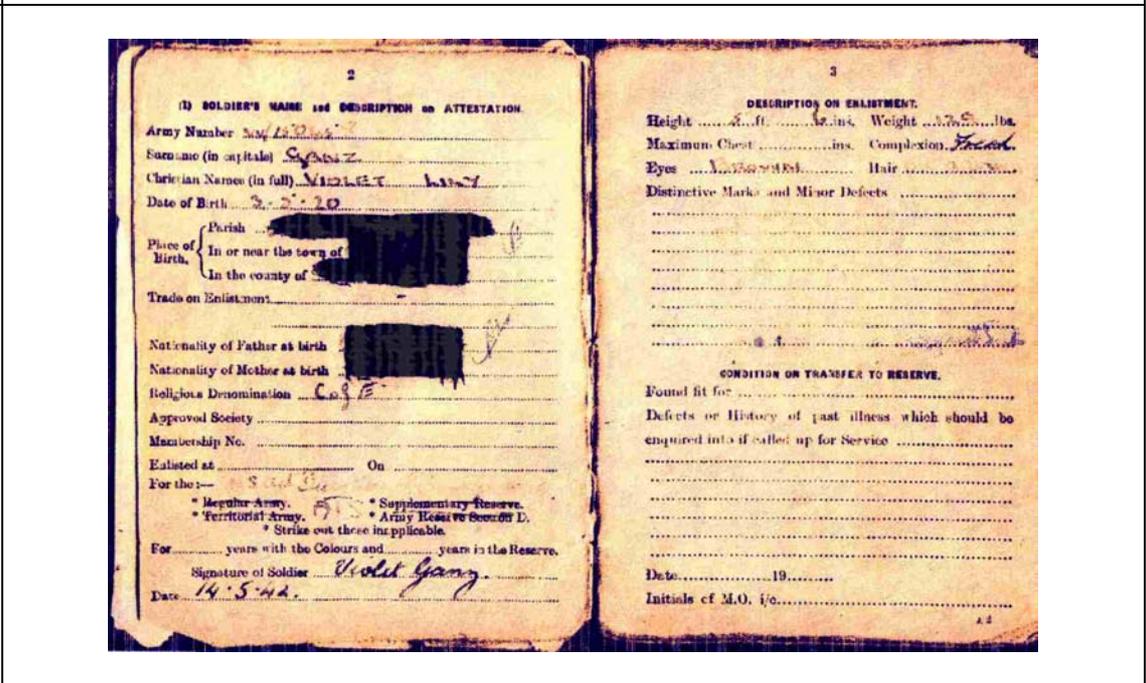


Surname: Thomas	First Name(s): Violet	Army Number: W/150458	
Maiden name (if applicable): Ganz	Name used during service: Ganz	Rank: L/Cpl	
Main base: Plymouth South Wales Leicester	Training base: Aldermaston Devizes (GL training) Weybourne (firing camp) Anglesey (firing camp)	Enrolled at: Aldermaston	
Platoon/Section:	Company/Battery: 555 (M) H.A.A. Battery	Group/Regiment: Royal Artillery R.A.P.C.	Command: A.A. Command
Year(s) of service: 08/05/1942 to 28/02/1946	Reason for discharge: Demob	Trade: Radar Operator Clerk (1/1/1945 – 28/2/1946)	
Uniform Issued: Hat Service dress Denim overall Shoes Boots Gaiters Vest Knickers Bra Stockings Gloves Grey worsted socks Greatcoat Pyjamas PT Kit Tin hat Battledress	Photo: 		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were in teams of 6; 2 in the transmitter and 4 in the receiver, and was connected to the command post by phone. • Manning Team: (6 ATS – 5 Privates and usually a Lance Corporal, sometimes a full Corporal). General maintenance for TX RX and PU (power unit) fill up with water and oil. Line up with Eddystone Lighthouse (Plymouth only) thus making 		

sure TX and RX are pointing in same direction at the same time. Sometimes a practice plane up (not very often).

