

LIFE IN ABBOTSKERSWELL

1939 - 1952

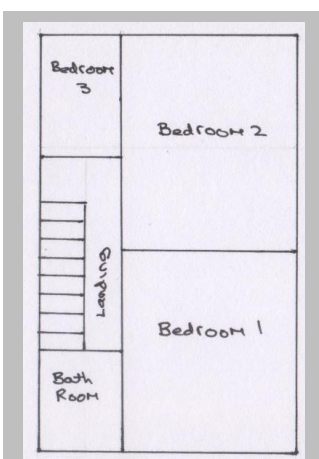
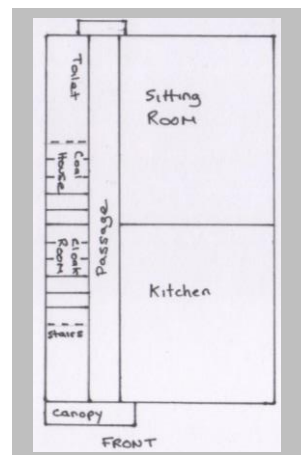
By Patrick Honey

The Honey family of five moved into 10 Orchard Terrace, now 19 Manor Road, when it was a brand new Council House. His father Charles, from Decoy, was in the army, his mother was villager Gladys (a descendent of John Lee, 'The Man They Couldn't Hang '); he had twin sisters Janet and Patricia, known as Midge and later sister Karen.

10 Orchard Terrace: when we moved in this was a far better house than the cottage we rented in Ipplepen, but by today's standards Orchard Terrace would be considered very basic and completely outdated! However, compared to most of the rural village housing stock structures (mainly cottages) available in the 1930s the new Council Houses were considered to be state of the art in comparison – especially for families. My family needed a three bedroom house – one for Parents, one for two girls sharing and one for me, being a boy. This was all the more evident during the war when we had a mother and a five year old son evacuated to us from Plymouth. Father was in the Army, and Mum and Aunt Peg shared a room, as did Royston and I.

These were in a new six house block of Council Houses [Ed. adding to nos. 1-9 that had been built previously] with the end houses being two bedroom ones. No 10 had a square garden to the front and a path to the road and the area just by the front door which was roofed over. The downstairs layout was two large rooms to the right of the passage from front door, with a passageway and staircase. The passage went from the front door to the back door; on the left was a small cloak area at the foot of the stairs. The space under the stairs was general purpose, but we children were put in there during any threat of air raids, then a coal house and by the back door a small toilet, which had no hand basin. Outside the back door were steps down on to the path which went the full length of the block of six and all these rear entrances to each house were covered over. Each house had a vegetable plot the width of the house and about 70 yards long as everyone grew vegetables in those days.

Unusually the front of the house room was our kitchen, which had a cold tap and sink, and in the corner a brick square structure containing the old copper. Under it was a space for the fire which was lit on a Monday, which was always



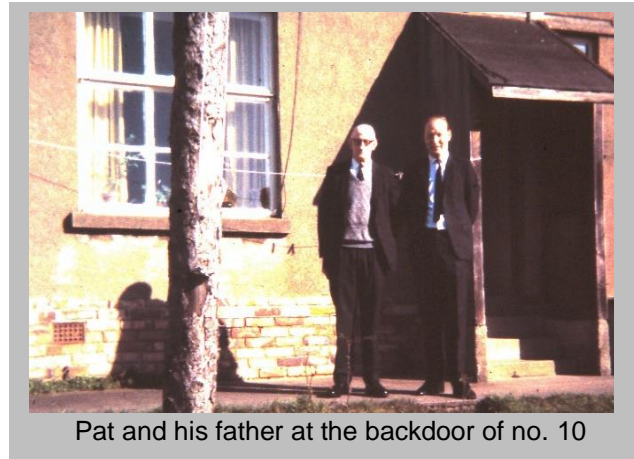
washing day. There was no tap over the copper

and all the water for washing clothes had to be put in using saucepans and when finished with had to be ladled out again! The main living room was at the back of the house looking down on to the village.

The upstairs had two large bedrooms over the two downstairs main rooms, with a bathroom in the corner over the front door a small landing and a single bedroom over the downstairs toilet and coal house.

