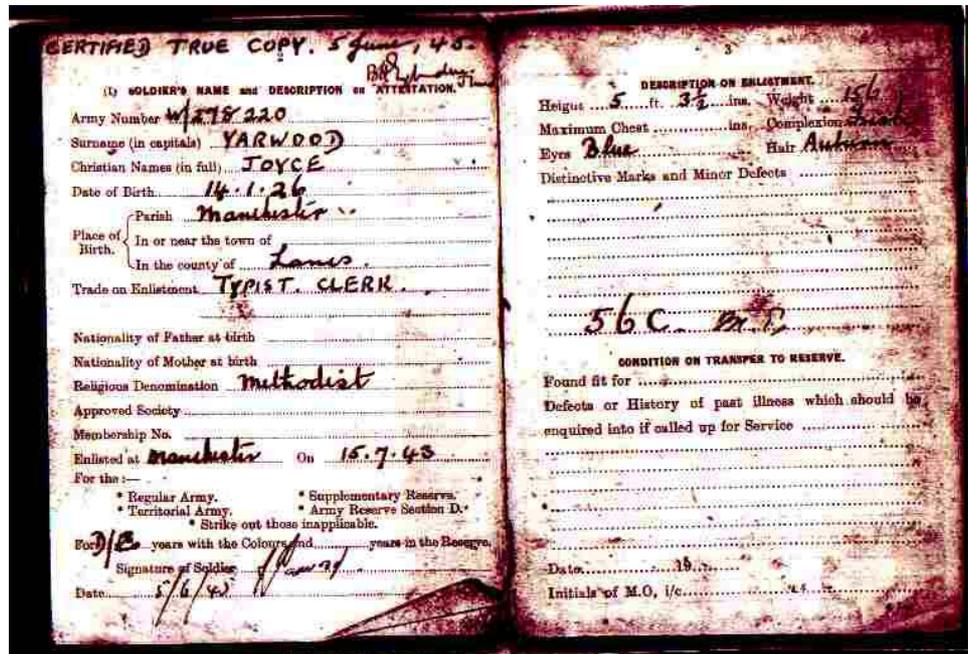


Surname: Sutherland	First Name(s): Joyce	Army Number: W/278220	
Maiden name (if applicable): Yarwood	Name used during service: Yarwood / Arnold	Rank: Private L/Cpl	
Main base: Northampton	Training base: High Legh, Cheshire Horsley Hall, Wrexham	Enrolled at: Manchester	
Platoon/Section:	Company/Battery: 577 Coy C.M.T. (Command Mixed Transport)	Group/Regiment: R.A.S.C.	Command: Eastern
Year(s) of service: 15/7/1943 to 3/1/1947	Reason for discharge: Demobilised with GP	Trade: Driver	
Uniform Issued: Tunic Skirts Shirts Collars Underwear Uniform hat Slacks Battletop Boots Webbing gaiters Jerkin Shoes Driving gloves Pyjamas greatcoat	Photo:  Chester 1943		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General driving duties from 15cwt truck to ambulances, as required. • The golden rule for all of us drivers was W.O.F.L.T.B. This stood for what we had to do each day before we took out vehicles out of the car park. To the uninitiated this was check, water (radiator) oil (dip engine) fuel (full tank) lights, tyres (pressure) and battery (check plates were covered). Woe betide us if we broke down because we had neglected to do any of the above. 		

Pay book:

Required to keep paybook in left breast pocket. No handbag at first. Mine stolen – copy issued in 1945.



Memorable moments:

