

Past and Present continuing our stories of: Women at War

Call-Up

My call-up papers arrived on September 3rd 1942. I travelled from Blackpool, where my father (an accountant in the regular air force) was stationed, to Innesworth in Gloucestershire. For obvious reasons my choice of forces was the WAAF. After “square bashing” in Morecambe I went to London for a course on meteorology. My father had suggested I become a ‘met girl’ because it was run by civilians; he seemed to forget that his daughter, an arts student, had not an ounce of science in her! After my course in London I applied for a posting to Yorkshire; the Air Ministry, running true to form, sent me to Northern Ireland! I rectified that by swapping postings and ended up at Catfoss, an O.T.U. Coastal Command Station.



The following day we cycled through the cold North Sea mist to the Met. Office located in the Ops. Block; there the Senior Met greeted me. Officer Ruddy was tall, thin, with a shock of red hair, beaky nose and piercing blue eyes. He turned round, saw me and said, “Where

the bloody hell have you come from?” Catfoss was an operational training unit for Coastal Command. The young pilots with their navigators flew Beaufighters over the North Sea. Before each sortie they came into the Met. Office for a weather briefing, followed by the pigeon fanciers and their crates of two pigeons each, possibly with an egg!

Moving On

After eighteen, happy months I was posted to York, 4 Group, the HQ in Bomber Command – at Heslington Hall, now the University. The work was very exciting but all done inside in artificial light –not the life of an out-station. After D-day I went to Howarden, an ATA station near Chester then as the war drew to a close I exchanged postings to Silloth in Cumberland, once again in Coastal Command on the Solway. How lovely to be beside the sea once more! My spell of duty ended at Farnborough, where as a mere Met. Corporal I met my future husband, a Squadron Leader with a DFC and bar, the C.O. of Aerodynamics Flight.

Pat Foster

Settling In

I arrived at Catfoss one cold afternoon in late autumn. The Waafery was on ‘dispersal’ in the village of Brandesburton, about 2 miles from the aerodrome. I booked in to find my new home was a purpose-built lunatic asylum, complete with padded cells; a fortress to keep inmates in and everyone else out – it did just that! The Admin Office was run by ‘Flight’ (the more senior) and ‘Sarge’, two characters straight out of a pantomime. Flight was tall and thin, black-haired and angular; Sarge was small, rotund, bottle-blond and blue-eyed.