The house had no central heating, only coal fired ranges and open fires; the open fire in the front room was a black leaded cooker range with an oven, there was the copper boiler fire in the kitchen, and the 2 larger bedrooms up stairs had one each diagonally across one corner (only ever used if someone was ill and bed bound), all placed so as they used the same chimney structure.

All the visible indoor piping to the kitchen tap, the toilet and upstairs bathroom were lead pipes and this created problems especially in the upstairs bathroom. Very rarely did we have bursts down stairs but, in the event of a burst this meant soldering, using a paraffin blowtorch. In the upstairs bathroom piping was prone to regular bursts as many a big bulge was evident where the pipes were exposed. The lead piping was eventually replaced by copper piping in the 1950s. All the windows were single glass and since the upstairs bedroom windows rarely had any inside house heat this meant that most winter nights there was ice on the inside of the glass! When small we used to draw our name and animals etc in the ice. We had to make up for cold bedrooms with more clothing and blankets, although hot water bottles did help in the winter, but folks were more hardy then.



Pat and his father at the backdoor of no. 10

The Honeys During World War 2

I was about 4 when the war started but there are implanted memories of certain things that happened still fresh today. Father was in the Army and Mum's two brothers were in the Navy and since nearly every family in the village had menfolk in the forces, or in factories, this meant the ladies were in charge of everyday life. After Aunt Peg and Roy were billeted on us – one vivid memory is all of us in the houses standing on the back path at night and watching the sky aglow with Plymouth being bombed; understandably I can remember Aunt Peg and Mum were crying.

All during the war all the children at some time or other, either in gangs or in pairs went through the fields collecting the metallic WINDOW strips dropped by the Germans to confuse radar. When collected, along with any other metal or silver paper, we had a salvage collection point at the school. Food being in short supply, everyone grew vegetables if they had space but autumn was a busy time gathering in the apples, plums, pears and sloes (*for gin*) and other fruit which was in abundance in the village. Blackberries and hazel nuts in particular were sought out and the mothers would get together and make a day out of it with all the children. Whole field's hedges would be stripped and shared out among the families. Jam sandwiches and cold tea was the picnic.

At the school the Army came and dug 5ft deep trenches in the field just across from the School front door; it was a short direct run from the front door, through the hole in the hedge and into the trench. The lower class went left and the upper class went right, no seating – everyone just sat down in the bottom, crouched or knelt down, thankfully the need very rarely happened!



The Nissan Hut and two sunken AA gun batteries are marked, with the separate raised spotting site, are shown as Pat remembers them

To protect Denbury Camp and Newton Abbot an Anti-Aircraft Battery was in the hollow 1 mile on the road from 2 mile Oak to Denbury (in the field behind the Caravan Club Site). Mum and friends did the laundry for the small detachment there and we children had an old pram and did a weekly run collecting dirty laundry and taking back clean. The large building at the 2 mile Oak crossroads was a machine shop for making cases for rifle ammunition, my Aunt Betty, later Landlady of the Tradesman's Arms, worked there with other local Ladies. Both Harold, Aunt Betty's then boyfriend, and Mums Brother, Johnny Webber, were in the Navy and one Xmas Eve I was down with Gran Webber at the cottage and there was a knock on the door and I saw Harold standing

in the doorway carrying a huge bunch of bananas! He had been sunk and when rescued they were brought into Plymouth, dockers were unloading a ship from the Indies and as it was Xmas they gave all the survivors a bunch of bananas to take home The survivors had lost everything and only had the

clothes they had been kitted out in before being sent home. We children had never seen a banana before.

I will never forget an outing of about 20 Mothers and children who were spread out in one field in Slade Lane and a German fighter skimmed over us at tree top level, he did a large turn and came back to investigate and the mothers made us scatter in case we would be shot at but he just came in low again and flew over us once more and then soared away towards Plymouth.

