

Joan Steel née Richardson

The following details were provided by Joan's son David Steel.

Joan Marion Richardson was born in Paris in 1910 and was known to her family and friends as Nonie.

She was educated in France and lived there, apart from the First World War years, which she spent with her grandmother in Stirlingshire.

Joan joined the FANY (*First Aid Nursing Yeomanry*) in late 1942 with qualifications in French and also in censoring and ciphering which she had gained during earlier war work in Bermuda and Nova Scotia.

In 1942 she transferred to the French section of the S.O.E. (*Special Operations Executive*). This part of the FANY, secret at the time, was involved in espionage work.



Joan's record card shows her unit as MOI (SP) which was the codename for the SOE.

The department was based at 1 Dorset Square, London. Part of her work was to supply agents with the correct clothing and equipment before they were parachuted behind enemy lines. Joan, with her excellent knowledge of the French way of life, was ideal for this job.

From December 1944 she served in France on the staff at the headquarters of the French Forces of the Interior (*Etat Major FFI*) until she was demobilised in June 1945. This body was concerned with bringing together the various resistance groups across France to form a new national military force. Nonie did not talk about her work in France so it is unclear what her work actually involved.

She continued to work in France until May 1946 as a driver for FANY BRCS Welfare Unit (*British Red Cross*)

In 1957 Joan was invited back to 1 Dorset Square when the Queen Mother unveiled a plaque in memory of those who had fought for and helped the Free French Forces during the Second World War.

People in Gatehouse will know Joan as Mrs Steel of Whitefield on the Cut.

SERVICE RECORD.

NAME..... *Richardson, J. W.*.....

NUMBER: *17315*..... TRAINING COURSE..... *41st*.....

DATE OF ENROLMENT..... *29.12.42*..... DATE OF RELEASE..... *16.6.46*.....

UNIT/S..... *17.0.1 (S.P.) Welfare Division B.P.C.2*.....

CATEGORY AT ENLISTING..... *Equipment - Driver*.....

CATEGORY AT RELEASE..... *Driver*.....

RANK AT TIME OF RELEASE..... *Ensign*.....

CONFIDENTIAL REMARKS:

B. de P. Wincier
Rank: *Ensign*
Section: *F.P.N.Y. H.P.*