

INTERVIEW WITH BOB BLUNT - GREENWICH. 12.2.95 TRANS16.DOC

Interviewer: Rib Davis.

B: I went to school at Christchurch School Juniors, in Christchurch Way. I lived near there. Then we went on to Cheltenham (?) Central School and I left there and I started work up the city as an office boy. I used to go by train for about 2 years. We went up one morning and the office wasn't there. It was a badtime and what they call 'the square mile of London' was absolutely, completely...bad bombing.

R: Where would you get the train from?

B: Maze Hill to Cannon Street. Used to walk from there to Moorgate. This went on for about a year. Then they got these bad bombing raids, it got so bad. Maze Hill station closed. New Cross. You couldn't get up at all. The roads were really bad. The only way people could get up to London was to go to Greenwich Pier, get on a passinger boat to get up to Charing Cross.

R: Is that what you did?

B: That's what I did for about 6 months. It was so bad. I went to work one morning and it just wasn't there. Just rubble. Absolutely flattened from the night before. I made contact with the people I worked for and they said they couldn't carry on or something. So then I came down to work for Harveys.

R: What was the job you'd been doing?

B: Only like office boy. I was only about fifteen and a half, sixteen. We was the London agents for De Paul Cross (?) the big glove people. We used to do orders and everything like that. Then when I came down to the engineering firm I started there as a junior clerk and I was called up from there in about September 42.

R: When were you born?

B: 1923.

R: Can you describe the area where you worked in the City?

B: Yes. It was near the Bank of England. It was getting a real plastering at the time because they were going after the houses of parliament and what have you all round that way. I used to take things to different places, backward and forwards. Every evening I used to walk back to Cannon Street and get a train from there down to Maze Hill. My parents used to get so worried about me, being a young lad and that. This business when they closed down the (stations), my dad said "No. You can't go up there". They set up a temporary office but it was no good at all. They lost all their contacts.

R: Were there still fires burning when you got there?

B: Yes. There was. It was in a right mess, really. It must have been back in about 1940.

R: Could you describe to me that street that the building was in?

B: It was just a heap of rubble. Near White Cross Street. It used to run down into Moorgate. Back of Mansion House. Red Cross, White Cross Street, Moorgate. All round the square mile of London, it was absolutely...a right old mess.

R: When you took the boat up there what would happen if there was a raid while you were on a boat?

B: That's a chance you had to take.

R: Did it ever happen.

B: I think it did at times. Mind you, I don't think they really was interested in the river - it was the docks they was going for. When they went for the docks it was mostly in the evening time. This is daytime. We used to get the 9 o'clock boat from Greenwich Pier. Get up to Charing Cross, if you was lucky, about half past ten to eleven o'clock. Nowadays you'd do it in about half an hour.

R: Then you had to take the boat back?

B: Home at night, yeah.

R: That must have been more...(?)

B: ..(?)

R: You said something before about the tide?

B: If the tide was against you, you went slower. An hour's journey would take, say 2 hours. By the time we used to get there - The governor used to say "Can't have this, you know. Your time is half past nine!" I was getting there at eleven o'clock in the morning. Then when they disappeared, my dad said "Well, you'll have to get something nearer, son". Luckily a neighbour of ours worked at the big engineering firm. He introduced me down there. ..(?). I'd been down there about a year, again the bombing was on, and I was called up. I went back there after the war and I stopped there for 37 years.

R: Can you tell us what your parents did?

B: My dad was a PLA Salvage. Port of London Authority. He done 52 years on that. His brother - during the war a destroyer called the 'Gypsy Moth' was sunk in the mouth of Harry's Harbour and it was a danger to shipping. My dad went away and they was away for months, and they raised this vessel, the destroyer, and he got awarded the MBE for that. It was being bombed because the Germans knew it was a vital port. It was quite a worrying time. My dad had 3 brothers, all on the PLA.

In those days our holidays used to be Greenwich Pier, Royal Eagle, Southend, two or three days down there and back.