Christmas 1943 will never be forgotten by we children who experienced it, at a time of great hardship; we were usually hungry and in most cases families were weary of the war and just getting by. However, unknown to us the Vicar had been in touch with the CO of Denbury Camp and the first thing we knew was that all the children, except those from Stoneyhill were sent home mid-afternoon one day in our last week of term. We were told to change into our best clothes and told to return to the school at five o'clock. When we did there was a line of six wheeled USA Army lorries waiting for us; we were all loaded on to them by GIs and set off into the night with some adult carers. Our destination, unknown to us, was Denbury Camp and we were taken to this huge hangar and each child was collected off the lorry by a Soldier or USA Lady Service Person. We were taken inside this huge building and into heaven, it was a brightly lit wonderland, all decorated for Christmas; a Christmas tree the like of which we had never seen before and a huge food servery all down one side, also set out were long rows of decorated tables and benches. We were given a steel tray with impressions stamped in it, the usual military multi-plate item for that time, and our escort took us along the servery and we could choose anything we wanted from a range of food we had never seen before, and then taken to a table where they sat with us. They produced hats and crackers, very few of us knew what ice cream or an orange was, and yet here there was everything.

Entertainment followed from the stage and each child was taken to see Father Christmas and left clutching a present, all this in the middle of a war, it told us we were not forgotten. Wonderful memories. Thinking back though, how many of those GIs did not make it home, but we children will always remember them. When Midge and I were 8 years old on February 12th 1944 we heard a knock on the front door, another surprise was a square birthday cake delivered by the GIs from Denbury Camp, again this was organised by the Vicar, we made it last a long time!

At the end of the war a United States aircraft carrier on its way back to USA called into Torbay. We children were taken to Torquay harbour slipway and were put onto front ramp landing craft and taken out to the carrier. To get on board this giant of a ship the landing craft was craned out of the water and we were unloaded on its deck. Taken to the central aircraft lift and taken down to the hangar beneath. There were tables piled high with food and ice cream machines for us to help ourselves. Sailors took small parties around the ship, I remember landing up in the AA gun pods on the edge of the ship and sitting in a gunners seat.



1946: this picture was taken by a Mr Gidley. He lived in the cottages half way up Ford Rd on the left. Very few people had cameras in those days and he did pics like this in his house. To my knowledge he never took outside pictures. L to R: Janet - holding Karen, myself standing and Midge seated, in Grammar School uniform.

Life in Post War Abbotskerswell

1947 – Snow: I was 12 at the time and have never seen snow like it since, it was at roof top level in places and waist deep everywhere else. There was no machinery then available as we know today to clear snow, the few tractors in use at that time (most farms still used shire horses) were used to move coal and food necessities. All that was to hand for most people was shovels. All buses were cancelled, if you wanted to go anywhere, you walked. The school was closed and like every house it was frozen in. We children looked to help out and the nearest place to the village for any relief supplies sent out was on the main road. Nothing could move in the village but we wrapped up warm and used sledges and sheets of ply and collected supplies from there and took them to Church House where distribution to the elderly was co-ordinated. We also helped deliver them to houses as instructed with

our sledges. It was better than sitting at home freezing as coal, if you had any, was kept to have a fire in the evenings only; then it was off to bed and hunker down with piles of blankets and coats.

But we survived of course and the thaw, when it came, brought other problems with many burst pipes in houses. Even the new Council Houses had lead pipes throughout and even rough lagging with sacks did not stop bursts. Add to that food was still rationed and was made worse by it being winter and no home grown items were available to supplement rationing unless the larder held pickled items; but we survived.

The Cider factory: my Uncle managed this and lived in the on-site house (now Henley Lodge) and the factory played a large part in village life, in that a large area below the works all the way to Manor Road were apple orchards belonging to Henleys. At harvest time whole families worked in these orchards collecting and bagging apples. The larger children would climb into the trees and shake them vigorously and get every apple off them, some used long poles as well. Mums and smaller children then shovelled the fruit off the ground and filled the one cwt sacks to a level top. The payment was 6p for each full bag, these were labelled as to the family for payment and stacked around the trees; they were later taken to the factory by horse and cart. The large collecting area by the factory doors was where these sacks, plus those brought in by farmers from far and wide, were stacked. The stacks on the left, looking at the doors, were three bags wide and three layers high. On the right the stack was about seven bags wide and again up to three layers. Apples from farms were mostly brought by horse and cart, there were a few old lorries, and queued at the little weighbridge hut and were weighed. They then backed down to the stacks and were unloaded and neatly stacked; this was not a slapdash operation as it could be days or weeks as to how long the apples were stacked before use, as the more rotten they were the better the cider.

