

Doug and Joan became very much a part of the community. They joined the Legion and she was active in parish activities at St John the Evangelist Anglican Church. Over the years they were the *Santa and Mrs Claus* of Salmon Arm, going around town, schools and parties in costumes Joan made herself.

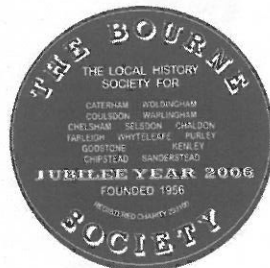
On the day they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, Doug had a massive heart attack. He was rushed to St Paul's Hospital in Vancouver where he had a triple bypass and two valves replaced. 'We had three more years and that was wonderful.' In June 1996 Joan called Doug for supper. As he came into the kitchen he had another massive heart attack and passed away.

Now Joan lives in Shuswap Lodge. Her sister, who had married a Polish soldier and moved to California, has also passed away. Her brother, Alan, still lives in England. They phone each other every Saturday morning. 'We're great pals,' she says.

On the walls and dressers Joan has religious pictures and her family photos depict the cycle of life. Her own grandmother, her parents' wedding day, her husband in uniform, their children, her nieces and nephews, her brother with his own grandchild.

Joan hasn't lost her British accent, but perhaps it has softened over time.

It was 66 years ago that Joan came to Canada. She doesn't regret her decision to get on the boat that would take her an ocean away from her parents, her country and everything that was familiar. 'Salmon Arm has been wonderful,' she says with an infectious smile, 'It really has. I don't regret one minute of it'.



By Des Burnell

THERE WAS an article on TV recently in which they asked for information on any wartime 'Unsung heroes'. I don't know about the hero bit, but what I, and my mates, did is certainly unsung, and as far as I know, has not been mentioned anywhere since. We were, as 15/16 year olds, in 1943/44, Fire Service Messengers. To begin with we were in the Auxiliary Fire Service, which later became the National Fire Service. (Many of us were also in the Sea Cadet Corps in Caterham, HM Training Ship *Carnation*, at the same time, but that's another story).

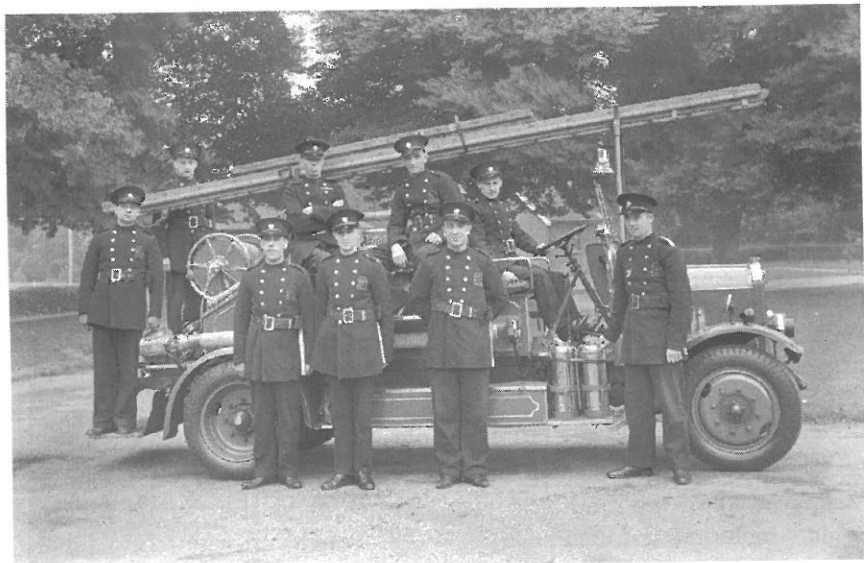
We were still at school during the day, and after school we cycled in pairs to our nearest fire station, in our case, the converted cricket pavilion in Queens Park. Here, when we were on duty, we stayed all night, and slept in bunks. We usually did our school homework, or read training manuals until the fire brigade was called to an incident. Then we had to hang our bikes on the back of the fire engine and go with the crew to the scene of the fire. From there, we had to take messages, taking a route via any 'phone boxes we could remember. If the first 'phone box was not working, we cycled on to the next one, (gradually making our way back to the station), to report the situation and make any request for more assistance or equipment. As the blitz was on, and there was total blackout, it could be tricky finding the way back.

