We didn’t make a lot of use of the bar, but it was nice to have an occasional drink.
- At the end, my posting took me to Ty Croes in Anglesey to join a newly formed Battery, 681, doing practice firing. Henceforth much the same – accommodation in part of a Nissen hut. Very cold, condensation on ceiling frosted, even a few icicles. Better was a purpose built Army hut, where Officers had a room each and a separate bathroom. The girls slept in large barrack rooms with adequate sanitary arrangements and showers. Food was as good as I (the Messing Officer) and the cooks could make it. I was also in charge of the Officers’ Mess menus which was easier as we all contributed a small sum and I would buy fruit etc – any extras for variation. After a month, we moved to Bristol. We saw little action there or at Weston-super-Mare. I had been hastily moved to another Battery when the C.O – Lt Col – discovered that I was married to an “other rank” stationed nearby! Further moves took me to two sites in Bristol at Purdown and Westbury-on-Trym. In October 1943, I remember the Service at St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol to commemorate five years of the A.T.S. in the presence of Queen Mary. In 1944, I was back at Weston and it was the time of the V1s – the buzz bombs – and our guns and gunners were sent to the South coast and the unit was broken up
- In August, I was posted to 531 Battery at Dartford in Kent. Once again a big change. This site was away from the centre of London but not too far for plenty of V.I.P. visitors. So this was somewhat of a show place. Apart from all the up to date Artillery equipment, personnel were out of the top drawer, in particular the Sgt Cook very competent, and very nice person. Always in pristine white overall and headscarf, she was a good advertisement. However, I was only there briefly, as I was sent on a course at the Army School of Hygiene at Aldershot. This was very interesting, not least because with over 100 men, we were six ATS Officers and one Naval Nursing Sister. We learnt about water re-circulation, personal hygiene, pests – lice, scabies and over 300 types of latrine that the Army used. By the time I had finished the course the Battery had moved to Leigh-on-Sea, Essex and was mobilising for overseas. On the last day of December 1944 we embarked on the Isle of Man steam packet, the “Ben-my-Chree” and sailed from Southampton to Ostend. New Year’s day we awoke to the sound of depth charges being dropped by our destroyer escort. A Royal Marine convoy took us to Antwerp where we took charge of a site previously occupied by a German Flak unit.

- In Antwerp I was Messing Officer and spent many mornings on the docks collecting rations. The docks were a prime target for the flying bombs and rockets. During this time I had the unpleasant experience of seeing a flying bomb land a few hundred yards from where I was sitting in the cab of the ration truck waiting to go to the docks. I saw all of the windows of the intervening houses sucked out of their frames and shattered but I was not hurt.
- Antwerp received more V1s and V2s than London and casualties were very high. However, the citizens of Antwerp were very courageous and doggedly carried on daily life as well as they possibly could. There were considerable casualties in the Forces too, for example, over 40 of my husband's colleagues lost their lives in one incident.
- Food varies a bit as it often depends on supply ships coming up the River Scheldt, or not arriving. All vegetable is dried and in those days nothing like as good as later on. The biggest problem is coal, or frequently nothing but slack, which of course is useless for cooking. Gone are the cook's white overalls – she's in khaki overalls, and major changes are made to the coal-burning ranges. I find it difficult to describe a Trombone Cooker but I'll try. On the wall a large drum of oil, with a pipe down to the back left corner of the stove, running along left hand side and into the front between the bars. Twisted to the front and back 3 times like two very flat S's it thus earned the name Trombone. The bottom layer had a series of holes which ejected oil which was heated, vaporised and heated the top plates of the range. This was very efficient, but pretty mucky – hence the khaki overalls. Outside were Soyer stoves – also useless because of the poor fuel. Blow lamps were positioned on top of bricks and directed into where the coal fire was supposed to be. One again very efficient, indeed, too efficient. After a very short time the bottom of the Soyer stove disintegrated!
- One day I was told to attend a demonstration of the No 3 Petrol Cooker. The Battery Commander (a Major) the Senior A.T.S. Officer (equivalent to a Captain) myself and the Sergeant Cook stood around and listened to the "spiel" given by an A.C.C. (Army Catering Corps) W.O. Class II (Company Sergeant Major). It had been developed, he told us, from the 8th Army's habit in North Africa of filling a biscuit tin with sand (of which there was plenty!) throwing on some petrol, igniting it and putting water to heat on top. He was not a large man, but was full of his own importance – cocky, actually. He pumped up the cooker, lit it and WHOOSH an almighty explosion. With caution he made a couple of quick adjustments – to no avail. The smoke rose high above us as we moved back and gradually the solder melted and the No 3 Petrol cooker fell apart. We dusted off – nonchalantly – partly to disguise our amusement and partly to spare the CSM's embarrassment – collapse of over confidence.
- The thing I remember vividly was the local children. Our site was completely open and we couldn't keep it secure. When the troops finished a meal they went outside scraped plates clean and washed cutlery. Before they could do this kids would appear and scrape the leftovers into a dish, and either eat it there and then or take it home. The disbelief on the faces of men and girls I'll not forget.
- Accommodation on this site was mixed. Nissen huts had been erected for the troops but we A.T.S. Officers shared a very small German building, built I would think, for offices or maybe a guardhouse. Partly buried, the windows were high, small and devoid of glass. Paper with wire netting was put back daily by Belgian workers and daily blown out by V1 or V2s. Snow on my bed was a nightly occurrence, it was a cold winter.
- In October 1944 Alec had gone to France on a special job and for about six weeks we had no communication. I could not have guessed what a big surprise this was going to give me. While we were at Ostend for a few days waiting for a convoy to move us on, I contacted a Signal Unit and was delighted to learn that Alec's unit –

	<p>90th Technical Maintenance Section – was in Antwerp, our destination! Royal Marines convoyed us to Antwerp, where we settled in on a site previously occupied by a Hitler Youth group of the German Army and who had been very difficult to dislodge. No action was taken because hundreds of flying bombs and V2 rockets rained on Antwerp. I recollect meeting up with my husband in Antwerp around 5 January 1945.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• February 1945 I was sent to Brussels to look after the ATS Leave Hostel. There was no leave for home, of course, but days out in Brussels were pleasant and the accommodation was pretty good. In mid-April I flew home in a Dakota to Croydon, checked in at an ATS Depot in London and at about 6.00 pm was at home in Mitcham with Mum.• A month's leave took me to May 11th and, much to my personal satisfaction, I had been called up before the war started and my leave took me past V.E. Day, 8 May 1945, by three days. Six years to the day since I had signed up.
Photos:	Not available