Then the empty transport was re-weighed and the weight of the apple load could be calculated for payment. When needed these heavy bags were emptied on to a conveyor by men, which took them to the pulping. From there the mash was spread on to sacking in wooden frames by hand and then placed in the press by local women employed as casual labour for the cider making season. There were two large presses in use to get through the operation, one being pressed and the other one being loaded while that happened. After pressing the ladies salvaged the wooden frames and the sacking for re-use. They emptied the mush into a hole in the floor, under which a conveyor carried it to outside and it was stock piled, the aroma of the mush was apparent all over the village. The liquid from the pressing was then piped to the huge vats which were on the Totnes side of the house, in the larger buildings and left to ferment for the appropriate time. When ready to be processed it was taken off site in tankers – the little slip road up onto the main road was for these tankers to have a straight run up the gradient. I spent many happy hours during apple collecting time and then in the weighbridge helping out.

Helping Out: after the war when Dad was demobbed, he worked on the railway as a platelayer. In the two years before I started full time work we helped to make ends meet for the family by working with Mr Lines; he was in his 70s and had a logging business which he ran in the old quarry on the road above Corn Park [Ed. this is the Park Homes site on Court Grange Lane]. Mr Lines spent all week felling and cutting up timber and bagging up logs. Father joined him every weekend and drove his old lorry around the village and district delivering the logs. I spent many evenings and the weekend at the quarry and sitting in a lean to, chopping up sticks and using a clamp to bundle them up for sale with the bags of logs. Once an axe cut on my leg landed me in Newton Hospital; I still have the scar. I was paid one penny per bundle made, and shared this windfall with Midge and Janet, mainly on boiled sweets which were rationed. It also paid for the Saturday morning Odeon Club and also a penny bun treat (it was like a large flat Chelsea concoction) from the little bakers on the corner, which we could tuck into when at the pictures. Simple pleasures.

Sunday school: the Church played a big part in village life and the incumbent Vicar and his Wife were busy people. He chaired most of the village activity meetings and she did the same for the WI and WRVS. Not only did he take the morning and evening church services every Sunday but he was also a regular visitor to the school and was present at all school functions. During the war he was also in touch with any military units in the area and serviced their spiritual needs and also was the link between the armed forces and the villagers. He was always on hand working with the WRVS and seeing to parishioners needs, especially the elderly and bereaved families. Both during and after the war he always supervised Sunday School for all the children and these were mostly held in Church

House; the exceptions being Easter and Christmas of course. In the summer he held garden parties for the village at the Vicarage. It was important in many ways in that by sending the children to all church services and the Sunday School it gave the parents a bit of time to themselves each week.

If you attended the Sunday School you were awarded with a sticker, these were collected and during the war an annual event for the children was held in Church House and to go you had to have enough stickers ! This was a joint venture with the Sunday School and the village School where the Children were given a party feast and prizes were awarded to children who had excelled at things throughout the year. Prizes were nearly all books and later on drawing sets were also given out. After the war, the big event was the Sunday School outing! This was usually to the seaside at Goodrington or Teignmouth. The old faithful Bedford O B



charabanc, shown below, was the usual transport until about 1947 when more modern coaches were hired. During the War the Bedford buses could be the utility version with slatted wooden seats. Again you needed to have collected enough stickers to get a place. Some parents went as well and always the Vicar and his wife and the teachers from Sunday School. Distant happy memories of a time when children who did not attend school in Newton Abbot would rarely ever have left the village.

In the village it was the custom that if a child died, and some did, then four children of similar age, dressed in white would carry the white painted coffin. I did it once and it's a lovely custom in that we children were a close knit group going to church and school together and it brought it home to us that friend had passed on, pity it no longer happens.

Cricket: after the war the village cricket teams were started again and played each other in a local league. The ground was in Berry Meadow, accessed over the plank bridge at bottom of the village. There was a wooden hut with its back to the hedge and a scoreboard. It was all very basic, as were most facilities in these rural villages at that time. My Father played, usually opening the batting and keeping wicket. When he was too old to play he became the Umpire. I always helped out keeping the scoring records or manning the scoreboard. The only people who had 'whites' to play in were the vicar and the Squire, the Umpires did get a white coat. To me this was the highlight of the week from aged 10 to 12, but when I was 13 onwards my Saturdays were spent in Aller Signal Box. The enemy were always Ipplepen and Denbury in that order, but I remember we played some other villages from as far away as the Teign Valley. The coach trips out with all the families were really looked forward to by everyone. I have loved that game ever since, because it is such a technical game, it was once described to me as: like playing 'Chess On Grass'.