R: Where would you stay in Southend?

B: In lodgings, boarding house. You used to get the boat tickets a bit cheaper because he worked on the river.

R: You'd go by boat?

B: Oh yeah. Go by boat. Remember the pleasure boats? The Royal Eagle, Crested Eagle. You see pictures of these up the Maritime Museum now. That was the Londoners, even day-trippers would go down there.

R: How often would you be able to go there?

B: Only once a year. We might have an odd day, day trip, but mostly it was a week's holiday. Used to go down Monday morning, stop down there, come back on the Friday. If we didn't go down there we used to go down on the sandy beach alongside the Greenwich Pier. And it was a sandy beach in those days. That was our seaside.

R: What would you do down there?

B: Go paddling. Sandcastles.

R: Wasn't it filthy?

B: No. Not in those days it wasn't. I'm going back 60 years ago. You'd be surprised how the river used to be then. The tugs used to go by with their barges. The wash would come in. We used to be really spoilt down there.

R: Did you ever see your dad at work?

B: Yes. I went on the vessels several times. You know the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race? That was one of their jobs. They used to lay the moorings for the whole course. I used to go to work with him on a Saturday morning..(?).. and come home with him on the Monday. I've seen the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race about six times.

R: What about your mum?

B: In those days mums were indoors, weren't they? ..(muffled sound) I had five brothers and three sisters. That kept my mother busy, the washing and the ironing and what have you. We lived in Gibson Street. You know Christchurch, Woolwich Road? Round there.

R: Were you an older one?

B: No I was in the middle.

R: So did you have to look after some of the younger ones?

B: Oh yeah. I always remember - I used to go up the road on an errand for my mum. In Trafalgar Road there used to be a butcher's shop and that - I went in there one day and came home and she said "Where's Peggy?" I'd only left her outside the butcher's shop, hadn't I? My sister still lives in Lewisham now. I had to run all the way back, across the main road, and she was sitting there good as anything. I got a right spanking that day. I just came out of the shop and I was talking to another boy. and I'd come all the way home and left my sister out there! My sister's got a marvellous memory. She lives at Morton Street, Lewisham. She said, if you'd like to, she'll do so me of this for you. She'd know all about the shelters cos she's younger. You know Greenwich Burrels (?), there used to be shelters there. Used to go down there at night. With me - I was away when it got bad. I landed in Normandy. Went right through that. I missed a lot . Our job was to get to the launching place before the V2's destroy them. My youngest sister Peggy who lives in Morton Street said she wouldn't mind, and she's got a lot of old photos.

R: When you left school, were you fourteen or thereabouts?

B: Fifteen.

R: What did you go into then? Was that your first job, in the City.

B: Mmm. First job.

R: How did you get the job?

B: A neighbour, he worked there. We used to go up on his motorbike. Until one day he hit a car and we went right through the air and landed up in Barts. I wasn't too bad - it was concussion and that ...(?). After that my mum said "You're not going up on that bloody motorbike no more". So I started to go up by train. I went up ...(?) ...otherwise you lose your nerve. I used to be the pillion, and him being a man of about 25, he managed to hold on. He's

hit the car and me being a bit lighter went over his head - and you didn't have a helmet in those days, did you? I was very lucky.

Then with this bomb business I came a bit nearer home.

R: When the bombings started, you were still at work - Where did you go and shelter of a night?

B: In these public shelters. My younger brothers were all evacuated down to Hastings. Some went up to the Midlands, some went down South. I used to go in this shelter with my dad. Do you know the Union Wharf (Walk?). Up the end of the road ... (?) You know the Union Tavern? We used to go round there and shelter in there... (?) We done that for several months.

R: That was a big public shelter was it? How many people went down there?

B: About .. (?) ..hundred.

R: Would you take your stuff and leave it there from one day to the next?

B: You had bunks there. You had your own bunk You'd take any personal stuff back.

R: What did you take down there? (NB: Sound quality in this section is very poor)

B: .. (?)

R: What about identification?

