

Mr. William Rockey (Bill)

MY TIME AT PD (Pembroke Dock)

I must start in August 1945 because it has a bearing on my choice of trade in the RAF. I should have taken a job in a garage when I left school, but I cracked my collar bone pushing a car into a barn on a farm and got trapped by the barn door jamb. My arm was strapped to my chest for three weeks. On my way home after my treatment was over, my Mother and I got off the bus outside our local cinema, and in the door window was an advert for a rewind boy. We went in and I started work right away and mother walked home by herself. I worked from 1945 until Easter 1947, after the big freeze. I then worked on a brickyard until I was due for national service. I signed up in the RAF, 5yrs on 4yrs off. I chose the trade of instrument mechanic because I really liked the time I was at the cinema, and I was told that I would work on cameras and projectors. So on 18th July 1949, aged 18yrs I was in.

I did my square bashing at HENLOW, then my trade training at MELKSHAM.

At Melksham. I found that I would not work on cameras/projectors until I reached the rank of corporal. I really felt let down and became depressed. I just wrote down the teachings but did not take it in. That is until nearly the end of the course. I pulled myself together, and started to study, but I'd left it a bit late. I failed the test exam terribly but I did get 80% marks for the Automatic pilot, highest in our class. I was passed as F. T. J. (Further Training on the Job).

That's when the BEST posting I ever had, RAF Pembroke Dock, happened.

No one travelled very far in my young days, so my movements in the RAF were quite an adventure. But on that first train journey to PD, I wondered if I was going on forever. And the walk from the station was no exception. That wall must be a mile long. Turning the corner I went through the little gate to the guard room to report in. (Little knowing that I would once again stand by that gate, 46yrs later).

I was in a billet at the far end, near what we knew as THE BOILER HOUSE. There was only one large square type stove to warm the room. In winter we used to take turns to light the stove, and needing wood to start with, we used to go down into an underground air raid shelter and break up one of the lattice type seats.

I was in the FLIGHT SERVICING dept, and our base was in a building between the railway line and No.1 hanger. We were upstairs accessed by a flight of steps with a landing, (we used to feed the Gannets on this landing, and they used to sit on the wooden hand rails, afraid of no one), on the seaward side of the building, I used to like seeing the dock loco' pass by.

In our library we had every manual needed for each instrument, and I gained much needed info' and in January 1951 was promoted to LAC.

We did major inspections on the Sunderlands, mainly in No.1 hanger. After each Inspection was over, one of every trade who did it HAD to go on the TEST FLIGHT. I had many a trip but as far as I know never had a log book of my air time. I do remember my first flight. Very exciting.... I didn't know we were OFF until I saw a ship below us. I wondered however, how searchers in these aircraft ever found what they were looking for - the sea reflected the sun back to you like as from a mirror, blindingly so.

The first landing was also an experience. The sound was like landing on a gravel road.

The final day came, and I was posted to Germany. It was July 1951, first I was given seven days leave, and it was on this leave that I met Cath' at a local dance in Tunstall, at home. We are still together and this December we have our 56th wedding anniversary. (2010).

Although we met some of the girls who lived in PD and went to local dances, we even went to one of their houses, but I can't remember which street it was. I didn't take up with one of them. YET, when I went for

my train one of the girls came to see me off. To this day I can't remember her name. Anyway, I missed the train, and she helped me with my cases and we caught the ferry across to Neyland. (There was no bridge then), we had to run for the train and I never really had time to say goodbye and thanks. The guard on the train was annoyed that I hadn't changed my travel warrant for a ticket, and said I've a good mind to put you off at the next stop. Thank goodness he didn't.

That young girl will be in her 70s by now and I do hope she is okay.