

The replies in Issue 34 triggered a few more memories and possibly a few more smiles from other re-cycled teenagers.

Being a 'Keythumper from way back – RN 1928' and prior to the Radio-Mechanic grades, it was not possible for me to compete with Peter Linzey or Reg Ellis in regard to the rapid technological changes during those earlier days.

However, following my discharge (invalided) from the Submarine service, and after a couple of grade changes during Air Ministry service – and because at the end of '42' Civil Aviation had become acutely short of 'Keythumpers' I was sent 'On Loan – it lasted until '47' to a Civil Aviation Radio Control station, where, together with several collaborating D/F stations, we provided positional information to aircraft in flight, and at the airport D/F and control facilities as required by ATC.

My wage was then £2-7/6 per week, but the CA W/T Operators earned the princely sum of £2-15/0 per week – a higher order indeed! They were ex-Merchant Navy Radio Officers and several ex-RAF Operators.

Plus fours appeared to be the preferred dress of the day for Radio Officers so this ex bell-bottomed matelot did not have an instant rapport; however, we finally made it as you will see later. They proved to be a fine bunch.

Our shift duties consisted of afternoon, morning and Night on the same day, afternoon, morning, night followed by one day off if we were lucky, seven days a week, rotating at the airport, the D/F station, and the transmitter station ad infinitum. 'Unsocial hours' I believe it is called nowadays.

'You chaps don't carry out transmitter duties Bo', one wag opined when I arrived on site for the afternoon shift. 'Here we have several transmitters which will be strange for you Bo; we have the TS4, the DM1A, the G12C and finally this ESL50 with which we have a few problems.' 'This relay does not always snap home as it should BO when operated remotely, so to deal with this problem we have this special stick on the window-bottom.' 'We push the relay in so,' quoth he, brandishing this much used piece of wood.

When the same expert arrived for the night shift, I told him that his stick had been relegated to the dustbin. He was aghast, but I explained that a judicious transformer tapping adjustment had rendered the much used stick unnecessary.

Needless to say, and even without plus-fours, I was accepted as a member of staff.

Marvellous this new technology! But I never knew what 'BO' meant – possibly an IN word like BASICALLY.

Yours sincerely

George Pickup

PS The attached will give readers some idea of the work we carried out. We were later called 'Communicators'.