B: You always had identification cards. You always carried them with you.

R: And a gas mask?

B: Yes, must take your gas mask.

R: What was it like in there?

B: It wasn't too bad. Most of them were under these shops, there was another big one opposite Greenwich Baths... (?) I was called up when I was just eighteen.

R: You must have had the blackout? What do you remember of that?

B: The blackout was terrible, at a certain time of night, they used to come down, black curtains and that. You mustn't have a light showing . The wardens used to come out and shout out "Number 10, close your curtains! Number 20, you've got a light showing!"

R: What about going out during the Blackout?

B: It wasn't ... (?) ..(inaudible)

R: ... (?)

B: Jimmy's Bar. That's where I met my wife. I was in the services and I used to come home on leave.... (?) ...Lived on Blackwall Lane. You know the Pilot public house? You go round there and she's got a ... (?) ..no houses down there. I always remember that noise as the ... (?) passed Browns the big engineering firm. It led down to the river. They was quite nice little houses.

R: Why did she say she lived down there?.. (?)

B: No, I said that. Her dad worked on the engines on the gasworks. They use to live at Downham years ago and when when the bombing was bad, he said they used to walk all the way from Downham to East Greenwich to the gas works.

R: Isn't Downham, Sydenham way?

B: Downham, Kent. It is a hell of a long walk...(?)...Walking through the raids and all that. They were courting. Missed the last tram home...(?) I don't know how dad stuck it. It must have been 5 or 6 miles each way. He'd done an 8 or 9 hour shift. He used to have those big hobby boots.

(muffled sound)

B: You'd go to a public house, go to a dance, come out, have a drink, have some chips on the way home. A pound. It's different nowadays.

R: How was it organised at the dance? Did you just walk up to someone you liked the look of and ask them to dance?

B: Yes.

R: Is that how you met your wife?

B: ...(?) You just went and said to a young lady "Would you like to dance?" And come the interval "Fancy a drink?" Nothing strong. Tried to get her to have a gin and orange, but they wouldn't have it. Then I was about 20 years of age, 21. I had my stripes on my arm...(?)

R: Do you think that had an effect?

B: I think it did. Especially with sailor boys. Her youngest sister Edna married a sailor. I do believe the uniform made a lot of difference in those days. I'm not being wicked but if you was part of the services. ...(?) get serious cos you didn't know when they was going away again....(?) ...We got married 1950.

R: That's quite a while later. Why did you wait so long.

B: We got engaged. You didn't feel you wanted to get married while you was in uniform somehow.

R: A lot of people did, because they were in uniform.

B: We never got married till I came out. I was only demobbed at the end of 47. Then after that we got engaged...(?) We used to live with her mum for quite a few months. From there we went up Victoria Way. When I went to Harveys they owned a lot of property, estates and houses. The wife and I was one of the first people in the new block of flats at Pantis Court. In Charlton. ...(?) Mr Macmillan was then the housing minister. We was the first couple in there.

R: Jumping back a bit - When you got called up you were doing this job in Woolwich. Can you tell us a bit about the job?

B: I was a junior clerk in the costing and wages department. I'd only been there about a year when I was called up. I went back there cos they guarenteed your job - they had to, see - I went back there after and I went from junior clerk to senior clerk, section leader, supervisor and I finished up under-manager. I was made redundant in 1977. I got the gold watch for 35 years. Mind you, it wasn't a very good firm, not bad but it had a bit of a name in those days. I used to do all the wages and costing and that.

R: What was it that they made?

B: They used to make everything for the war. Galvanising, engineering, water tanks, perforation metal, big clutchinating (?) columns.

R: They must have been a bombing target as well.

B: Yes it was. You'd have raids during the day and the warden used to get up on the roof. When they put up a flag it means that they was overhead. First you heard the sirens, you had to dash down to these big shelters underneath the big warehouses. That was a last resort because in the end they got so many daylight raids, it was terrible. And once they put the flag up the top, that was really (?)..they was overhead. Every day to rush down, get the ledgers, put them in the lift and rush on down. Oh my god.