- Stand-by Team: in case of sickness, or leave. We were kept busy – how, I have forgotten!
- Fatigues: Cleaning the loos and wash basins etc or cookhouse preparing potatoes and veg, washing up.
- Spare team for leave and sickness, a team went on leave at the same time (a weeks leave, plus a weekend leave taken all together) I think about every 3 months. Local leave – every 8th day leave from 9 am to 10.30 pm and the following week 4th day evening pass 6 pm to 10.30 pm.
- A Sunday on site – we were allowed to make the bed – the rest of the week we had to strip the bed, and fold up the blankets and sheets in a special way. Layout knife fork and spoon (we only had one of each) neatly for inspection by ATS Officer. This was followed by inspection outside for the whole site (except those in the cookhouse). The Captain usually took this parade, though sometimes the Major took it. On Sunday, no parade, but later on it was Church parade. RCs were excused the service. The service was usually taken by a local Vicar. Now and again the Chaplin (C of E) came and gave Communion to who wished to attend the service, usually in the NAAFI. Not many of us attended the service. Usually somebody came round and said “Holy Communion in 5 minute’s time”. So it meant we had to go as we were – just washing hands if necessary.
- If you left camp you had to wear service dress – and to have a pass. On site you wore either battledress and if it was a dirty job (or if it was hot) “Overall comb” (denims). There was sick parade (Monday – Friday) and anything serious you were sent to C.R.S. – a kind of nursing home – suitable only for simple illness. Sat or Sunday the M.O. did not come, you had to go to C.R.S. if serious, if not wait till Monday.
- P.T. sometimes on Saturdays on site – not at all in R.A.P.C.

Pay book:



Memorable moments:

- I was evacuated to Torquay with the Prudential, a week before war was declared and we were a reserved occupation. However, in 1942 a small number were released and went into the forces. I went to Aldermaston Training Centre. Having been away from home, it did not come hard, but some of the girls were homesick, but they soon settled down.

- I was to be a radar operator; although the word was not used, it was G.L. (Gun Laying) and highly secret. After training we were posted to sites just outside Plymouth. By then we were a Battery and we formed two gunsites. We arrived in Plymouth after it had its bad bombing, the town centre was flat. However, one night a lone plane was picked up and we had a direct hit. I was on duty that night. We had some more alerts but no direct hits - mostly life was peaceful. Still, did bring a plane down and that was very pleasing.
- Mostly I remember the funny little things. I went to Exeter for my medical (prior to joining the forces). It was April 1st 1942, and we were sitting about in our underwear. Then we were presented with a saucepan (cream enamel!) and told to perform! Afterwards we sat in a row – plus a glass beaker at our feet – what we looked like I dread to think!
- I was called up on May 8th and I went to Aldermaston – it was a big house in lovely grounds and we got used to living together and sleeping too. Then I and some others went to Devizes to a huge camp and learnt how to operate G.L. sets and how to do maintenance. Then we went to Sheringham to join the rest of the Battery for more training. We lived in a big empty hotel, but the firing took place at Weybourne. We had a packed lunch and had a dinner when we returned to Sheringham. A plane would fly by with a long red sleeve – we had to aim at that and fire at it. I am not sure how this worked, because being in the cabin we could not see anything. Anyway, we got the sleeve and shot a bit of it off. I've still got that red cotton square – we each had a piece. At least our training had finished. We were given 7 days leave and then we went to our first gunsite at Plymouth.
- We were sent to Cornwall and arrived in thick fog. The Battery was divided into two parts. Our half was near Cawsand, the other was at Maker. It was no fun that first night. We had to make our way to the dining “hall” – we didn't know where to go. The original camp had been all male and the site had a barbed wire fence all round it. The A.T.S. quarters were outside the barbed wire, with just a small gap. Finding that gap in a strange foggy night was no fun! It was hard work even without the fog.
- We slept in Nissen huts and in the summer we used to leave the door open for fresh cool air – only snag – we shared the field with a few sheep and they used to wander in and out – leaving their ‘visiting cards’. We had a ration of choc from time to time. One night Doris was sitting up eating part of her ration. Instead of getting out of bed and putting the chocolate away in her ‘soldiers box’ (our only cupboard for clothes and anything else) she put it under her pillow. Next morning she realised that a little field mouse had had a nice meal of chocolate.
- Another time a friend was on evening pass and offered to get some chips from the village. The same Doris and I, along with another girl Gladys, asked for chips. We had gone to bed (it was warmer there!) eating our chips, when we thought we could hear the voice of an Officer (female) so Doris and I quickly pushed our chips down in the bed, but Gladys still went on eating hers and in came the Officer. I was told off for letting Gladys eat in the barrack room. I was an N.C.O. at the time. Still she let her finish her chips. We weren't supposed to have food in the barrack room – a sensible rule really because we didn't need unwanted visitors.
- We lived together, worked together and had days off together and we did not fall out but lived in peace together. It was a really happy time for me, although the war spoilt it. I suppose we did not have much action, but we were reminded about it when in Plymouth. There was a covered market and people like Boots (the Chemist) had a stall there. Of course, they did not stock a lot of things. The Market was still there the last time I was back in Plymouth – about 20 years ago.
- We had arrived in Plymouth after the worst of the bombing, but we did see a little action. I think sites varied – it all depended on the Captain at each site. Each Battery had two sites, and a Major over both. I think there were two A.T.S.

