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| Surname: Wright | First Name(s): Bessie | Army Number: W/ | |
| Maiden name (if applicable): | Name used during service: | Rank: Sergeant | |
| Main base: Knightsbridge, London | Training base: Wrexham, North Wales | Enrolled at: Wrexham, North Wales | |
| Platoon/Section: | Company/Battery: 1 st AA Group Knightsbridge | Group/Regiment: Royal Artillery | Command: AckAck Command |
| Year(s) of service: 20/11/1942 to | Reason for discharge: Demob | Trade: Plotter | |
| Uniform Issued: | Photo: | | |
| Description of daily tasks: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three weeks or so spent at Wrexham were filled with uniform issue, how to lay out kit for inspection and barrack boots. There were medical checks, inoculations and vaccination. Drill on the square – talks on ATS Regulations and Intelligence Tests to assess one's capabilities. • A group of 20 started training at the AA Operations Room at Knightsbridge HQ, after first signing the Official Secrets Act and learning a little about Radar and the London Gun Defended Area. We were taught (using tiddlywink counters) to plot to a four figure map reference plus an Alpha. Practice runs were aimed at improving speed until we reached operational standard. At the end of the course only 12 remained to join a duty team. • The duty team was 'on' for 24 hours being replaced by 'stand-by' teams for lunch break and a period during which they either had drill practice in Cottage Place, did PT or Netball on a tennis court in Holy Trinity, Brompton Churchyard (if fine) or the Signals Drill Hall (if wet). We also route marched through Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens stopping for a coffee break. • Our evening supper was brought over to us and usually was a jacket potato with cheese or cheese and potato pie. • The standby team was in two sections 'immediate' which had to report to an assembly point within two minutes of the Air Raid warning sounding; the others had to be within reasonable distance to report as soon as possible. | | |
| Pay book: | | | |
| Memorable moments: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I reported to the Welsh Fusiliers Barracks at Wrexham North Wales on 20 November 1942, having previously seen service in the Auxiliary Fire Service. The site contained old quarters built in the time of the Crimea and a new camp built | | |

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| | <p>originally for male conscripts. My sleeping quarters were in the old building – we were in two-tier bunks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the three weeks training, my expected posting was to Bristol as a plotter, but after a weekend leave at home it was changed to London. • Several days later we were sent off to our postings and I reported to 1st AA Group HQ in Knightsbridge. I was first billeted in a large house in Brompton Square and afterwards in Egerton Gardens. • Dress standard was strict – if we had been issued with tunics with plastic (non polishable) buttons, they had to be replaced by brass buttons. • There were no NAAFI facilities but the crypt of Holy Trinity Church had been converted to The Dug Out Club. They served tea and coffee and light refreshments and showed films with a short break between each reel. I used to take my soap coupons down to Harrods to change. • I was on duty the night the Europe invasion started and when called up to the ops room in the early hours of the morning, remember that the board only recorded ‘friendly’ plots all heading towards France. Not a hostile in sight. Later that morning I was walking along Brompton Road when the newspaper placards came out announcing the start of the invasion. • During the V1 raids (flying bombs) we plotted the crashes in the London area from information received from the Observer Corps. • I was in charge of the duty team on V.E. day as sneak raiders were expected. We were given a Firkin of Beer but I had instructions to keep the team sober. • After V.E. Day we moved to a disused gun site in West London as our ‘rest camp’. My main memory was of earwigs in the sleeping quarters. Fortunately, it was a dry summer so I moved my bed into the open and slept under the stars. • Demobilisation and transfers to other units started whilst we were there and those left went back to Brompton Road until we were demobbed. • Our ATS Company Officers were non-operational and did not come down to the Operation Rooms. The duty teams were led by a Sergeant who was responsible to the male Royal Artillery Officers. • Pay, leave passes, shoe repairs and uniform exchanges were handled by Company Office in Rutland Gate but our monthly issue of pads were collected from the male Signals Quartermaster at Brompton Road. • A curate from Holy Trinity, Brompton visited us for padre’s hour and that was the venue for District Church Parades. • Senior NCOs did Billet Orderly duties which covered room inspection, a note of those reporting sick, keeping the house boilers stoked for heating and hot water and booking in at night. • It was a happy unit, discipline was fair but not strict and when off duty one was able to take advantage of London theatre and social units. |
| <p>Photos:</p> | |