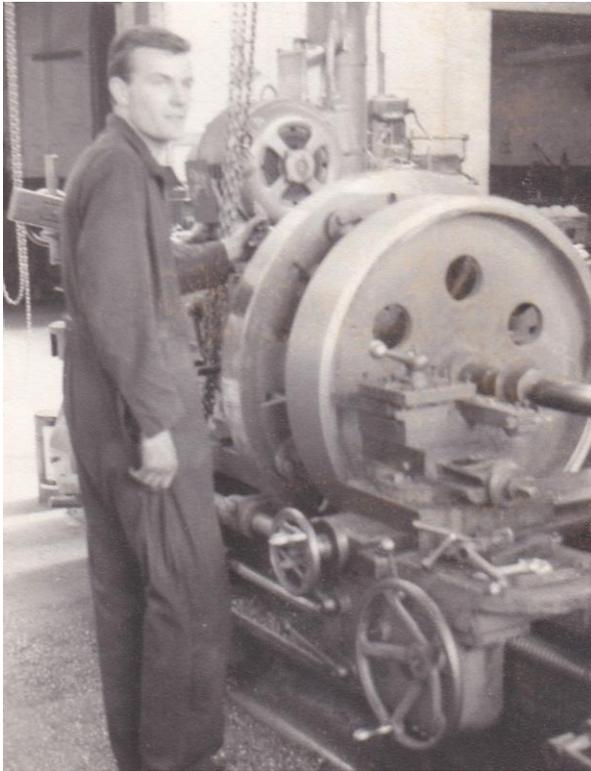


89 Pear Tree Road,
Lindford,
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I was born in 1937 in Codford St Mary Wiltshire. In 1952 I was offered a civilian



Stanley Bennett, aged 23

apprenticeship with 27 Command Workshops R.E.M.E Warminster as a fitter/turner. Warminster in 1950 was still a cattle market town with a strong military presence. I loved my village home and my family very much but London held a fascination for me although it was not that easy to get to for more than a day trip. An advert came up in the Daily Herald in September 1952-- "Centre lathe turner required to operate a large centre lathe— William Douglas & Sons, SW15". I travelled up to Putney by train from Salisbury on a sunny September morning and was interviewed by Mr Webb. Walking across Putney Bridge that morning I

looked across and recognised Putney Wharf and the mighty Thames and with cold feet so nearly turned back towards the comfort and routine of village life. Anyway, I got the job and left my parents and home for Brewhouse Street Putney on October 11th 1959 not knowing where I was going to sleep that first Monday evening. I was handed on to the shop steward Wag Findlater who showed me around and introduced me to the lads and actually found me temporary digs with another fitter Ron (Sandy) Owen. The lathe was a fairly awkward old Broadbent and the advice from the lads nearby was "you will be pushed to earn any money on that machine Ben". The system for payment was £16/week with the London Bonus Scheme in operation making £20/week possible. This was very good money for me as I had left a weekly wage of £8 in my job with R.E.M.E. The main work of the Douglas workshop was the manufacture and repair of rotary pumps for the biscuit making firms such as

Peak Fren, Mcvitie, and Mcfarlane Lang who were located at Harlesden, West London and refrigeration compressors used in cold rooms worldwide. When the biscuit pumps came in for overhaul we would be amazed at the wear on the moving parts and could only assume that large amounts of grey cast iron had gone into the making of the biscuits without detriment. The workers also consumed a fair share of cast iron dust by way of hands, hair and clothing. Four lathe operators I got to know well were Dave Howton, Pete Sanders, Tony Robinson and Tony Sutton to whom I was best man at his wedding and life long friend. Enclosed is a picture of myself at the lathe with a four belt compressor flywheel on the faceplate. Other names which may be of interest to your needs were Ron Judd, works foreman, Alan Rous, rate fixer, Arthur Simmenton, large horizontal borer, Frank Morris small borer and Mrs Sippet, canteen. There were a number of men "on the road " servicing and installing equipment of course and a works football team. This Thameside part of Putney had been quite industrialised in the past and next door was "Spaldings" the big name in tennis equipment supplies. The lower yardage of Brewhouse Street was still of cobble construction and there was a very useful slipway into the river for small boats. The rush for luxury high rise riverside accommodation was yet to come and the Thames was in dire need of saving from pollution and persistent dumping. Another abiding memory I have is of just one pea soup fog which came in the winter 1959/60. The smokeless zone act really did have a dramatic effect on air quality. There was plenty of work around then of course in engineering and as my mates moved on so did I gaining more experience working as a toolroom turner. Ironically after a few years in 1962 I joined Battersea College whose engineering annexe was in Putney Bridge Road exactly opposite to the vacated William Douglas premises in Brewhouse Street. I knew nothing much then, as now, of the move to Basingstoke but Sandy Owen told me that the move appealed little to the people he knew. Battersea College had annexes in several districts in South London and the rush for technology in the sixties saw it become the University of Surrey moving to Guildford in 1967. After nine years in London I moved with it and fulfilled a forty year career retiring in 2002.

Yours sincerely,

Stanley "Ben" Bennett.

December 20th 2015

