

Surname: Harford	First Name(s): Margaret	Army Number: W/180416	
Maiden name (if applicable):	Name used during service:	Rank: Corporal	
Main base: War Office, London	Training base: Basic – 3 weeks Hermitage Barracks Wrexham 6 weeks at Queensbury, Bradford	Enrolled at: Liverpool	
Platoon/Section: 'A' Section	Company/Battery: No 1 W.O. Signals, Whitehall	Group/Regiment: Signals	Command: London
Year(s) of service: July 1942 To July 1945	Reason for discharge: End of War in Europe	Trade: Teleprinter Operator	
Uniform Issued: S.D Plus Greatcoat Waterproof cape	Photo: 		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two weeks day shifts, 8 to 2, 2 to 8 alternate days. One week nights 8 – 8 am. One night on duty. • There were about 75 personnel per shift. • When on night duty, most of our typing was pages and pages of code in 5 letter groups, one felt cross-eyed by 4 am and we often wondered what message was received at the other end!! • We had time off on nights for a light meal – we had good food on the whole. Our HQ was Buckingham Court Hotel (opposite side entrance of Buckingham Palace). Our dining room and kitchens were in Catherine Place as were our billets – tall 		

	<p>narrow houses, our section occupied two (Later Jackie Kennedy's sister lived in one of them). Our walk to Whitehall was through St James Park which I loved – the dawn and the sunsets, flowers and ducks on the pond.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the air raids we were sent by coach to an underground station to sleep – ugh. We did not like it, there were families there too. So we complained and went back to our own beds, until they sent us to a department store basement. Horrible! I caught scabies there. We had no sheets only blankets. Some girls complained of rats – so back to our beds and that was the end of trying to protect us.
Pay book:	Not available
Memorable moments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Sunday morning there was a church parade to the Guards Chapel nearby and the Chapel had a direct hit. One of our girls was killed and other injured. I was friendly with her. It was a very upsetting time. Long after the war I went to Edinburgh Castle and somewhere there was a large room with rolls of honour for every war casualty – her name was there. It was an emotional moment. The names were in alphabetical order. • The winter of 1944/45 was very cold indeed. We asked for an extra blanket, none came. My father wrote a letter which we pinned on the notice board – next day – blankets. A mutiny was averted!! • After VE day and on night duty each night, a few of us in turn were allowed to finish early, about 6.00 am. When it was my turn I and others went to “The Corner House”, Lyons, on the corner of The Strand not too far away – I had kippers for breakfast!! • I was lucky enough to be off duty on VE Day and I and my friend Joan went to Buckingham Palace to join the vast excited crowd. Being only 5 ft tall I couldn't see much, so a very kind soldier lifted me up to see the Royal Family on the Balcony. Many years later watching a programme on TV for the 40th anniversary of VE Day I caught myself on TV being lifted up. Immediately Joan was on the phone (she lives in Essex but we are still very much in touch) “Did you see yourself?” • After VE day, I and two or three other girls slept in Churchill's Office, me on his table! The maps and scramble telephone were there untouched – my claim to fame! • I enjoyed my three years in the ATS. I was married 19/12/1942. My husband was stationed in Suffolk and Essex during that time until D Day. My mother was unwell or I would have stayed longer.

Photos:



'B' Section on duty in the bowels of Whitehall
The Teleprinter Room No 1 W.O. Signals, Whitehall



'A' Section No 1 W.O. Signals