- I was thirteen when war broke out in 1939 and went through what everyone else went through in Manchester for the next three and a half years. Taking shelter when we had to, walking to work to the city centre through broken glass and carrying on as we had to otherwise 'they' would have won!
- Three and a half years later brought me to seventeen and a half in July of 1943. I had decided I did not want to be sent to work in a munitions factory and the only way to be sure of doing what I wanted to do was to volunteer as soon as I reached seventeen and a half. Had I waited until I was eighteen and called up I would have had to do as I was told!
- I enlisted in the A.T.S. on July 15th 1943 and was duly sent to High Legh Hall in Cheshire for basic training. What a shock that was! I had never been hassled so much in my life. Paraded, inoculated and generally chivvied around until I didn't know which end was up! Issued with enough clothing to meet all my needs. I had been a clerk so of course that was the last thing the army would want me to do. After aptitude tests it was determined I had a 'mechanical aptitude' so of course I would be a driver.
- After the initial basic training I was sent to 'Horsley Hall' near Wrexham which was the driving school the course lasted twelve weeks and covered just about everything one needed to know about the internal combustion engine. We also had lectures on vehicle care and maintenance and of course actual driving instruction. Half a day of every day was spent driving along with maybe two or three other girls.
- We were taken out on the roads the first day and what a mess we made of things. However, the various instructors were always good. We were never aware of being assessed each day and to my knowledge no-one was ever returned to unit as a result of mistakes made during the daily lessons. We were however, required to take a check test after five weeks and this was when it was decided if we would ever make drivers.
- We were taught to drive anything and everything up to the maximum allowed for women drivers which was three ton trucks. Each day the vehicle would be

different and we had to be able to get in and just drive. The instruction was excellent in every way and understanding the vehicles we were driving was a plus. During my check test I actually went the wrong way round a roundabout but was still passed O.K. After the final test, which was taken on the narrow streets of Wrexham in Austin ambulances, I, along with about thirty five other girls, was sent to 577 Coy. C.M.T. R.A.S.C. in Northampton. The C.M.T. is Command Mixed Transport. We were to provide transport to any units in the area of Eastern Command who requisitioned it. This meant we could be sent anywhere in the area and the map reading we had been taught was really essential. All road signs had been removed and on the daily orders map references only were given. I became very good at finding my way around but we did have ordinance survey maps that were one inch to the mile that were invaluable. To this day I can still read a map and find my way just anywhere I need to go.

- Each driver was allocated a vehicle and had to sign for it complete with tools and then be responsible for that vehicle. Our duties were many and varied. A driver could find she was loaned to another unit for a week while their vehicle was being repaired, or maybe take a Padre around to various units to take R.C. Mass on Sunday. Maybe spend time at the nearest Army Ordnance Dept driving 'stuff' around from bay to bay. Transporting soldiers from Telavera Training Camp to the various assault courses, or standing by with an ambulance. A day off meant signing off and then on again for one's vehicle.
- In Northampton, which was a very nice place to be stationed, we all lived in houses that had been taken over by the Army. Well scattered around the town and the mess was situated in the town centre. This entailed quite a long walk to get there for meals. At one time, so many girls were skipping breakfast that officers made us sign in. At least for a while.
- If the particular job we had been allocated entailed being away for the full day sandwiches could be collected from the mess. It was all quite well organized actually because when one went to collect the sandwiches they were always there! Quite often however, which ever unit one was sent to, would see that the driver was given tea, coffee, or a meal. If it was a unit without women, which was often the case, the driver would be taken to the Sergeants' mess or the Officers' mess. If a duty was thought to be longer than the day, unexpired rations had to be collected. This would consist of food that probably had to be cooked. We were allowed to go into any army unit we came across and ask to be fed. The cook would either cook what we had, probably bacon and egg, or give us a meal from their own supplies. They would then take our unexpired rations.
- On one duty I allowed, strictly against the rules, the driver of that unit to drive my truck. At that time it was a 15cwt. He crashed it into a shop window near Stony Stratford. Dashing out to see what had happened to my truck I fell down the steps that led up to the door of this enormous house. I damaged my ankle quite badly. The officer at this unit, realizing we were all in trouble for disobeying the rules, and I, and the driver, concocted a story that I had hurt my ankle before I had let him take my truck. This resulted in a small reprimand for me, and a reminder that I should have telephoned for a relief driver. I did get seven days confined to unit but this was no great hardship because I still had to work. It simply meant that I could not go out at night.
- On one of those nights the duty Sergeant came into the recreation room and told me she had a job for me. It would save having to get someone else as I was confined to unit. The upshot was, that I took two officers to Daventry to a concert. The wonderful part of it was that they got me and another driver, two tickets for a show. It was in aid of the Red Cross and the artist was the wonderful Evelyn Laye. I even saw her husband Frank Lawton standing ear to where I was sitting. I don't know if the Sergeant knew exactly what the job was. Maybe had she known

she may have done it herself!