R: You used to take the ledgers with you?

B: Take all the ledgers down there. Yeah. In the end they set up offices in the shelters cos you were losing so much time going down during the war.

R: So you'd go straight into the shelter?

B: Yeah.

R: Was there any entertainment in the shelters?

B: No, not really. I suppose in the evenings they used to have entertainment. On the undergrounds they used to have the odd singer, the old squeeze-box. The old banjo. I've never been on an Underground shelter cos they'd locked it away. Our nearest underground was at New Cross - it wasn't even underground. New Cross Gate. My sister is the one who can tell you about all this.

R: Before you were called up, your younger brothers and sisters had been evacuated. Did your mother go with them?

B: Yes she did.

R: Where did they go?

B: They went to Hastings for a while and they went up to near Doncaster.

R: Do you remember seeing them off?

B: No I don't. I suppose I must have. They went by coach. That was when I was at home with my dad and my older brother and we used to go in the shelter. Mum was away with them. I remember going up to see them when I was on leave - up to Doncaster. I had one leave up there with them. They came home after a while. Hastings had quietened down a bit and they came back again. And I think they went away again, when it got bad again.

R: Were they well looked after?

B: Yeah, I think they really was. A place called St Leonards outside Hastings. When we went on holiday recently with the wife, we went down to a place where she used to be. She remembered it after all those years.

R: So you were called up - in 41?

B: In 42. August 42.

R: What did you go into?

B: We didn't have much choice. I tried for the RAF because I knew someone who was in the RAF and I liked the idea. But I finished up in the army in the Isle of Wight. I'd done my six weeks primary training with the Green Hours in Newport, where the big prison is. From there we got switched into the Royal Artillery. Went to Aldershot way. That's what I went overseas as - I was a gun-layer on the guns.

R: What's a gun-layer?

B: You had one on each side. They had no computer assistance in those days. It was all hand.

R: Aiming?

B: Yeah. Laying on and laying off.

R: Can you describe it?

B: Your hand, the barrel used to come up. There used to be a corporal in charge of the gun. You'd have a crew of about six of you: two layers, a loader, unloader, one at the back, one bringing up the shells and that.

R: Who actually did the firing?

B: The corporal. First we went anti-aircraft and we went to anti-tank. We went overseas as that. We landed in Normandy, D2...

R: What's D2?

B: The day after D-Day. We had a sergeant in charge of us who had just come back from Middle East, the Desert Rats. When we was on the Thames on the LCT's he said "The first thing when we get ashore - You want to dig your trench". "Oh, what's he going on about?" We all rushed up inland about half a mile, set the gun up. He said "Come on". We said "No, lets have a brew up first". Before we had a chance, he came over "Shwoosh!" Machine-gunning. After that, that was our first main job. It was terrible. He was machine-gunning hospital ships, everything. It was really terrible. My elder brother was at Dunkirk. He got wounded, came back, met his wife who was a nurse, went out again to the Middle East, got wounded again at Ancio, came back - never smoked, never drank - and he died of an ulcer in Miller's Hospital. It seems so cruel. He was in the territorials in those days. That's why he was (wasn't?) at home so much, cos there wasn't much work about. He joined the territorials in 1938 and he went right the way through. When he come home he was 56 years of age.

R: When they came back from Dunkirk, do you remember your feelings?

B: Relief. To think so many of them got back.

R: Did you think we were about to lose the war?

B: If they'd have come over then, they'd have gone right through Britain. Ask anybody who was in the services then. There was nothing to stop them. I don't know why he hesitated. If he had ...(?) over the week after Dunkirk, he'd have taken it.

R: And people really knew that?

