

P: Where were you during the war?

S: I wasn't called up. I was more or less 'reserved' working for the public utilities. I was working on the London Fire Brigade. The headquarters were on Southwark Bridge Road at that time and I had quite a big job there, with fitters under me as well. Then the letters started coming - they wanted recruits - people who wanted to volunteer. I was working at that time in the main office and they showed me some of the letters from some of the girls who wanted to join the fire service. They were quite good really. I was working for the Gas Board doing a big job in the Fire Brigade Headquarters.

P: What was the job you were doing for the Fire Brigade?

S: I was putting in extra appliances. On the outbreak of war I was putting extra appliances in schools cos the Fire Brigade were going to have courses in schools. And the barrage balloon people as well. So you put extra cooking appliances in for them.

P: Because the schools were evacuated?

S: The schools were away. We put in appliances cos the Fire Brigade then moved into the schools, permanently there. I you wanted to join the Fire Brigade, perhaps you went to a school. They appealed for volunteers. You went to the headquarters and then you got posted. In different areas the fire Brigade took over the schools in different areas.

P: What did they use the school buildings for? As a depot for the fire service?

S: Yes. If they were called out on bomb-damage, explosions. They were called out from there.

P: What did they have in there? A switchboard? What would there have been in a small school?

S: You couldn't get a lot in there. They got headquarters to bring out the tail-ladders and things like that. They were near, situated all round the area. There was quite a number set up. I joined as a volunteer because of while I was working there and I went to New Cross Fire Station. In addition to that I used to do Fire Watching on the Gas Company's showrooms. Then I had to join the Home Guard. So it was quite busy really.

P: What made you volunteer to join the fire services?

S: When the war started. From the beginning. Cos I was working there when the applications come in. They advertised for volunteers. Naturally, I was working there, they said "You'll have to sign" so I joined. Really the Board had first call on me.

P: So you'd work all day for the GAs Board and find yourself fire watching at night?

S: Used to do fire watching on their showrooms. Then joining the Home Guard. We used to do the military training. Not that I was ever called up. Used to go down to places like Aldershot, that was the Home Guard. I was stationed at Eltham. I was in the Home Guard, I could have been called out on the Fire Service. Then I could be called out for Fire Watching. I was at Lewisheam at one time. There was a flat roof. A doodle-bug came over. Myself and another chap - we were on the roof fire-watching - we saw it go across and then it turned. We dropped down just in time. The blast came right across that flat roof.

P: Were you a family man at the time war broke out? Already married?

P: So when you moved back to London, they would have been too young to be called up then.

S: It was getting near the end of the war, but at one time a plane came over and gunned the playground of the Dulwich Hamlet, which they often did. I remember my wife standing at the door in Woodward Road and he was coming out of Dulwich Hamlet, walking up Woodward Road and calling out to him to hurry because she could hear the planes overhead. Actually I lost 4 brothers in the war. The first was in Normandy. We went over there afterwards, along the coast where they set up the first bridges. From there he went to Arnhem. He was taken prisoner. He was in Germany for some time. Then he came back from Germany. We were waiting for a telegram or something. It came, but it was to say that my other brother had been killed clearing a minefield in Arken, in Germany. I lost 4 brothers.

P: Were your parents still alive then? They must have been devastated.

S: Yes. They were.

P: Did you spend a lot of time with your parents during the war years?

S: We were quite local. We all lived on College property and they didn't live far from us. Do you know Lordship Lane? Do you know the Magdela (?). In the Magdela there used to be Weeks (Wheat?), who was a manager there. Do you remember Haw-Haw who broadcast from Germany? They were partly related to him, their family. Before the war he used to shout the odds outside Dulwich Library - about what Britain should and shouldn't do. He was a Moseley supporter.

P: What was his background. I know he wasn't really a Lord.

S: I don't know just who he was but he was partly related to one of the girls in Weeks' family. They owned the Magdela pub. My mother used to use it quite a lot. Its at the top of the road.

P: Were the Moseleyites quite active round here?

S: They were at one time.

P: You were never drawn to them?

S: No, not interested. We were Labour at the time, still are really. The Conservatives haven't done much for the average people.