- I was sent on detachment for a week to a place near Kettering. It was, on daily orders 55 I.G.H. I hadn't a clue what it was. I found the unit only to find the man on the gate was a small, slim Indian in a Ghurkha type turban. All I could do was ask for the officer. And ask and ask and ask! Eventually he allowed me in through the gate, pointed to where I should leave my truck and beckoned me to follow him. I went into this large old house and meekly followed him up the stairs. All I was concerned by then was finding someone who spoke English. He opened a door and pointed for me to go in. I found myself in a huge bedroom with a man just getting out of bed. An English voice told me to wait downstairs. Needless to say I did just that! I spent an extraordinary week working at that place. The initials stood for Indian General Hospital. It was a mobile unit I was told. It was a unit of the British Indian Army and all the officers were Indian Army and to my mind at the time, very 'posh'. An amusing thing while I was there. One of the officers schedules a trip one afternoon. I presented myself at the given time and place and was ordered to take this officer and three soldiers into Kettering. Upon arrival I parked the truck as directed and was then informed we were going to the cinema. The vehicle was not really to be used for recreational purposes but he obviously had been given permission. I didn't know whether to go with them or not but thought I may just as well. It seemed better than hanging around for the time it would take for them to see whatever the film was. What a mistake that was! The film was 'Gone with the Wind' and for the time it took to show it I had to sit there and listen to the officer translate every little bit of the film for the three soldiers!
- There were so many incidents it is difficult to select just a few. Meeting a girl in initial training who claimed to have been advised to join the service because she was in real danger after becoming involved with a man in London known to MI5 as a spy. She walked in her sleep every night! One day we went for breakfast and when we went back to the hut she was gone and all her gear. We never did find out what had happened to her or if her story was true!
- Taking supplies to Italian and German prisoner of war camps. Being cooked lunch by an Italian prisoner but not being allowed to get out of the cab at the German camp.
- The young soldier, in detention who cut his throat while I was on ambulance duty at Telavera camp.
- Taking a very Irish Padre to various camps and not being able to understand a word he said.
- Wearing pants and first war puttees when first in Northampton, because they had no slacks for us! (What a spectacle we made)
- On detachment at North Mimms in a camp that had been an American army hospital and finding the toilets had no divisions at all. Every one had to 'go' in company. The N.C.O.'s course at St Neots where the ablution walls were covered with carved out of the wood graffiti that no amount of painting could cover. The camp had been used by the First Airbourne division so we forgave them. In absentia! And while we were chuckling!
- Having to go out on an assignment at five in the morning and having to break the ice on the can of water before I could refill the radiator. Anti freeze was in short supply and was kept for ambulances only. The golden rule for all of us drivers was W.O.F.L.T.B. This stood for what we had to do each day before we took out vehicles out of the car park. To the uninitiated this was check, water (radiator) oil (dip engine) fuel (full tank) lights, tyres (pressure) and battery (check plates were covered). Woe betide us if we broke down because we had neglected to do any of the above.
- After the war was over in May of 1945 our lives changed dramatically. We all

expected to be able to go home right away but we know really that no way would that happen. Demob numbers were being allocated. For the most part on a first in first out basis. My number was 56 and although the war was over in May of 1945 I did not actually leave the army until January 1947. The time in between was spent being sent from unit to unit. I went to Bedford, Cambridge and Virginia Waters in Surrey. I don't think 'they' quite knew what to do with us. Units seemed to be in the process of being consolidated and maybe returned to a more peace time army. Also a lot of troops were being sent to Europe.

- I did not volunteer to go overseas. I had met my husband by then and he was due to be demobbed in November 1946 and we planned to marry in January 1947 when I left the army. I therefore really had no wish to go overseas.
- My army experience is one that is as fresh to me today as it was then. I never regretted joining the A.T.S. We were all so patriotic somehow, but also we knew, I think that we were fighting for our lives.

Photos:



Members of 577 Command Mixed Transport Coy R.A.S.C.
1944/45