B: People really knew that. They did, honestly. If it wasn't for the RAF then - well. "So much was owed by so many to so few" as he used to say. But honestly it was a very frightening time I think. Then my brother coming home and he was in hospital up in Blackburn for months. He used to write to mum and dad and say "I wonder if I'll ever see you again because if he comes

over..." There was thousands of those boys come back in a terrible state. My brother had shrapnel wounds in his thigh. He was helped on board a boat by a naval rating and he went into a military hospital near Blackburn. That's where he met his wife, a nurse. When he came back, got well, they sent him out again to have another go. Royal Engineers then. And a land mine exploded in his face. He had all this in his face and his neck.

R: When you landed in France and you didn't dig your trench, did this plane get any of you? When you first came over?

B: It went all round us, yes. What they call strapping (?), machine-gunners.

R: Were any of you hit?

B: Not on our gun-sight, but quite near us, they really was quite near us. And the Sarge said "There you are. I bloody well told you. You won't listen to experience, would you?" We said "We're sorry sergeant". We couldn't dig it quick enough. Then after that, every time you set down the gun it was your first main job - dig your trenches. You learn by your mistakes, don't you?

Then we went right through France, Belgium, Holland. We tried to relieve the chaps at Arnhem a bit but we couldn't get through to them. We went over the Rhine crossing. We carried on and went right up to Hamburg, up this Dresden ..(?). When they say Dresden, it wasn't only Dresden, there was loads of cities done like that. Then again, it was only what he done to Coventry, wasn't it? And London? I feel a bit sorry, it was a lot of people. But when we went into Hamburg, it was a city as big as London, and it was one mass of burning. Five thousand bombers went over there and dropped those incendiary bombs. Everywhere.

Also I've been near Belsen. Oh, terrible. Bodies and that.

R: Had the people been taken out of Belsen by then?

B: No. That's where they used to burn the Jews, wasn't it? Get their teeth out.

R: But when you arrived there?

B: They'd moved on. But we had the job of clearing it up. Not so much the troops - they had labourers and that - the Pioneer Corps - but we had to mount guard. Yet this camp was only about two or three miles from the town of Ceele (NB: Could be Celle? Sounds like 'Seller'). The people there said that they didn't know it was going on. They could smell it but they didn't realise what was going on. Couldn't believe it, ourselves. Imagine being here and there was somebody burning bodies at the Standard. I've got one or two photos indoors. Of the ovens where they used to push them in. That's a bit.. Don't want to start thinking about it.

R: You were standing guard while people were burying these people or what?

B: Yeah.

R: Did that affect you?

B: It didn't really then in a way. No till afterwards. You was 19, 20. Pretty A1. I think it sort of goes in. Same with the conditions. In those days it was nothing to be on stand duty for 48 hours and not have a change of clothing. Used to get soaked through. That's why I get rheumatism now. It's a fact. It's surprising what you can put up with. When I went in at 18 I was A1. I came out as A1. But you didn't realise what you went through. Stand duty in the rifle corps is 48 hours. Keeping it, on a machine gun, as me and my mate was. Nowadays I wouldn't last an hour.

R: What are the days you remember most clearly, between then and getting to Hamburg.

B: One of the worst times was when we were outside Caen. We went in to relieve the Canadians. They'd been sending over these bombs - like weasel (whizzer?) bombs - they were giving them a real pasting. We was on a burial party. We used to get them out of the tanks. As you got them out- I'm sorry Judy, but they was...Wrap them up in blankets and take them down ..It was terrible. Really made you feel sick.

R: Presumably if a tank was hit, nobody survived?

B: Other cases where they got near it, or was trying to get in or trying to get out. Half and half. As you carried them along they'd just...

R: Just fall to bits?

B: There was hundreds of Canadians lost at Caen. And the Queens Own Regiment went in. We used to give them covering fire. Sometimes it makes you wonder. I'm one of thousands - if it was all worthwhile what's happened to this country now. It does really. The people are coming over here and yet we've got thousands of our own people practically starving, homeless. I'm not prejudiced at all but the government has been too easy. They've let so many come in...That's another...

R: The end of the war - Where were you?

B: End of the war - I was in Hamburg. We had VE Day. We got a double NAAFI issue. Instead of one pint of beer it was 2 pints of beer and an extra 20 cigarettes. That was our celebration. That was it.