School Life: in 1946 my twin sister Midge and I both passed the 11 plus exam and started schooling at Newton Abbot Grammar School. At the Grammar School boys and girls were segregated; at the entrance there were arches for the designation of girls and boys, which was etched into the stone portals. The layout of the school was a centre long block of classrooms and on the north side was the girls playground and on the south side it was the boys. No communication was allowed between them on the school premises, not even for twins. This was not so at Highweek Secondary, which was where Janet went to.

With two same age siblings, and now a new one in Karen, in the family as well as Janet, money was very tight. Being at Grammar school it was expected that all pupils would comply with wearing the school uniform and also to own PT clothing, football boots and other sports equipment; in Midge's case this was hockey equipment. Midge really took to Grammar School life, she found some of her friends at school were daughters of professional people, she enjoyed the girl's team sports and mixed well. I really enjoyed the classroom side of things, being a quick learner I did well in the core subjects and that side of my education has stood me in good stead all my life. However, I detested the regime of emphasis on field sports, the snobbishness and bullying of the elitist clique which I found existed on the boy's side. It was this that led me to leave, as I lawfully could, as soon as I was 14½. Midge staying on until she was 16. In retrospect I think I would have been happier had I gone to that school at Highweek. It was more of a hands on trade training which I would have liked and far less emphasis on sport and one upmanship than at the Grammar School.

The Grammar School did not have enough classrooms to cope with the post WW2 generation and so we were marched in crocodiles to the building on the corner (the Library) near the Alexandra. Behind it is the cattle market and we used the rooms on the first floor and there was an enclosed playground at the back. I was taught shorthand and typing in that building which has stood me in good stead ever since. Mother found the cost of kitting us both out with the uniform was a burden on the family's purse and I told her to ensure Midge had all she needed. Not being able to afford a proper blazer for me she found me a striped cricket style blazer at a jumble stall, so I really stood out; Midge was fitted out with all she needed but I drew the short straw, rather than put pressure on the family finances. I never told Mum when I had a hole in my shoes, I just put a fresh piece of cardboard inside daily and made sure that at no time did I let anyone see the soles. Midge was never a problem at school but I avoided sports days and swimming lessons at Penn Inn Baths, which I rarely attended either, although I did play cricket.

All I wanted to do was be at Newton Railway Station and could always be found on the wall opposite the West Signal Box. At that time I was in Aller signal box at weekends and by using the phones was always in contact with Newton West box and knew all the signalmen.

Today I keep an open mind regarding Grammar Schools as although it did not suit me they have much to offer young people in progressing their career, more so now as the world of work is getting more competitive.

Reminiscences of Post WW2 Rural Life on the GWR

As a boy I lived near Aller Junction, this is the junction that separated the Newton Abbot main line to Torquay and to Plymouth, and thus was a very busy junction, especially with summer Holiday traffic. My 60 year old Grandfather, Tom Webber, was the Ganger in-charge of the 4 lines from Newton Abbot Station to Aller Junction and as far as the starter signal on the Torquay line and up to Stoneycombe Quarry (half way up Dainton Bank) on the Plymouth line, this was about 11 miles of walking.

I was 13 and at Grammar school at that time in 1947 and Tom was friendly with Harry Hackard, the one legged signalman at Aller Junction box. Harry lost his leg one foggy night, being hit by a train when putting detonators on the line outside his box, the Company fixed him up with a wooden Pirates leg and he kept his job, stumping around the box for the rest of his life. They did however install the detonator equipment which he could use to push them on to the rail from within the box. Not many alive today can lay claim to using that equipment as I did many times since Aller was in a valley and very prone to fog.

