

From Ration Book, thru' Wilhelmshaven to Pension Book - Alex G Briggs

So a bit of background of how PRS has come to me since leaving in 1955. It might be of interest.

Me I joined the RAF Apprentices on leaving school. Sent to Locking and there were a few PRS guys there. In particular Mike Keen. He was senior to me (and older!!). Long story short I never stayed the course and left. When leaving Mike swapped his old "Best Blue" uniform for mine as it was newer, better condition etc. When I handed my "Best Blue" in to the stores I got a rollicking due to the excessive wear and tear on a suit 12 months older than it should have looked. They still don't know the reason.

I am a keen jazz fan and in the late 50's & early 60's went regularly to London Kilburn & Festival Hall to see live jazz with Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Brubeck, MJQ, etc. One Festival Hall show during the interval 2 guys came into view and yes it was PRS again. Both guys' shoes were not as shiny as when I had spent time polishing them as a fag for each of them in Collingwood. They were Tom Fisher, now in Australia, and the other was Ian Grant. Last I heard Ian had been in the catering trade for one of the big swish Hotels in London. Anyone know his whereabouts now?

My younger sister joined the WAAF. One her first leave she came home with her RAF boy friend in his car. The car was a Maigret type Citroen, which enthusiasts will know has the two inverted chevrons on the radiator. I said that looks like a "Corporal Technicians" staff car. It was, the boy friend was that rank in the RAF. Worst was to follow, when he came in our house we greeted each other like long lost pals. My sister and family did not have a clue, I was amazed the Boy Friend was an ex Collingwood guy from same years as me but younger. His name was David Guilfoyle, last heard of living in Watford.

Then in the 60's I lived in Portsmouth and wandering thru' Marks & Spencer or British Home store one of these I saw this big guy telling the staff (girls) in the shop what they should and should not be doing. He looked at me and said I know you from somewhere. Yes it was PRS again. The guy was Robert Jenkins of Rodney same years as me. He was always known as Biff. He was the assistant store Manager.

In the late 80's I worked in Benelux world.

On a trip home to UK I went via Ostend to Dover.

On arrival at Ostend I had time to kill till next ferry. I parked and walked into Ostend for a snack and a Belgian beer. An Englishman ran the cafe I entered completely on spec. Yes, you guessed it was "Biff" Jenkins. So the next ferry or two was missed and I slept off the alcohol on the 4 hour crossing to Dover.

Pre Newbury I heard about the pending reunion by way of the radio. The lady running the show as we all know and can never thank her enough was Liz Bird of Chandlers Ford.

I lived in Romsey 5 miles away. However when I found Liz's house it was in the next road where I spent many weekends at a close friends house. PRS again was just half a mile away.

Since then I have been to Newbury -fantastic weekend. If you could bottle that I would have lived on it for weeks after. Then the weekend at Wilhelmshaven - Again fantastic we never had such weather when we in term time. Bristol followed and again great time seeing and meeting so many folk from the special school. So many travelled from around the globe for all these reunions.

The school must be special as so many still meet and keep in contact today.

Final coincidences for me, my parents lived for years in Gosport -Hants. When going there in the season we would stop often at one of the biggest, pick your own Strawberry fields in the area. One of the lovely properties adjacent to these Strawberry fields was owned by a great lady who served, counted the money of your pickings, and organised the fruit farm area. At the time I never dreamt or knew of PRS involvement on a fruit farm in Hampshire.

The truth is a very special PRS girl, lovely lady & can't thank her enough for lots of things. Especially "The Book". The house close by is called POSBROOK known to several PRS 'ites now. The lady of the house in this true episode of the story is Babs - Barbara McGee / Latham. Another star from Collingwood.

All these coincidences really happened to one PRS pupil who has gone from Ration Book ,thru' Wilhelmshaven to Pension Book so far!!

Collingwood Boy "L 60" Alex G Briggs 1952-55.