R: So what did you do?

B: We were in the mess. We went a bit mad like you would do. Nobody wanted to go on guard duty. But you had to.

R: What were your feelings?

B: Relief. "When's my de-mob day? What number am I? When am I going to get home?" It was relief really.

I remember my mum sent me a home-made cake when I was in France for my 19th birthday. I got it about 6 months late - it was solid as a rock. I was in Brussels at the time. I had this box - it was tattered and battered about. We took the cake out and could hardly get the knife in it. It wasn't her fault.

R: what about writing to your girlfriend? Did you write regularly?

B: I wasn't courting in those days. Not till I came home after. I didn't meet her till about 46, I think.

R: Were you seeing anybody else or not?

B: No, not really. You didn't think about it really, in a way. We never got much sleep. You went overseas and you was overseas for 6 months. You never got any leave there. You was eighteen and a half when you landed and you went through and you didn't hardly get any leave.

R: ~Did you resent it?

B: Not really. You didn't have much choice, did you? You was just a number, called up. I think nowadays it would be a good thing to keep up this 2 year business.

R: I don't mean against the government. Did you resent the war taking that part of your life up?

B: Yes in a way. It was the best five years of my life, all but a month. It was really. You take eighteen and a half - You just begin to feel your feelings (?), you was really, suddenly coming here and you're just cannon fodder. I'll give you an example - I went in the Green Hours, I went in the Royal Artillery and I was at White Tarn (?). They said "The Seahawk Islanders have taken a bashing." So they pulled us back. A week's training, right, Seahawk Islanders. So I call myself jocks (?). A month later the ...(?) took a very bad bashing, come back, I'm in the Welsh Regiment now, I've been put in the Welsh Regiment. That's how it went on.

R: That's unbelievable. I thought people joined up for regiments and just stayed in them.

B: No. If you was an A1 you was just whatever you wanted. They used to draw you back, regroup you, send you up to reinforce the others. Then after the war was over I heard of a course, come through from headquarters - "Anybody with clerical experience" - Well, I had to go on postal work attached to the Royal Engineers. I was in there like a shot, give it a go. We went to Brussels, done a two weeks course and I ended up a sergeant in charge of an army post office at Cooks Arm (?). I used to have an interpreter lady, I used to be in charge of about a dozen people there. Big transit camp. But I'm saying, you had no say in it.

R: When did you finally get back?

B: I got demobbed in August 47. I dragged these (papers) out the other day. That's my enlistment notice and that's my .(?)., my medals. I got 12 shillings a month war gratuity and my post-war credits, and the total come together came to £54.

R: That's after 6 years?

B: Yeah. When you think what they get nowadays.

R: Are there any people that you were working with. You moved from one crew to another, didn't you?

B: There's a nice debonaire chap. I'd been in about 3 or 4 months there.

R: Were there any particular crews that you enjoyed working with?

B: Yes. The gun crew. The sergeant, he was a Desert Rat and he used to tell us, reminiscing and that. And you had a sergeant, a lance-bombadier and about six gunners. They used to be together for months so you got to know and you trusted one another, you relied on one another. Comradeship, friendship - That's what you don't get nowadays. The way things have changed now - no manners now. Those days it was different. You talked to a mate one day, you didn't know if you were going to see them the next day, did you? So as such you made the most of them at the time.

R: Do you think things changed at the end of the war? In the years immediately after the war, did people start to be different to each other?

B: I suppose it took a time and then things started changing. You'd come home and be always telling one another about your experiences, going back in your jobs, picking up the strings and starting again.

R: Some people say that after the war people immediately became concerned with getting things and they weren't as communal, they didn't do things together as much. Did you feel that?

