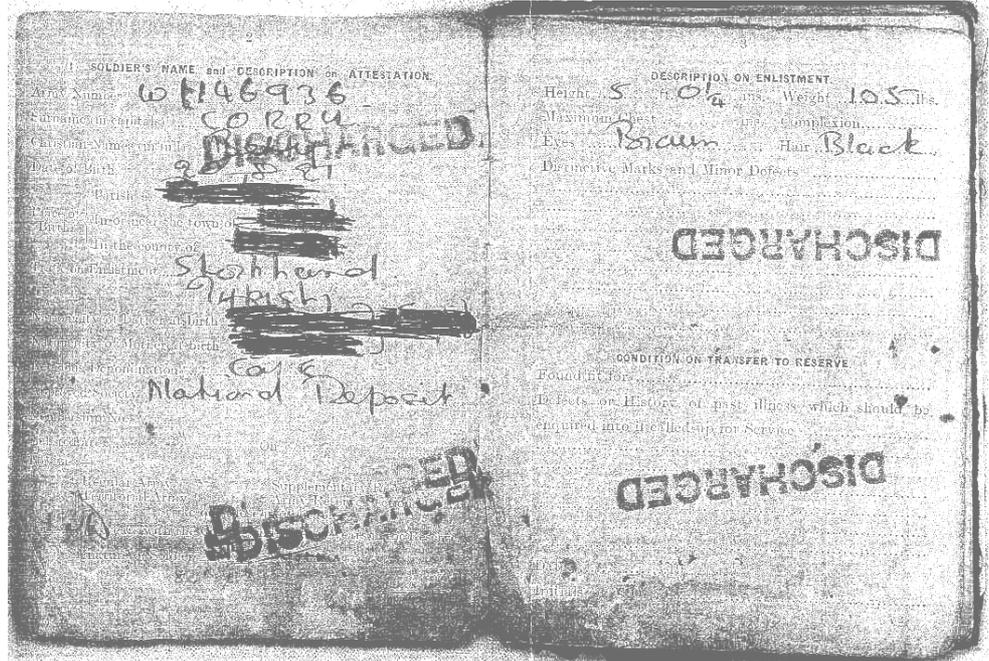


Surname: Templeton	First Name(s): Betty	Army Number: W/146936	
Maiden name (if applicable): Corry	Name used during service: Corry	Rank: Sergeant Decorations: Africa Star. Defence Medal, War Medal (1939-1945)	
Main base: Strathpeffer, Ross Shire Preston Cairo Alexandria	Training base: Pontefract Barracks	Enrolled at:	
Platoon/Section:	Company/Battery:	Group/Regiment:	Command:
Year(s) of service: April 1942 to 24/12/45	Reason for discharge: Family reasons	Trade: Clerk / Shorthand Typist	
Uniform Issued: S.D: Jacket Skirt Shirt Collars Tie Shoes Stockings Underwear Tropical kit: Sandals	Photo: 		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General clerical and shorthand typing duties in Preston. • In Cairo, I was sent to work in the office of the Director of Ordnance Services and on the first day had to sign the Official Secrets Act as they were already planning for the invasion of Sicily and later Italy. I think for the first time I really felt part of the war and was at last doing something useful. During the summer months I worked from 8.00 am to 12 noon and from 5.00 pm to 8.00 pm in the evening, seven days a week. The afternoons were too hot and I was encouraged to rest. • In Alexandria, I initially acted as secretary to the Brigadier and was attached to the Legal Department. Following my promotion to Sergeant, I was put in charge of the Office. 		

Pay book:



Some personal details were obliterated from the paybook before leaving London, for security reasons

Memorable moments:

- I was conscripted into the A.T.S. late April 1942 when I was 20 and after basic training at Pontefract Barracks I was posted to Strathpeffer in Ross Shire to do an intensive three month clerical course. This entailed an assessment of my shorthand and typing ability, learning about all the various Army Forms (of which there were hundreds) and endless lists of Army abbreviations, Army ranks and equivalent ranks of all other Services. There was a lot of work and study involved but it was a very pleasant three months in a lovely part of Scotland.
- From there it was home to Leeds for a short leave before my next posting. The journey from Strathpeffer on the slow train was quiet but the overnight journey from Edinburgh was quite eventful as, after midnight, I was able to say "It's my 21st birthday" and as the train was packed with service personnel there was no shortage of food and drink! We had a tremendous party, but it was a bit of an anticlimax when I arrived at Leeds to find the trams had not started running and I had to sit in the station for over 2 hours before I could get home!
- I was then posted to Preston in Lancashire as a clerk/shorthand typist at an R.E. Supply Depot, where I volunteered as soon as I could for an overseas posting. Within two months I had been accepted and was sent to a Holding Unit in London to be kitted out with tropical gear and was informed very sternly that we must not mention this to anyone and indeed I didn't know where I was being posted to. Luckily there were no air raids whilst we were in London.
- On 16th January 1943 we travelled to Liverpool where we embarked on a troopship and joined the rest of the convoy. Whilst waiting to be escorted through the dangerous Atlantic waters, I witnessed a number of terrifying raids on the City of Liverpool and again thought how lucky I was.
- The ship was called the SS Volendam, an ex-Dutch Cruise Liner, stripped, of course, of all luxurious fittings but four of us were lucky enough to get a cabin with two portholes whereas the majority were below decks. I had one or two scary experiences when the accompanying destroyers and corvettes dropped depth charges, but in the event all the convoy survived.
- This was my first long sea voyage and I was a bit apprehensive about sea

