

Surname: Stevens	First Name(s): Audrey Margaret Finlayson	Army Number: W/17064	
Maiden name (if applicable): Mathers	Name used during service: Mathers	Rank: Cpl	
Main base: Bristol	Training base: None	Enrolled at: Bristol (Volunteer)	
Platoon/Section:	Company/Battery: 448 Battery	Group/Regiment: 66 Searchlight	Command: A A Command
Year(s) of service: 23/5/1939 to 22/10/1945	Reason for discharge: End of War	Trade: Switchboard Operator	
Uniform Issued: 1 Macintosh 1 shirt 1 skirt 1 hat 1 badge	Photo:  <p>2.30 pm Monday August 10th 1944 Mullers Orphanage, Smythe Road Hawkins and Audrey Mathers</p>		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In charge of Signals Operation Gun Ops Room. 		

Release book:

RELEASE LEAVE CERTIFICATE A.F. X 202/C

Army No. W/17064 Present Rank CORPORAL

Surname (Block Letters) HATHERS **17 DEC 1945**

Christian Name(s) AUDREY MARGARET FINLAYSON

Coy. and Group/Unit NO. 10. SOUTHERN BOMBING GLD. DISP. UNIT. N. WILTS GROUP.

Date of *Last enrolment 22.8.39 * Calling up for military service 29.8.39
* Strike out whichever is inapplicable.

(a) Trade on enlistment None (c) Service Trade SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR D.II

(b) Trade courses and trade tests passed 1.9.39 school of tele. comm. 2.9.39 (d) Any other qualifications for civilian employment NIL

Military Conduct: Employed

Testimonial: Honest & punctual, N.E.O.

Coy. and Group/Unit Overseas or United Kingdom Stamp
No. 1 S.C. HOLDING UNIT.

Date 22.12.45

Signature of Officer [Signature]
 Signature of Auxiliary [Signature]

* Army Education Record (including particulars under (a), (b), (c) and (d) below). * This section will not be used in lieu of further War Office Instructions.

(a) Type of course.	(b) Length.	(c) Total hours of instruction.	(d) Record of achievement.
(i)*			
(ii)*			
(iii)*			
(iv)*			

* Instructors will insert the letter "I" here to indicate that in their case the record refers to courses in which they have acted as Instructors.

Signature of Unit Education Officer: _____

NOTES:
 (1) Further details of service and of medals to which entitled may be obtained in application to O. I/o Records, accompanied by the applicant's A.B.54, Part I.
 (2) If this certificate is lost or mislaid, no duplicate can be obtained.

THE ABOVE-NAMED PROCEEDED ON RELEASE LEAVE ON THE DATE SHOWN IN THE MILITARY DISPERSAL UNIT STAMP OPPOSITE

N.B.—A certificate (A.F. X 202/D) showing the date of transfer to the Unemployed List in the case of A.T.C. auxiliaries, and the termination of release leave in the case of V.A.D. members, will be issued by the Officer I/o Record Office. All personnel released are liable to recall if necessary during the continuing period of the emergency.

Military Dispersal Unit Stamp
MILITARY DISPERSAL UNIT
No. 6
22 OCT 1945
AUNTON

Memorable moments:

- In May 1939 I and a couple of friends approached the Sergeant Major of the T.A. Drill Hall in Old Market Street and we joined up. One of my friends mothers said “I think you girls ought to join up”. There was a booth down at the Bristol Centre where you could register, so we went down. We wanted to go into the Navy but there was no space at that time. We thought about the Airforce, but that was right out at Filton and that was miles to go. I said to my friends that I didn’t want to go in the 6th Gloucester’s, as I had two brothers in that and I didn’t want to be in the same unit. So they suggested I tried the 4th Gloucester’s down in Old Market. That was where we went to see the Sergeant Major.
- There were soon about 30 of us. My friends and I were lucky as we had led a privileged life and were well educated and wore stylish clothes. We had never been out to work, ever. Our life was getting up in the morning, being served breakfast, perhaps going out to coffee or having someone in to coffee. Then in the afternoon perhaps going to the cinema or going out to tea, or having someone in to tea. In the evening we would go to dances or the cinema or the theatre. At the Drill Hall we mixed with people from all walks of life.
- The Sergeant Major took us for drill and first time and we were taught to march with our thumbs in line with the seams of trousers. The Drill Hall was rather large so we moved to a hall at the bottom of Park Street. It was then that we had our own Junior Commander called Lara who later became a Subaltern and eventually rose to Brigadier.
- I was 24 then, and had had a good life between the wars, although a lot of people didn’t. So many of the girls who joined up went straight from work or home and they were much younger, so they were glad to get away from their mothers apron strings. I had already known ‘freedom’, because my parents were abroad and my grandmother who looked after us died when I was about 17 leaving my elder sister to look after the money and my two elder brothers they also helped to manage the

house for the 6 of us ... I had two younger brothers. We had a maid and we used to ring up and get the groceries sent round on a bicycle.

