

Surname: Smart	First Name(s): Annie (Nan)	Army Number: W/125274	
Maiden name (if applicable): Chalmers	Name used during service: Chalmers	Rank: Private	
Main base: Woolwich	Training base: Cameron Brks, Inverness (initial) Oswestry (radar training)	Enrolled at: Kirkcaldy 1/1942 (Volunteered)	
Platoon/Section:	Company/Battery: 543 H.A. Battery 579 H.A. Battery	Group/Regiment: Royal Artillery	Command: Ack Ack Command
Year(s) of service: 0/03/1942 to 04/04/1947	Reason for discharge: Class A	Trade: Radar and A.T.S. Provost	
Uniform Issued: Top and skirt Tunic Battledress Top and trousers Boots & Gaiters Long underpants Shirts Collars Ties Leather jerkin Stockings & shoes Bras Suspender belt Pants Greatcoat Shoulder bag Steel helmet	Photo: 		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our duties as radar operators (termed as gunlaying in those days) were usually 48 hours on and 48 hours off. We operated in two cabins, one being the transmitter and the other the receiver. Our power was by A.D. power unit which we had to crank up by hand and maintain. Four girls operated the receiver and two in the transmitter. • When not on duty we had to maintain the equipment, including climbing the cabin ladder to clean the aerials. • When the war finished I joined the A.T.S. Provost. 		

Pay book:

(I) SOLDIER'S NAME and DESCRIPTION on ATTESTATION.

Army Number W/125274
Surname (in capitals) CHALMERS
Christian Names (in full) Annie
Date of Birth 10.3.24
Parish
Place of Birth. In or near the town of [redacted]
In the county of [redacted]
Trade on Enlistment _____
Nationality of Father at birth [redacted]
Nationality of Mother at birth [redacted]
Religious Denomination P.C.S.
Approved Society Presbyterian
Membership No. _____
Enlisted at High school On 21.3.42
For the:—
*Regular Army. *Supplementary Reserve.
Territorial Army. *Army-Reserve Section D.
*Strike out those inapplicable.
For 7/20 years with the Colour and _____ years in the Reserve.
Signature of Soldier Annie Chalmers
Date 6/3/42

DESCRIPTION OF ENLISTMENT

Height 5 ft. 11.5 ins. 11.5 lbs.
Maximum Chest 32.5 ins. Complexion Fair
Eyes Blue Hair Brown
Distinctive Marks and Minor Defects _____
_____ H.C. R. Andrew T. L.
DVI 25 APR 1945
CONDITION ON TRANSFER TO RESERVE
Found fit for _____
Defects or History of past illness which should be
enquired into if called up for Service _____
Mod. Reserve
A.F.W. 3140 Completed
Cat. A.W.L.S.
Det. 4th/1st Capt. R.A.M.S.
Date _____ 19____
Initials of M.O. [initials]

Memorable moments:

- I volunteered to join the A.T.S. just before my 18th birthday and become W/125274 Pte Chalmers.
- Unfortunately the morning I was due to report to the Cameron Barracks Inverness, there was a very bad snowstorm and as part of the road was blocked, I had to be taken from the farm, through the fields by tractor to the station at Milnathort. Another girl from the village travelled with me, we were delayed on the journey because of the weather at Aviemore, eventually arriving at Inverness around midnight. Even at that time of night we were given a medical etc before being served with our first Army meal of Shepherd's Pie, which we were most grateful for, as we hadn't eaten since breakfast.
- On joining I'd hoped to be a driver but soon discovered that so did most of the others. After being kitted out with my uniform etc and a few lectures, we did some square bashing and had route marches with the pipe band. One day we were given an important talk by an officer on how vital it would be for a few of us to consider joining an Ack Ack Battery, so as to replace men to go abroad. She emphasised it would not be in any way a glamorous job – we would have to be prepared to rough it a bit (which turned out to be true).
- After a few weeks initial training and various tests my next move was to the Windgate Barracks Oswestry to train as a G/L Waller (Radar) then moved from there to a practice camp at Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire. From there I went home on my first leave before meeting up with the others in London to form 543 H. (M) A.A. Battery when we were stationed at the Fort Borstal, Rochester, Kent – while there I was often attached to other Batteries, namely at Burnham, Gillingham and Isle of Sheppy.
- Eventually I and a few others were posted to 579 Battery situated on Woolwich Common. That was where we were until the Flying Bombs began in July 1944 when the Battery at very short notice, moved down to Rye in Sussex under canvas. From there (still hunting Doodle Bugs) we moved to the Marshes Southminster Essex under canvas. After a short time there our next move was to flats at Leigh-on-Sea. Yes – real houses for the first time – before being kitted out and going on embarkation leave. That was when the Battery were shipped over to Ostende when I still remember most of us being sick during the crossing and the sailors being so concerned for us.

