

**Mary Griffiths 1924-. Royal Air Force.  
Llanelli, Carmarthenshire**

West Wales Veterans Archive, National Library of Wales

Date of interview: 19.11.19. Llanelli

**Description**

Mary Griffiths nee Walker (1924-) has lived in Llanelli for almost all of her life. In 1941 as the German bombing attacks on South Wales intensified, Mary became a Fire Fighter in Llanelli Town Centre at the tender age of 17yrs. She then volunteered for service in the Royal Air Force, was accepted and after basic training at RAF Morecambe Bay spent the next four years in administrative roles in the Women's Royal Air Force with postings to RAF Operational Training Units in Moreton in the Marsh (Gloucestershire), Lossiemouth (North East Scotland) and finally to the Avro Lancaster equipped 150 Squadron stationed in Helmswell, Lincolnshire.

After demob in 1946, Mary Walker returned to her hometown of Llanelli where she married and brought up her family. Mary was joint founder member (with her brother in law) of Llanelli's branch of the Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA) and served as 'chair' for several years. Mary was interviewed alongside her son Keith in Llanelli on 19th November 2019.

**Early Life**

Mary Walker was born in March 1924 and was one of two sisters and five brothers living in Llanelli. She grew up in the town and following her wartime in the RAF, returned to the town, married and brought up her own family.

As the first Luftwaffe raids on Swansea and its surrounding areas became increasingly apparent there was a call in Llanelli for Fire Fighters and Mary volunteered. After training she was issued with a card dated 13.10.41, which said "*Mary Walker is appointed one of the Town Centre Fire Fighters*".

**Entry to the RAF**

Mary's brother-in-law from Laugharne had joined the Royal Air Force at the start of the war and was doing well and this inspired her to volunteer for service in the RAF.

Mary's Certificate of Enrolment as a short hand typist in the RAF was issued on 28.10.1942 at 9am in Llanelli and she was sent to the RAF Morecambe Bay where she and other new WAAF's were given three weeks 'Square Bashing', where Mary gained her 'Gas Test Certificate' before learning of their postings.

**Postings to RAF Stations in Wales, England and Scotland**

Much to Mary's initial chagrin she found herself immediately sent back to Wales to the No 6 Embarkation Centre, Newport though this was to be short-lived for a posting came through

to No 21 Operational Training Unit (OTU), Moreton in Marsh located in the Cotswolds, where aircrew were training on Vickers Wellington, twin-engined bombers. Mary remained in Gloucestershire until late 1944 before being sent to RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland where 20 OTU were based and she joined them for a short period.

Then came a key posting to 150 Squadron, an operational Lancaster bomber squadron stationed in Helmswell, Lincolnshire. Mary was with the Squadron when it took part in 'Operation Mannheim' and she still has an original copy of the crew list dated 1.3.45.

After the end of hostilities, the four-engined bombers of 150 Squadron were used to repatriate POWs. Mary and a colleague WAAF were taken on a 'Cooks Tour' in a Lancaster bomber at low level over Cologne and Dresden where they witnessed first-hand the devastation of the RAF bombing. Most evocatively, Mary still has a large squadron photo taken in June 1945 on the ground in RAF Helmswell where, in front of the vast bomber, she can be clearly seen in the middle surrounded by all squadron aircrew.

### **Leaving the RAF**

150 squadron was disbanded on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1945 and Mary Walker was posted to RAF Silverstone (now known as the home of the British Grand Prix). She received her discharge on 9.9.1946 having served for four years as WAAF and, of course, prior to that had been a teenage Fire Firefighter in Llanelli Town Centre.

### **Post War**

Mary returned to Llanelli, married and brought up her own family. Mary became a founder-member of Llanelly R.A.F. Association (along with her brother-in-law, himself ex-RAF) & was the last "Chair-Person" of the Association up until it was disbanded some years ago.

Aged 95years of age at the time of being interviewed for the 'West Wales Veterans Archive' Mrs Mary Griffiths continues to live in her hometown of Llanelli.