

Surname: Turner	First Name(s): Terri (Ada)	Army Number: W/9243	
Maiden name (if applicable): Turner	Name used during service: Turner	Rank: Cpl	
Main base: Belfast Ballykinlar, Co Down Ballymena, Co Antrim	Training base: Victoria Barracks, Belfast	Enrolled at: Recruiting Office, centre of Belfast	
Platoon/Section:	Company/Battery: 40 th Co Antrim Company 8 th Clerical Company	Group/Regiment: Royal Irish Fusiliers HQ	Command: Northern Ireland District
Year(s) of service: 14/03/1939 to 14/3/1943	Reason for discharge: Discharged to go home and look after my widowed mother	Trade: Clerk Cipher Operator	
Uniform Issued: 1939: Initially silver badge, then Service Dress Shirts Shirt Collars (we bought our own Van Hussen collars as they were much smarter)	Photo:  St Patrick's Barracks, Northern Area B'mena 1942 Back row - Teri Turner Myra Moffet Front row - Rose McVeety Sheila Graham		
Description of daily tasks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First of all secretarial; typing, duplicating etc. • Later cipher – encoding – de-coding. 		
Pay book:	Not available		

Memorable moments:

- I signed up on 14 March 1939 which was before the outbreak of war and was called up 10 days after the outbreak of war in September 1939. I lived in Northern Ireland and there was no conscription. No uniforms were available for A.T.S. in March 1939, so we were given a small silver A.T.S. badge which I still have today. I eventually got my uniform in June 1939.
- We had a two week camp in June 1939 and were attached to the 40th County Antrim Company, which was a general company. A.T.S. were used as cooks, orderlies, drivers and clerks as at that stage in the war they had not considered that women could be used for anything else, so additional trades were not available.
- At June camp, there was little work for the clerks to do, so we ended up on guard duty where the only part of me that managed to get sunburnt was my hands.
- Later I was attached to the Royal Irish Fusiliers which was an infantry training centre (ITC) where I worked with two other ATS as a clerk in the orderly room. The officers had never had to work with women before and we were treated like ladies. They escorted us everywhere and on the first Saturday were taken to a dance at the Sergeant's Mess. We were escorted home after the dance and as we passed the rank of huts which held the local regimental tailor, hairdresser etc and the camp weapons training office, we noticed that there was a taxi sat outside with its engine running. Our escorts thought that the tailor was having a late night out and commented about this. The next day we discovered that the weapons training office had been cleared out – the taxi had been waiting for the IRA to come out of the office with their loot!!
- The ITC took the army class intake (conscripts) for the Fusiliers. Mainly Irishmen who went as the B.E.F. When the conscripts arrive I used to sit with the officer and take their particulars. It seemed that the men were called up in trades as we got groups from the same trade arriving at the same time. At one point we seemed to be getting lots of painters and decorators but one chap turned up who seemed very different to the others. He wore a smart suit and hat and was wearing a cravat rather than a tie. I was a bit confused until he explained that he was an interior decorator! Obviously the army found it difficult to work out the difference between someone who put paint on the walls and someone who was a designer.
- In 1942 the ITC was closed down and I was sent to HQ Northern Ireland District, to Upper Malone, Belfast – 8th Clerical Company. This was a very 'posh' area of Belfast, but the billets were awful. We were put in a big house, but some of the girls were in the stables and had rats to deal with. The latrines were a wooden plank with a hole and a bucket underneath and sacking behind. One of the ATS girls came running back one day to say that she had had to sing as much opera as she could remember, as loudly as she could, just so the soldiers on latrine duty would not come and empty her bucket whilst she was still in situ!
- My friend and I thought it would be very interesting to do cipher work so we were sent on a training course. In January 1942 we were sent to St Patrick Barracks, Ballymena the Royal Ulster Rifles HQ. On the way the train was put into a siding for a hour with us still on it, whilst another train came into the station. That train pulled up alongside us and we could see the people in there, but they were in strange uniforms. We couldn't quite work out what was different about them, but it turned out that they were the first lot of Americans coming over to join the war effort.
- One day we had what we call a 'soft Irish day'. The day was bright and warm, but it was raining lightly. My friend and I decided to go for a swim. We put on our costumes and put our skirt and blouse over the top. We ran across the ground in front of where we were billeted – married quarters just near the beach – and over the sand dunes and down to the water. We took off our clothes and jumped in.

We were having a lovely time swimming around and then we suddenly noticed it – a red flag. The whole area was used as a mortar range and when the flag was up, they were about to fire. We starting shouting and ran out of the sea, waving our towels above our heads. A head popped up from the sand dunes and an English Staff Sergeant looked at us strangely. We told him off for not checking the sea before putting up his flag, but he seemed confused – what were these people doing swimming in the rain!

- After four years' service I was entitled to a discharge, as there was no conscription in N. Ireland, and as my father had died and my mother was very distressed, I left the A.T.S. to go home.

Photos:



Pre WWII Recruiting Parade
Portadown, Co Armagh N.I. July 1939

Terri Tuner