- On arriving we spent the night in a Hotel. Next day we travelled by truck, which seemed an endless journey over bad roads in very wintry conditions, arriving at our destination, a gunsite situated in the American Sector of the Antwerp Docks. The rear party of the all male Battery we were relieving were there to welcome us before they moved further up the line.
- We should have gone to Antwerp in November 1944, but we were held up because our troops had been held back around the Ardennes or somewhere in that area, so it was into December before we moved. Our duties at Antwerp were similar to England except the action was mainly against the V2 flying bombs. We lived in Nissen huts with a coke stove for heating situated in the middle of the hut, which we had to take our turn to stoke and clean out. The weather was very wintry, snow and frost. We washed our faces in cold water under a corrugated iron shelter and once a week if we were lucky, we were taken by truck to the baths in Antwerp. That was until they were hit by a V2 when I think we were taken to one of the Hotels. There were no flush toilets at the camp only buckets under a corrugated roof with sack screening. These were emptied each day, when possible by the Belgians, who were referred to as The Lavender Men.
- Food was quite often in short supply, I remember going round looking for crusts of bread and often wondered how the men managed. In England my mother used to send me down hard boiled eggs, but didn't think that possible in Antwerp, they wouldn't pass the censor. I also remember melting the snow in our mess tins on our stove to wash our stockings and smalls.
- That was where we were until glorious V.E. Day, when all the Ship's horns went mad, as did everyone else, I may add.
- After helping to demolish the gun pits etc. we moved under canvas to Deurne Aerodrome to pack up parts of equipment etc to send back to England. By this time anyone entitled to demob was being sent home, others like myself were asked to remuster. That was when my friend Peggy and I ended up being sent to the B.A.O.R. Training centre at Sennalager to train as A.T.S. Provost which didn't make us too popular with others at the time.
- When we had completed our course, we spent a short time on patrol in Brussels before being posted to a Civil Internment Camp (Sgt Steel) at Neumuster Germany.
- Our duties there were to look after and guard a few hundred ex-S.S. women awaiting their trials and at times going out with other sections of the Police to arrest others still in their homes. During my time there we moved all the inmates by train (fixed with searchlights and armed guards) down to No 5 level Internment Camp at Paderborn.
- My last duty from there before being demobbed in April 1947 was to attend the War Crimes Trials in Hamburg.
- I had a most adventurous and memorable time during my service, enjoying the comradeship and would do it all over again if I had my time.

Photos:



Photo taken whilst on patrol in Brussels 1945



British War Crimes Trials – Hamburg 1946/47
Ex S.S. Staff Ravensbruck Concentration Camp
(Private Chalmers on far right of prisoner, Sgt Lewin at the back
and Eva Barry on the left)



Antwerp – April 1945
Jan McKay Sally Nottage Nan Chalmers Depper Clark
Peggy Leitch Meg Poole Marg Munro Edie Costin May Clark
Joan Sharp Muriel Postlewaite Mavis Vernon

RESIDENTIAL PASS ANTWERP.
Certified that ~~4/12/74~~ ~~579/155~~ ~~579/155~~.....
579/155 (M) HAA Bty RA is at the moment l
within the bounds of ANTWERP.
Signature of Holder... *A. Schreier*.....
Issued by
J.P. Bus Major RA
Comd. 579/155 (M) HAA Bty RA
Date.....