

Surname: Lowe	First Name(s): Elsie Mary	Army Number: W/318166	
Maiden name (if applicable): Jones	Name used during service: Jones	Rank: W/S Sgt	
Main base: Taunton, Somerset	Training base: Pontefract, Yorks	Enrolled at: Shewsbury	
Platoon/Section: Clerical	Company/Battery: No 5 & 'H' Coy	Group/Regiment: South West District ATS	Command: Southern
Year(s) of service: Almost 3 years	Reason for discharge: Demobbed	Trade: Clerical	
Uniform Issued: Regular issue, No extras	Photo:  <p style="text-align: center;">Elsie Jones 1947</p>		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typing, filing, general duties prior to promotions. Then C.Clerk duties. • The H.Q. R.A.S.C. was a fair distance from the main H.Q. where the camp was, so we had to allow for that. Mostly we worked days, but had to spend weekends on occasion manning the switchboard. • P.T. was done before breakfast, on the driveway. 		

you passed A1, you were vaccinated and inoculated by male orderlies and then we could hurriedly dress to be marched off for more instructions, including quad drill on the Barrack Square, often confused by the commands being given to other squads also being drilled at the same time.

- As a rookie A.T.S, we had squad drills every day and early morning PT. A chilly experience! We were taught how to use a stirrup pump for P.A.D. (Passive Air Defence). We had to put on our respirators and enter a small cement building for a tear gas tests. Sore arms from the vaccinations didn't excuse you from the various activities. Wearing a steel helmet and gas mask added to the soreness. We also had an occasional route march. Eventually we completed basic training. I was among those put in a holding unit for a Personnel Selection Test and was sent to the Clerk's Training Centre at Golders Green, London, for a 6 week course.
- CTC was a collection of private houses, taken over by the military. Classrooms were on one street and the billets were on others. I was at No 9 Spaniards Close. The trees lining the streets were starting to bloom, a lovely sight. The houses were very modern. All Mod-cons. We slept in three tier bunks. From our bunks in a bay window, we could see the bombers returning from night missions. The song, 'Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer' said it all. We got to know the code lights for emergency landings. Wounded on board etc. Life at CTC was such a change from Training Camp.
- We did our PT on a lawn at Kenwood House. We were close to Hampstead Heath and enjoyed that. Rumour was that we were replacing a soon to graduate unit that had been killed by a flying bomb. (Never learned if that was so). On a day pass to town with friends and needing to buy writing paper, we went into a Woolworth's where I bumped into my brother who was en route home. He had been in Norway and I had not seen him for quite a long time. I had heard that my younger brother had reached the UK after escaping from a P.O.W. Camp in Germany, but I could not get leave while in training. However, before I left the CTC, he went to London to meet me. We arrange to meet in front of St Martins in the Fields. After passing him a couple of times, we recognized each other. I was 5 years older and in uniform. He had left as a 19 year old and had now aged beyond his years and looked frail in his uniform. We had a great visit. He wanted to go to Buckingham Place. When we got there, a friendly policeman told us to stand on the pavement by the gate. No one else was there. Soon a car carrying the Queen and two Princesses turned into the gate. They smiled and waved as we saluted them. A plus for our visit.
- We were given day passes on Saturdays unless we were on duty, so several of us would go into the City. We enjoyed going to the Service Clubs. The Stage Door Canteen, where we danced to Mantovani or to the Nuffield Club. We girls stuck together. No Yanks for us! We slept in the Underground stations a couple of times on a weekend pass. With the bombings over, except for the V1 and V2 rockets, the stations were not used as much and they were safe and cheap.
- VE Day we were given a bag lunch and a pass to go and celebrate. So a group of us went to town and made for the Palace. For safety, we linked arms on the way down the Mall. It was scary being swept along with thousands of deliriously happy people. We were close enough to see the Royal Family on the balcony, joined by Mr Churchill. We were there for a long time. Later we made our way back to our Billets. We were so exhausted we just fell asleep as we were.
- The Victory Parade was our next foray to town before the postings were published. That was a sad day, when we all went our different ways. I was posted to No 5 Company A.T.S., S.W. District Headquarters, Southern Command at Taunton Somerset. The camp was at Pyrland Hall, a few miles from Taunton, with various HQ Staff at other locations. I was attached to the R.A.S.C. at Tainfield House, an old Manor House complete with a ghost! It was a couple of miles from the main HQ housed at Pyrland Hall. We sometimes were lucky and got unofficial lifts from

Dispatch Riders, or a Jeep, more often after a contingent of Red Devils Airborne, arrived at the HQ.