Officers who looked after the girls. They were strict but fair and looked after the girls' welfare. No question of men and girls in the same sleeping huts – we were kept well apart! However, there was one man who worked with the girls – the G.L. girls and the radio mechanic – we just had to work together.

- Very near our site, but lower down the cliffs was a specially adapted G.L. – it was for any planes flying low up the Sound. They decided to replace the men (army) by women. As it was the Navy who could fire at these low flying planes, they put the WRNS in this little site. The WRNS Officer decided it was not suitable for WRNS. Next the WAAF Officer said no too. It's OK for the ATS!! It was lucky for us because it was lovely there. No Officers or senior N.C.O.s, no parades. We went up to the main diner and then took food back with us for tea and breakfast. We had a coal range, so the day hut was warm and we slept in another Nissen. Every other night we had to watch the screens and had the GL working from 8 pm to 8 am (another team did the other nights). We took it in turns and we were able to sleep part of the night. It was a beautiful place, and is now part of the coastal walk – but like all good things it came to an end.
- We were told we were to pack up and went to another local site and then we went to firing camp in Anglesey. The food was good – male cooks – I had them in several places and they were always the best. Another time I was on a course with male cooks providing the food and they grew their own fresh vegetables.
- After Anglesey we went to South Wales. There our Sergeant (Connie) went sick and we could not find out what was wrong except she was in hospital. Then it was made clear. I was on duty and sleeping in the manning hut – I was in a fever and quite ill. As it was Sunday, no sick parade, so I was taken by Ambulance to our sick bay – then put in bed – bliss – only to see the Doctor and I was back in the Ambulance on the way to Isolation Hospital – I had Scarlet Fever. I landed up in the children's ward along with Connie. Fortunately, nobody else caught it.
- Another A.T.S., Joan joined us – but she was from another Battery and no more A.T.S. Once we were allowed to get up and feeling better, we were able to help the nurse with really quite small children. None of them seemed to miss their families. It wasn't like a normal hospital and we enjoyed our stay.
- Then we had several weeks in a very nice home just outside Hereford and then back to the site again. By then the forces were in France again and the sites were not needed.
- We had several sites in South Wales. They tried to find things to interest us. Some went down a coal mine, I and some others went round the local Gas Works. We also went on route marches – lovely countryside. Then by December 1944 we were at our last site – Margam (near Port Talbot) where I have one lovely memory. It was Christmas Eve – the powers that be, said Margam Abbey could have the midnight service and the abbey could use candles for lighting. My friends and I got permission to go to that service. The moon was bright – a frosty night – it was a lovely walk down country lanes to the Abbey – the Abbey was full and the Welsh can sing. It was a night I still haven't forgotten. Christmas morning and as usual the R.A. Officers brought us tea in bed! At dinner time the officers served our dinner to us. A few days later, the Battery was disbanded and a crowd of us went to Leicester and became Clerks in the R.A.P.C. (Pay Corps). Life was so different. The work was very boring, however I was able to get home for the weekend. Train fare (return) was 15/- (75p) but then money went farther in those days! On a Saturday I went to the station and had a good dinner for 1/3d and then caught the train to London and then home by bus. Now and again I didn't get a pass, even then I was free to go out, and I soon got a billet in a private house with a very nice family, which was better and I got home for V.E. Day and for Christmas 1945. On 28th February 1946 I was demobed and was married (to one of the radio mechanics) in the following May.

- My two lives in G.L. and Pay Corps were very different and I was much happier on the gunsite. I was only a Clerk at the bottom of the tree.
- The best days were the days at Plymouth, which is where I met my husband. I suppose there were bad days but I can only remember the good days.

Photos:



Devizes 1942



1944 – Denims

(We were moving the wheels from the RX (receiver) to another spot.

The wheels were removed when on site.)

Violet Ganz, second from right