

<b>Surname:</b> Hodgson	<b>First Name(s):</b> Ella Jean	<b>Army Number:</b> W/234280	
<b>Maiden name (if applicable):</b> Bailes	<b>Name used during service:</b> Bailes	<b>Rank:</b> Sergeant	
<b>Main base:</b> Chilwel	<b>Training base:</b> Harrogate	<b>Enrolled at:</b> Middlesbrough	
<b>Platoon/Section:</b>	<b>Company/Battery:</b> B	<b>Group/Regiment:</b> Royal Ordnance	<b>Command:</b>
<b>Year(s) of service:</b> 11/12/1942 to May 1946	<b>Reason for discharge:</b> Demobbed May 1946	<b>Trade:</b> Clerk Class I	
<b>Uniform Issued:</b>  Greatcoat 2 uniforms 2 pr shoes 4 shirts 4 stockings 4 underwear silk and cotton knickers 2 ties	<b>Photo:</b>  <p style="text-align: center;">Cpl Bailes at 23 years (with Uncle blinded in First World War when aged 28)</p>		
<b>Description of daily tasks:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As ledger clerks we kept a record of <u>every</u> vehicle in the British Army and Home Guard.</li> <li>• We worked normal days.</li> </ul>		

Pay book:

Memorable moments:

- Firstly, I would like to say about my Uncle, Joseph Swales, pictured with me on the first page, that he was blinded in the First World War at the age of 28. He was awarded the Military Cross for bravery on the battlefield and in later years received the OBE from the Queen for services rendered to his town of Middlesbrough, Yorkshire. We were very proud of him!
- I had to wait to be called up and went to Harrogate, December 11<sup>th</sup> 1942, to Ethelburg Training School. I could not go before as I helped my mother in a business. She had been left a widow at 39 in 1939 when my father, a Captain in the Merchant Navy died in Malta of a heart condition, while on his way to Egypt. 3 months later the war started on what would have been his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. Consequently I had to wait until they called me for service and did 3 weeks training in a very good school and was picked to train as a signals operator. Was sent to Strathpeffer, 50 miles north of Inverness and was billeted in the Ben Wyvis Hotel, owned by the railway at that time. We were up there in January and February 1943 and had Norwegian soldiers billeted near us and had several dances with them.
- One thing that stood out, apart from having to learn to touch type, were the huge old rooms in the hotel and one had been made into a bathroom and we had to only use 2 inches of water!!
- I managed to scrape through my course and had been given a compassionate posting because of my mother, to Yarm. One girl I met up there became a very good friend and I was godmother to her first son.
- We had to have a medical before leaving Strathpeffer and the medical officer decided that I should have a medical board meeting in Invergordon as I had been graded A1 medically and 2 years before being drafted, I had had a serious illness; pneumonia, pleurisy, an operation on my right lung, an abscess taken off my lung. This meant that I could not have been sent overseas and I was regraded to C1 medically and couldn't stay in the Signal Corps! One side story to my operation – I was the second one in England to have it and the first one was George V!
- So back I had to go to Harrogate to re-muster and the only thing I could do was be a clerk in the Ordnance Corps. I was sent to Preston to a training school and

learned all about taking a car apart and ended up in a huge office in Chilwell outside of Nottingham.

- I met up with 4 girls and we went all the rest of our service together, 3 of them are with me in the group photo and the fourth was a good friend from Gateshead. I was bridesmaid to Ann and the last time we were altogether, was at Marjorie's wedding in Leeds and I sailed to Canada the day Ethel was married and missed her wedding.
- We were first billeted in a huge building called "Baby Sandhurst" on the base at Chilwell. There were 3 companies, the NAAFI and the Mess Hall all in the same building and it was heated through the floor! It was named after the Officers' Training School – Sandhurst in the south of England.
- We had no problem with regards to air raids, but we did have a drill early one morning that scared us a little.
- Our building where we worked was right on the far corner of the base which was a big one and as a Corporal I had to march the girls down through huge buildings occupied by tanks, armoured vehicles and such. That is where we spent our days pouring over huge ledgers which contained Home Guard vehicles as well as those belonging to the army. We knew something big was looming in 1944 as we army personnel did a lot of overtime. The base was run by Civil Servants in peace time but they did no overtime. Consequently, when we learnt of D Day we knew what we had been in the midst of.
- After the War finished in May 1945, I was on leave at that time and on returning to base as usual we had to go on medical and I went to Coy office to see if I was on as Night Orderly Corporal – and found out that I wasn't – but the list had been changed and I should have been on that night. Instead I left the base – so I was put on charges for neglecting my duties! I got by with a reprimand but my Sergeants stripe was put on hold for 3 months! At the end of 1945 the soldiers who had been in for the very first of the War came home from the Middle East and were put in our office to await their demob numbers. So little old me – a mere corporal – had Staff Sgts, Sgt Majors and such all old enough to be my father, under me on my section, and one morning I got there early showing off my sergeants stripes and had a cheering section. That night I was escorted across the road to the Blue Bell Inn to Christen my stripe!
- I was on leave again in August of 1945 when the War in Japan was over.
- The work was very interesting and you have no idea how many vehicles were 'lost'! One time I had a letter saying some farmer had a Sherman tank in the middle of one of his fields and I had to find out who it belonged to. Some soldier – a little drunk – had driven it there and forgotten about it!
- I think we all enjoyed our time in the service and had our moments. Once or twice we could not leave the vicinity of Chilwell as they feared an invasion – which thankfully didn't happen. I was fortunate that, through my blind uncle, I had friends in a small town not too far away and I used to take my friends there at their request, for the odd meal and sometimes a weekend, which was very, very nice of them.

**Photos:**



Ann Clark Jean Bailes Edith Groom Marjorie Bowen