- Pyrland Hall camp was situated in the Great Park, part way along the long carriageway. It was heavily treed with a swamp nearby, a great haven for mosquitoes. Our billets were Nissen huts. Condensation often ran down the walls. The ablutions that were reached by duckboards had cement floors with a row of washbasins. Open windows meant that insects were plentiful. You had to be in dire need to go there after lights out! We had 24 other rank beds, 12 per side with an NCO cubicle at one end and a small stove/heater in the centre. A pipe chimney went up through the roof. I can't recall the regulations re caring for it. We heated water for hot water bottles and made black tea in an old jam tin. Occasionally, in winter, we draped our greatcoats on our beds for warmth, sometimes our groundsheets too.
- We pressed our skirts by putting them between the bottom biscuit and the bottom sheet and hoped that it didn't get moved in the night. Laundry was taken to and picked up at the Company Stores. Only 'Issue' was accepted. We took our collars to a Taunton Chinese Laundry. Some items like stockings we laundered, probably with the same soap that we used on ourselves. There were no silk stockings although, much later, they were available for off duty wear. Hair, of course, must never touch your collar. Our CO was strict about our behaviour when away from camp as Military Police patrolled the streets.
- My first job was in the typing pool, later as a clerk in the Barrack Office. We processed indents for supplies from units throughout S.W. District, and located them at various barracks stores and authorised the shipment to fill the requests. This is a simplification of a busy and necessary part of getting supplies where needed from cutlery to beds etc etc. Married quarters for returning troops were in demand also. Most of the stores were spread around the district. I was promoted to Corporal while at Tainfield House. I remember doing my first squad drill and my voice acting up while the men watched, of course!
- The room the Chief Clerk and his staff used, had a large bay window overlooking parkland with cattle. In the summer the window was covered with cluster flies and they got so bad that a powdered D.D.T. was sprayed on. Each day the flies had to be swept up. Today, of course, D.D.T. is banned.
- HQ S.W. District with all its components were moved to a former US Army base, Sherford Camp. It was on the other side of Taunton. With staff changes, due to demobs, I was made Chief Clerk and promoted to Sergeant. My initiation into the Sergeant's Mess was over quickly. I felt that I was being observed and was on my guard, but it wasn't until I was finishing my bowl of cabbage soup I found that they had put a caterpillar in it. Well, it was either dash out or fool them. So I put my spoon down and said, "That was good, too bad the caterpillar drowned". Silence, then cheers, I had made it!
- There were some German POW orderlies at the camp. It was a pleasant site, tree lined roads and not too far out of Taunton. It was a good posting. I met my husband at Pyrland Hall, he was with R.E.M.E. and had just returned from India. Their HQ at Bishopsmead later moved to Sherford Camp. The local civilians were very nice. There was a Church Canteen on Silver Street and the Salvation Army had one near the Railway station. I learned to play skittles and drink cider. The mild not the rough! The pub was very old and the game was played on a dirt floor. Our highlight was having a goulash and chips supper at Slocomb's before heading back to camp.
- My next posting was to H Company, Ashchurch, Gloucester. An army vehicle depot, as Orderly Room Sergeant. A big change for me. Later I was posted to No 3 Army College, Chiseldon, Wiltshire. We figured we were in holding prior to demob. Volunteers were needed to help at Savernake Hospital, near Marlborough. We were taken by truck each day. Discipline was strict. At our noon meal, no one sat down until Matron arrived and the Blessing given. Eventually our documents and railway

warrant arrived. I had to report to HQ York Garrison at Imphal Barracks, Fulford Road, York.

- At each phase of army life, parting with friends was never a happy event. Addresses were exchanged and in my own case, several of us maintained contact. I am glad that I did not miss the experience of being an A.T.S.



No 5 Coy A.T.S. Pyrland Hall Camp, Nr Taunton 1945
Co Office staff – standing Mac, Beryl Davies, Mary Burns, Iris Coles Sylvia Harper



R.A.S.C. H.Q. Tainfield House, Nr Pyrland Hall Camp 1945
Front - Bill, Vic (1st Airborne 'The Red Devils')
L-R – Tex, Capt Alsop, Elsie Jones, Mary Burns, L/Cpl M Stephens



Sgts posing for a farewell photo at Sherford Camp, Taunton 1947
L-R – Elsie Jones, Jan?, Shirley Bruton, Olive Turner



District Barracks Office Staff, Sherford Camp, Taunton 1946/7
L-R – N Gould, Capt Stokoe, Elsie Jones, Madge McCanna, two civilian clerks



Sherford Camp 1946, Heavy snowfalls – water rationed – heat non existent in the huts, so we warmed up with snowfights! Everyone pitched in, even the Officers



Posted to 'H' Coy, Ashchurch, Glos 1947
Orderly Room Staff
Front left Betty Robinson, Elsie Jones



These were the Flashes that we wore on our sleeves, I am not sure when in 1946 we changed to the Grouse? We had a visit from the G.O.C. and it could have been around that time or later.