For over two years Tom took me to work with him at weekends, leaving me in the signal box with Harry for the eight hours, while he walked his 'length'. He walked the two UP main lines, which was two miles to Newton Abbot West Box and then walked the two DOWN lines back to Aller Box. He then walked ½ a mile out and back on the Torquay line before walking the three mile UP gradient to Stoneycombe Quarry and back. Tom walked this route 6 days a week, in all weathers. He never had a holiday, his day off was allotment day. This was in 1947 and him being born and bred in the nearby village of Abbotskerswell adjacent to the cider works, like all railway and farm workers at that time (a hardy breed), he was brought up on scrumpy and although never drunk, he was addicted and needed a continuous supply to keep him going. He always carried a flagon of scrumpy and in hot weather a bottle of cold tea. When walking his 'length' in his old long wax raincoat (if needed) he carried a 14 lb sledge hammer to tighten

up and replace loose or fallen out wooden keys holding the track. He also carried a gallon of oil and a brush to lubricate the points and signal wires, plus a tube of grease for the same and a large spanner for tightening fishplate nuts. Apart from a blue boiler suit and a great coat no other protective or visibility clothing was issued by the GWR; most railway men wore long johns, vests, trousers and always a white shirt, plus a cap of course.



Compared with working conditions today, they took their lives in their hands every day, train drivers had to be extra vigilant to see trackside workers in those days.

The Junction: the Plymouth line from Aller Junction was as Brunel laid it for atmospheric working with the Broad Gauge and as atmospheric cylinder propulsion did not need to take into account traction issues it was a very steeply inclined route following natural land contours and thus also had sweeping curves. The consequence is that the gradient was 1 in 31 in places, reputed to be the steepest main line in the UK. When atmospheric propulsion was abandoned then traction issues emerged and although some easing of rising curves did take place it became accepted practice that all but the lightest trains were double-headed from Newton Abbot en route to Plymouth. Operations also had to take into account the bank UP Dainton, then the drop into Totnes and from there the bank UP Emerdon and the drop into Plymouth. So in steam days, trains in both ways, were always double headed between Plymouth and Newton Abbot.

Newton Abbot and Laira (Plymouth) loco sheds were enlarged to be repair and maintenance sheds capable of supplying this need. In 1921 with the increase in overall traffic putting extra pressure on the line, with slow moving goods trains for the Royal Navy Fleet at Devonport causing long delays to other traffic, Tom supervised the laying in of a goods holding loop on the DOWN Plymouth line just as it cleared Aller Junction. This loop had a large rear end Pilot holding bay, a water tower and emergency coaling facility. The handling of goods trains up Dainton Bank was always a problem in that no goods train could be released to climb



to Dainton unless the signalman at Aller had a full 30 minute break in traffic. With trains coming from London and the North and Wales via Bristol, there were rare times in the summer when goods traffic could be released, although some were got away at night. I remember lying in bed and listening to the two engines lasting away up through Stoneycombe Quarry to the tunnel. All goods trains were rear banked up as far as Dainton summit and from Dainton Signal Box all banking engines (usually Prairie tanks) ran back as light engine to Aller Jct or on to Newton Abbot depending on rotation of duties.

In the 1930s as new trains were progressively getting heavier new Castle and King locomotives were coming into service. These could achieve high speeds, with the Kings in particular being capable of hauling some of the express trains over these banks on their own, but this meant that the crossing of the Torquay UP Main by the curved Plymouth DOWN Main at Aller had to be capable of dealing with Plymouth bound Express trains crossing at 70 MPH, to have enough momentum to clear up to Dainton tunnel without assistance. Hence the need for the installation of the switched and locked crossing at Aller being installed.



There was also a signal box at the Stoneycombe sidings which were often used to hold slow day time goods trains which were blocking passenger workings. The reason for the box there was that it was only locked IN and manned when empty trains were delivered and full ones departed to and from the quarry, and this meant using the main lines. Aller and Dainton had to be in touch by telephone until such movements were completed.

The hard roof box, shown here, was erected in the 1950s as the edge of quarry being blasted was moved nearer, sending bits over the railway.

Starting Work

I left school on September 1st 1948 and had one ambition, to join the GWR as a Signalman, having spent almost every weekend for two years, unofficially, working in Aller Signal Box. My expectations were dashed as I was informed that I was colour blind and that precluded me being a signalman. So my very first odd job on leaving school was to run the office at Sinclairs Garage in the village over the

winter, but come spring I spread my wings and found a job as a beach photographer at Goodrington and also on the miniature railway at Paignton Zoo.

