

W&M162 Frankie Hornby

SPEAKERS

Frankie Hornby

Frankie Hornby 00:00

Well the war was just on and I thought, 'Well, they'll teach me to cook in the Army. So I'll join up.'

Frankie Hornby 00:09

So I went and joined the WAAF and I was a few months away from 18th birthday. I joined up and I went, so I can't remember the name of the place in England, I went for my basic training, which took about six weeks.

Frankie Hornby 00:27

You are in a great big nissen hut with twenty other girls, got through my basic training, you got up in the morning had your breakfast, you went parading, learning to salute the various people, there were Wing Commanders there were all sorts of people, you learned all about them.

Frankie Hornby 00:50

And I think I got through that very well, passed out, and then decided what trade I wanted to do.

Frankie Hornby 00:59

And I said I wanted to be a cook. And they told me that we didn't want cooks. No cooks needed. What they wanted was drivers.

Frankie Hornby 01:11

Well, I had been brought up on a farm and the only thing I'd ever driven was a horse and trap or a horse and cart or a donkey or something you know.

Frankie Hornby 01:20

And I thought, Oh, my goodness, how am I going to manage that?

Frankie Hornby 01:24

Anyway, I was posted off with some other girls, again we were in another station where there were a lot of girls being taught, there was about another twenty of us, I suppose.

Frankie Hornby 01:35

I met my, he was a lovely fatherly corporal, I got on very well. And the first thing I learned to drive was a three-ton truck and that went on, well, three or four weeks, got on very well and you learned to drive on trucks and cars and everything like that.

Frankie Hornby 02:03

And then I was posted to my first station, which was a fighter station in Portreath in Cornwall. And we're just driving everything there, wherever you wanted, you could have three-ton Truck one day taking stuff from one place to another.

Frankie Hornby 02:26

Or you were driving pilots to an aeroplane and a couple of times at night, you had to take the ambulance out to go and pick somebody that had died... you didn't know whether it was a German or whether... all I was was the driver, I didn't get involved in anything like that.

Frankie Hornby 02:45

But you were out all night with the nurse getting people brought back to the morgue up.

Frankie Hornby 02:50

So that happened, that went on fine for about six or twelve months and then I got a posting to Coverack and I didn't know what I was sent there for, I didn't know why I was sent there and Coverack is a small Cornish village and I thought, well there's no airport, no airport here, it was just little village.

Frankie Hornby 03:17

So I was taken up to the MT section in the middle of a field. There was nothing there, just... other than a hut with an adjutant and a few girls and the MT section had a petrol station and what have you there, a Corporal and there were two men drivers and myself.

Frankie Hornby 03:44

And it was my job to... I didn't realise that this place was so very important. It didn't look anything to me.

Frankie Hornby 03:55

I was to drive my commanding officer, who was responsible for twenty or thirty girls.

Frankie Hornby 04:02

Every morning I picked my commanding officer up, took her up to this gate in the middle of a field. The men who drove the trucks brought the girls up, they got off to this gate in the middle of the field. You would never see them after that.

Frankie Hornby 04:19

They were not in the same hotel as we were they were quite separate as though they were being secret, they were of course in secrecy there.

Frankie Hornby 04:29

And it was an underground station where the girls were plotting the planes that were going on above.

Frankie Hornby 04:41

Of course when it was D-Day we realised, we got up one morning and there was nobody about at all everybody had gone- the Americans, the place was absolutely dead. I think it was three weeks after that I was posted back to Northern Ireland. So I think most of my wartime duties was in in Coverack.

Frankie Hornby 05:05

And it was a 24/7 job, you know you will never idle. And then we came back to Northern Ireland and I worked... well I worked in Belfast, mainly driving officers around, especially the clergyman on a Sunday.

Frankie Hornby 05:23

I had to get up and take them off to wherever they were preaching anywhere in Northern Ireland. Sometimes on a Friday the man coming down to Enniskillen he would say, "Well, don't you bother to come back until Monday because they'll look after me here", so I used to have the car for the weekend and used to go home to see my mother.

Frankie Hornby 05:45

One day, I... there was an RAF station quite near my home, it was a very small station, I don't know what they did there, but I had to take this three-ton lorry with a lot of equipment in it up to Newtownbutler. It was emptied and I thought, well, while I'm here I'll call home and see my mother.

Frankie Hornby 06:08

She'd never had any idea of what I'd really been doing, you know, so I drove up to Lammy and turned this big lorry on the back street and stopped out by the back door.

Frankie Hornby 06:21

My mother came out looking and I got out of this and she looked at me she said, "What on earth are you doing in that?" and I said "I'm driving it". "Why?", I said "I've been to Newtownbutler to drop something off and I thought I'd pop in and see you".

Frankie Hornby 06:38

"Oh", she's says, "it's getting near dark. You get away back home".

Frankie Hornby 06:42

I said, "I will not indeed, I'm going to have a cup of tea- I'm alright" I said, "I've driven things like this in London many a time". She couldn't wait to get the tea made and get me away back home.