- When I joined up we didn't really have a uniform. I was given a mackintosh and we had to supply all our own underclothes, and all our night attire. When uniform was issued, we had one shirt and one skirt and the shirt we used to wash on our days off. We had a cap and a hat badge. Heavy lace up brown shoes.
- A week or two before war was declared we were called up and were taken in coaches - my two friends to Southmead and I to Churchill, eventually Banwell. I was attached to 66th Searchlight Regiment, I was with 447 Battery at Southmead 448 Banwell and Wells 449. We had Gloucester flashes on our upper sleeves - grey with Gloucester in blue.
- It wasn't issued until about 18 months after the war started, when they started conscripting, that we came under military law. The war had been on 18 months when we actually became the army, before that we were a voluntary organisation.
- We were in private billets to start with and then they requisitioned a house in Banwell with basic furniture and uniform. Iron bedsteads and straw palliases. We had to go and get straw for the palliases. No sheets or anything just rough scratchy army blankets and it was ghastly!
- Stationed at Banwell Abbey, we were not allowed to speak to the men except on duty or go anywhere on our own. Our recreation was organised. I was Sgt Major's Clerk. Eventually the ban was lifted.
- The Searchlight Batteries stationed around Churchill came to HQ for a rest once a week. I was on duty at Banwell Abbey when daylight raid on Filton Aerodrome. We were in the flight path, so saw the planes going overhead.
- I worked the switchboard in Banwell. The Company had me trained up. There was a course going, so in 1941 I went to Kenry House in Kingston in Surrey and did an Ack Ack signals training course and that's how I ended up with the switchboard. I should have gone on teleprinters as it was better paid. Kenry House was in the Cambridge Estate and, they were beautiful houses. Each house was different, there was a French House and an Italian House and an American house and so on and they were all different architecture down this particular road. One particular house had a lovely rhododendron half way up the drive and I used to go up and have a bath there ... take my towel with me.
- Eventually I was sent to Chatham Camp, then Barking Essex and then on to Coxtie near Brentwood Essex, Felixstowe Suffolk, Weymouth Dorset, Dover Kent. I went on course to Durham and Worthing, Horsham Sussex. Joined draft to India at Muller's Orphanage Bristol and was subsequently released and went to Devizes Wiltshire. I was shunted from east to west, on the south coast and somebody wanted me to swap for Scottish Command, but you never came out of there.
- As Corporal Heavy Ack Ack Signals Switchboard Operator, on 6th June 1944, D Day, I went on duty at 8.00 hours until 13.00 hours in the gun operations room at Nottingham House." Nottingham was the main operations room, near Weymouth. My shift was informed that D-Day had begun. We were highly active all morning as allied troops involved. Americans left Weymouth for Omaha and Utah beaches. At 17.00 hours returned to duty. A few days later we sat on the beach, German prisoners of war escorted up the beach close to us."
- I was stationed at Dover Castle in May 1945 - VE Day. The ground shelling had ceased, and everything was quiet. Everyone highly elated that at long last it was over. Lights came on, music played, blasting out. Relief and remembrance as one celebrated, chain dancing, strangers greeting one another - population exploded. Celebrations started early in the evening, went on to wee small hours. Hospitality overwhelming.
- VJ Day. Very early on this morning in Bristol, ships, alarms, bells, hooters etc sounding. We were in Muller's Orphanage and rose from our beds and went out

in night attire. VJ Day meant so much to me as my youngest brother was a P.O.W. in Hong Kong. Emotions ran high as we realised that at long last it was all over. During the day people produced upright pianos in the street playing and dancing.

- I was demobed near Exeter, Devon in September 1945.

Photos:



Felixstowe
Audrey at back



Banwell Abbey 1940
Audrey in civvies



Storrington Nr Worthing - N.C.O.'s course
Audrey 3rd row 5th from end on left