

<b>Surname:</b> Kuypers	<b>First Name(s):</b> Hilda	<b>Army Number:</b> W/262756	
<b>Maiden name (if applicable):</b> Pooler	<b>Name used during service:</b> Pooler	<b>Rank:</b> L/Cpl	
<b>Main base:</b> Welwyn Garden City Portsmouth York Chester	<b>Training base:</b> Talavera Barracks, Northampton Alverstoke	<b>Enrolled at:</b> Birmingham (Volunteer)	
<b>Platoon/Section:</b> D Troop	<b>Company/Battery:</b> 301 Battery	<b>Group/Regiment:</b> 93 <sup>rd</sup> S/L Regiment, Royal Artillery	<b>Command:</b> A.A. Command
<b>Year(s) of service:</b> April 1943 to December 1945	<b>Reason for discharge:</b> War ended	<b>Trade:</b> Searchlight Crew Office	
<b>Uniform Issued:</b> Service Dress Battledress. Leather jerkin Fur smock Fur gloves Greatcoat Cap and badge Shoulder bag Gas mask Tin hat Kit bag Shirts Tie Shoes and boots Puttees Stockings Underwear Pyjamas	<b>Photo:</b> 		
<b>Description of daily tasks:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I served at the Troup HQ site, where there were about 30 girls. We had a 150 cm searchlight. We controlled five satellite sites that were each about a mile away and formed a circle around us. Each of these sites had a 90 cm searchlight and about 15 girls.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We lived in Nissen huts and, whilst heavy manual jobs were tackled by R.A. and R.E.M.E. mechanics from BHQ, the everyday running of the site was down to us.</li> <li>• We worked through the darkness during enemy action and slept in the mornings.</li> </ul>
<b>Pay book:</b>	Not available
<b>Memorable moments:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I joined the ATS in April 1943. I had two friends who were not in protected jobs – one a trainee hairdresser and the other a trainee librarian. They both were ‘called up’. I worked in an office – a lot of business with the Air Ministry – they kept quite a few young girls to replace practically all the men. I had to do quite a lot of persuading of parents and bosses, but eventually got my release. But by then my friends had gone, so I went alone. Parents apprehensive!</li> <li>• Reported to Talavera Camp, Northampton. Hundreds of girls and I only knew one, and she was sent in a different direction. What had I done!</li> <li>• Talavera was a huge place and we stayed together like a flock of sheep. However, lots to do, piles of things to collect, getting tucks put into the uniform (I was small, so lots of tucks). The greatcoat buried me and was so heavy. We were told to work hard polishing our cap badge. I sat all one evening rubbing away, only to be reprimanded next morning for a non-shiny badge!</li> <li>• This intake of girls was mostly directed into the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment – the first and only all girls regiment. When we were eventually passed as ATS girls (uniforms fitting – knew our left foot from the right – remembered to always carry your knife, fork and spoon and mug – and pack all kit into a quite small kitbag) - we were off. A girl named Jane Boddington and myself were to report to Alverstoke. Papers at the ready we set off – the RTO were helpful – and much later arrived at Portsmouth in an Air Raid. Eventually we crossed the Ferry to Gosport and were wet and taken to Alverstoke. We were on a course to learn plotting, electric plugs and sockets and terminals and to march. The marching was great, all along the see front behind the wire. After Alverstoke we went on several courses, all to do with us being part of this new regiment. When you had time it was really quite exciting. I did get to a place near Luton – ugh – and was shown how to lay a brick path between Nissen huts, in the mud. My tears were helping keep the mud soft. A nice kind driver came and stooped by my side and said “Where’s the office. I’ve got to pick up two girls, Boddington and Pooler.” Us. Jane and me – Eureka! He took us in the rain to Stanborough near Welwyn Garden City. Nice camp on the side of a cornfield – quite primitive by today’s standards. <u>Very</u> nice crowd there – we worked hard – at night – slept in the morning and site chores in the afternoons. Jane trained as one of the numbers in the searchlight crew and also as a P.T.I. and she was made a Corporal. I was a No 14 – plotter, and second choice No 9 – keeping the generator going. I couldn’t swing the starting handle (we had a converted lorry not a generator) so I used to pray over it to keep going. And then I went to work in the site office – we were Troop HQ with the big 150 cm searchlight and we had five satellites – 90 cm searchlights.</li> <li>• One day we had an “all stations go” inspection. I was told to see that the donkey stoves, our only source of heat in the huts, were immaculately swept out and that sticks and coke were ready for lighting when work and training on the site was finished. We would then be on stand-by for our proper job of lighting up the skies. I was given an axe which was nearly as big as me and told to go and chop some wood for kindling. Off I went to start hacking at the branch of a tree. Just as I was getting desperate, my guardian angel sent me some help in the form of a female R.S.M. She was a big girl and very much suited to her rank and in no time at all</li> </ul>

	<p>had completed the task that would probably have taken me to rest of the war to finish!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We were at Welwyn until late 1944 and then went to Chiswick – “Doodle bug alley”. Night raids had finished but the V1s and V2s were deadly. The small S/Ls were put on to lorries and the crews went out at night to light up help with rescue. VE day came along then and we were posted to Nelson Camp at Portsdown Hill. The 93<sup>rd</sup> Regt was disbanded and the girls deployed elsewhere or demobbed.</li><li>• I was posted to York and then to Chester to work in the Offices filling out demobilisation papers. Nice lads, some of whom had had a terrible war. The first soldier we sent to the York Garrison for his demob suit we were at the gates of our workplace – Cardbox Mill, Rowntrees, York. We insisted he showed us all his spoils, suit, shirt, tie, socks etc. After all we wanted to know the end of his story. He went home the next day.</li><li>• I went to Chester for a while and then returned to civvy street. Jane went into Europe and was demonstrating prefabricated houses to troops over there, but that is her story.</li></ul>
<b>Photos:</b>	