In post WW2 Britain very few people had a camera and the main way of getting holiday pics was the beach photographer. At the beaches and other visitor attractions there was a photographer's kiosk. This was the place of contact for collection of any pictures taken. 'Pics' taken before noon were ready for collection at 4pm, whilst those taken in afternoons were ready for collection at 9am the next morning. Most hotel and B and B holidays at Torquay and Paignton were for a week, from Saturday to Saturday. The photographer had a 35mm camera with large spools on each side and each roll of film held 200 photographs. I patrolled the park and beach and mainly took family photos or courting couples on holiday, as they wanted a memento for the family album. They were given a numbered card to take to the kiosk when they wanted to collect their pics. The point of payment was at the kiosk when collecting prints.

Payment from this job was basic, plus bus fares to get there, but a commission on sales boosted pay. I always walked from Paignton Station to Goodrington and claimed the bus fare. However, that route was a foot path alongside the railway storage sidings for all the holiday trains arriving and being cleaned and prepared, before being used on return journeys. Many locomotives were waiting, some just arrived and some waiting to depart and my love of all things railway made me chat up the crews who noticed the camera and asked for me to take pictures of them with their loco; likewise the gangs of cleaning ladies working inside and out of the trains also wanted pics and I was happy to oblige. I even took addresses of crews leaving for all points north and the office sent the pics on. The boss blew his top when he saw the first batch as he said his licence only covered the beach and park; anyway as soon as he saw the uptake by the railway workers he told me to carry on, but discreetly. He then sent me to Paignton Zoo as apart from visitors wanting pics with animals, the miniature train was popular for pics as well. I enjoyed that one summer doing that but then a full time job at the Odeon Cinema in Newton Abbot came my way and that saw me through until I joined up in 1952.

Happy days.

My job was a projectionist and the week I started the film was 'She Wore a Yellow Ribbon', starring John Wayne; I saw it 18 times that week. In 1948/49 we ran Gaumont British News and the Alexandra and the Imperial Cinema ran with Pathe news. Although different companies cooperation between all the three cinemas meant that the minimum of operators had to be two if at all possible, so the Odeon, which was always fully manned, often lent us for a few days if the others had someone off on emergency sick. The Odeon could seat 800 and at weekends I have seen the queues back out on to the main road and as far as the Tower. The Odeon also ran the only Saturday morning



children's programme of cartoons and Roy Rogers westerns, nearly always playing to a full house because it was the highlight of the week for the children; they were very appreciative and very well behaved as a consequence. The staff had the authority to ban any badly behaved child and his membership card was taken away.

Feature programmes, the blockbuster films, changed every Wednesday at the Odeon, but the newsreels were changed every three days; remember no mass TV so it was the only source of up to date information of national events. The big push for household TV renting was started by the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1952. Local events were covered in local papers.

This also affected public transport, there were taxis, but they were few and far between, and not many people had a car, so the bus timetables from Newton were also programmed to cover the Cinema opening hours, with late buses crowded. If I missed that late bus to Ipplepen I had to walk home. There were no street lights, and rarely any other vehicles out, unless it was the doctor on call, even the midwife had to cycle on her rounds, but there were more of them. So often I cut up through Wolborough and used the footpaths if a dry night, but if wet I used the main road. I thought nothing of it, the only danger of using footpaths at night was not knowing if the farmer had a bull in the field, so you always kept to the hedge in any field with cattle in them, ready to dive through a hedge or over a fence if need arose.

Since my working day was from noon to after 10pm (matinees every afternoon). I rarely saw my family as they were mostly in bed by the time I got home and I was in bed when they all went off to do their thing. If doing relief duties, such as covering holidays of staff in Exeter or Torquay, my working day was extended. But I enjoyed it.

On September 1st 1952 Pat joined the RAF; his story is told in our publication *5 The Era of WW2* on pages 123-4. Having joined he never returned to live in Abbotskerswell, and he now lives in Staffordshire.



He did return in June 1954 to get married at St Mary's Church, with a reception in Church House.



A different age at St Mary's, when servicemen were proud and allowed to wear their uniform



..... and a honeymoon in Brixham.



The Tradesman's in the 50s with Pat in his RAF uniform.