B: I suppose it was in a way. I was in a routine 9 to 5 job, Harveys. We had our first daughter and we had a bit of trouble with her. She had a displaced hip joint. She was in hospital for months at a time, months and months. You know, you're so tied up with that. We got a little place and there you are. I had a son first. I haven't (?) even got grandchildren now. But my daughter, she was a big ..(?). She couldn't help it. She was born 6 weeks premature and she was in one of these incubators. The wife thinks the hip was put out of place when the nurses were handling her. When she started walking she kept on toppling over. Then she was at Millers Hospital and we got 4 different opinions. In the end they took her up to Stanmore and they operated, they put a pin in. First they done it with tractions. You don't want to hear this, do you?

R: Food. People on the home front talk a lot about rations. What was the food like out there?

B: Not too bad. We used to have all the old brown tins. I was a non-smoker. Well, I used to smoke a little bit, but I used to bring the cigarettes home to my dad and my elder brothers. And sweets, especially when I was on leave. In those days you always used to get those long coms, I used to bring them home for my dad, what I couldn't wear. I think the rationing here wasn't so good, was it? It was pretty bad. Like so many egg a week. ..(?) you'd get a little bit extra, cos you had to really.

R: But you were getting decent food?

B: Reasonable, cos we were in the services. Nothing elaborate. Cups of tea and that. You never had like 3 courses. You had these special pills, salt pills and that, ration tins. Didn't know what it was to see a ...(?). You didn't worry as long as you got enough to keep you going. As for a bath! Showers. That was a load of...The only time you got a shower was when you'd brought your ...(?). About once a week, get in there, get back on the lorry and go back up again.

R: The whole army must have stunk.

B: If you was alert and you could fire a gun, that was the main thing.

R: Housing - When you got back at the end of the war, where did you live?

B: We lived in Gibson Street. No, tell a lie, we got bombed out again. We went down to Church Lane. You know Chobham Station? Church Lane? Gibson Street got bombed out. They were going for the big power station at Greenwich, the generating station - it got bombed, and all round there. Thats when we got bombed out.

R: Were your parents there when you got bombed?

B: Yeah.

R: In a shelter or what?

B: We used to have an Anderson Shelter in those days. I was in the Home Guard then, before I went in the army. I done about a year in the Home Guard.

R: The Anderson Shelter was down the garden. Now, when they did the bombing, you were away, in France or somewhere by then? So your parents were in the garden when the house was hit?

B: Yes, sometimes.

R: The night that the house was hit, they were in the garden?

B: Yeah. These land mines used to come over on parachutes. One fell on Maze Hill station and all round that area. That's what done it. That's when I was trying to get up there, then. That's where I was going. It used to be very bad.

R: I'm confused. When you were bombed out there, was that before you went to France or after?

B: That was before I went to France.

R: So you were around then. Can you remember coming back and finding the house...?

B: When I came back, they'd moved. Gone down to Church Road. One of the blokes there told me what happened...(?)..... the station there, Charlton Station. From there, that's where I used to go home and court the wife, used to walk up Blackwall Lane, up Tunnel Avenue. And from there we got married and we went down to Prentice Court. Then we went to Harvey Gardens. All that was owned by Harveys.

R: When you came back, can you describe that area of East Greenwich?

B: My sister can remember Scargill Road (Row?). Cos in daytime they used to come over in daytime and machine-gun, right along the main road. Down Scargill Road, New Cross. Remember that school at New Cross where about 50-odd children got killed? They was after the river and the industry. It was only a few hundred yards away from the river, wasn't it?

R: You didn't have anytrouble getting your job back when you came back?

B: No, no. It was compulsory. They had to reinstate you. Your job was kept open for you. That was a government ruling. Then I went in for studying. I went in for accountancy. I passed the first year. I passed the second year to be an ACWA - Associated Cost of Works Accountant. Then I met this young lady, went courting and this and that. I'm afraid I regret it - If I'd have qualified and got my finals, things would have been a lot better. You're not to know that at the time, are you? I'm not blaming my wife, but there you are. When you're going out two or three evenings a week, used to go to college, and used to come home and what you should be doing - You wasn't doing it. It's a shame though.

END OF AUDIO TAPE, SIDE A (SIDE B IS BLANK)

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