sickness as we wallowed through some pretty rough seas and there were no stabilisers fitted in those days. However, I found my sea legs fairly quickly. During the day we were kept occupied with boat drill every morning and various lectures about avoiding sunstroke, being careful of what we ate and drank (particularly the latter) the danger of mosquitoes and, most importantly, how we should comport ourselves in a foreign country! However, we were allowed to relax in the evenings and in fact, a few of us got together with some of the men and formed our own concert party. (I had a good singing voice in those days). There were also 2 ENSA parties on board so we were never short of entertainment.

- The journey to Durban took around 6 weeks, partly because our ship was the slowest in the convoy and also we had to go a long way out in the Atlantic to avoid enemy submarines. After we disembarked, the ship turned around immediately and returned to England. We were in Durban for just over 3 weeks and this was a real holiday as we were billeted in a lovely hotel on the sea front. The clerks amongst us were set to work each morning to help in the South African Army Post Office sorting the mail, but the afternoons and evenings were free. The weather was glorious and we spent the afternoons on the beach and the evenings at the open air cinema or were invited to dances.
- I am afraid we gorged ourselves on the masses of fresh fruit which had been almost unobtainable in the UK. Quite a few of the girls made themselves ill and we were ordered to go easy as the next person to become ill would be put on a charge.
- The dream ended all too soon and we found ourselves on another troopship, this time not so large or comfortable. There were also three battalions of raw African conscripts who had only received the least basic training possible and were quite unused to discipline and I heard that the Captain was not at all happy about the combination of A.T.S. girls and Africans. He said that should we be so unlucky as to be torpedoed the girls wouldn't stand a chance. However, his doubts were ignored by the powers that be and we were soon underway on the next leg of our journey. By this time the heat was almost unbearable and it was not such a comfortable journey. It was also quite weird and rather scary to hear the African drums throbbing at night and the chanting when we were miles out to sea. During the day there were compensations such as watching the dolphins and flying fish and there were some spectacular electric storms.
- I arrived at Port Tewfik in Egypt three months after leaving England and we were all bundled into army lorries with our kitbags for the final stage of our journey to the Kasr el Nil barracks in Cairo. Incidentally these barracks had been condemned after the First World War! It was there I had my first horrifying experience of bugs! The place was alive with them and three times a week I had to dismantle my bed on the balcony, stuff all the corners and crevices with cotton wool soaked in paraffin and set fire to them. The smell was horrible. It was not a very pleasant experience but it was amazing how quickly one became used to it and also the obligatory mosquito nets, because the barracks were close to the River Nile.
- In Cairo, I joined the Royal Signals Dance Band and we played at various Clubs and Camps in the area. On these occasions I was given special permission to wear civilian clothes. My sister-in-law sent me copies of the latest songs so I was up to date with the latest dance music. I was also lucky enough to get tickets for a concert by Nelson Eddy when he came to Cairo to entertain the troops. Naturally, I visited the Sphinx and Great Pyramids of Giza whilst in Cairo.
- After being in Cairo for a year I developed bronchitis and as the barracks overlooked the Nile, I was posted to Alexandria on medical grounds. There I was attached to the Legal Department at H.Q. and also acted as secretary to the Brigadier (which got me 2 stripes!). After a while I was promoted to Sergeant and

took charge of the Office. I was still in Alexandria on V.E. Day and we had a big parade along the sea front and celebrations well into the evening.

- In September 1945 I was called into the office of the C.O. and told that my Aunt, with whom I lived as both my parents were dead, was terminally ill with cancer and I was repatriated on family grounds, earlier than I expected.
- The journey home was much quicker as this was via the Mediterranean Sea. I travelled on a very old troopship and had to master the art of sleeping in a hammock. As you can imagine first efforts were hilarious!
- Many experiences were very frightening and I had to cope with conditions not previously in my imagination, but I do not regret any of the time I spent serving with the A.T.S. and I was proud to be working alongside so many other dedicated people from other Services.

Photos:



On the Royal Signals houseboat (for personnel on leave) on the Nile.
Betty Templeton wearing tropical issue, including sandals.