We were kitted out with blue overalls, a handful of silver AFS buttons, heavy duty welly boots, steel helmets, (on which we had to apply the fire service badge transfers), and service respirators in the usual canvas bag. This was a much better gas mask than the normal civilian one, and was the envy of other boys at school.

We had training sessions at the main fire station in Caterham Valley on Saturday mornings, much the same as the regular firemen, which included the use of the stirrup pump, crawling into smoke filled rooms to put out incendiary bombs, climbing up the hose drying tower, from window to window, with a hook ladder, and, every month we had to discharge all the station fire extinguishers, (foam and soda acid), in the yard, and then recharge them all. We used to have fun spraying each other with the foam and then washing each other down with water hoses).

LOCAL HISTORY RECORDS

The fire engine we had at the cricket pavilion was rather old, with a ladder on the top. It took experienced drivers to start it, and it was usually one of us lads who had to swing the starting handle. I learnt never to wrap my thumb round the handle as it would surely be broken if the engine backfired! The old fire engine also developed an alarming 'speed wobble' if it went above about 40 miles per hour, but one of the drivers always managed to drive through this patch and it smoothed out again at about 55 (probably it's maximum speed). I now know it was probably caused by unbalanced wheels, or worn king-pins, but then I was just a lad, hanging on and hoping my bike wouldn't fall off the back! We were also trained, in teams of four, to man, and use, the trailer pumps. These were two wheeled units, usually towed behind a fire engine or other vehicle, each with a Coventry Climax engine driving a high-pressure pump.



AFS Fire Engine in Queen's Park, Caterham 1942

Bunce Bros. photograph. Courtesy of Surrey History Centre

The team consisted one man on the engine, (in our team it was my job, probably due to me going to technical school), one to connect and immerse the inlet pipe, with its large basket filter, into any

WARTIME FIRE SERVICE IN CATERHAM

available water supply, such as a pond, river or static water tank, and two to run out the reel of canvas pressure hose, connect the brass 'branch', (nozzle), and aim at the fire.

While the others were doing their bit, I had to start the engine, (with a starting handle, no self-starter), and I had the responsibility of ensuring it was in good tune. I had to make sure there was a proper water supply coming in, and that the pressure gauge indicated sufficient pressure, then slowly open the pressure valve to allow water to flow up the hosepipe. By watching the hose being run out and seeing where the water had got to as the flat hose opened up, it was a matter of fine judgement to ensure that the water followed the two branch men, and got to them fractionally *after* they had fitted the branch to the end of the hose. Too late, and they would be standing there waiting for it, and too soon, and they would be drenched with water and find it impossible to couple the branch against the high pressure. This meant shutting down and starting again. The water pressure was so high that it took two men, or boys, to hold and direct the jet.

Sometimes, we had competitions between other fire stations and any factory or commercial companies that had their own trailer pumps in the area, and these usually took place in the local sports field at White Knobs. These friendly competitions were to see which team could manhandle their pump onto the field, connect up, using the supply from a static water tank, and knock over a round wooden target with the water jet, in the shortest time. Our team was usually one of the best, but the champion crew, much to our dismay, was a team of girls from the local laundry!

I remember one hectic night, cycling back from a fire in Court Road, to the station with a message, I ran into an unexploded incendiary bomb that was sticking out of the road. It had penetrated the road surface but had not ignited. I was thrown off my bike and my tin hat slid forwards across the bridge of my nose and caused me to have a nosebleed. An ambulance coming up the road stopped and the crew thought I was a casualty, but when I explained, we all had a laugh and went on our separate ways. The next day we found a considerable number of unexploded incendiaries; they were sticking out of the roofs of houses, and in people's gardens, all over the place.

LOCAL HISTORY RECORDS

My dad, who was a firewatcher, brought one home and, much to mum's consternation, dismantled it in the garden shed. He showed us how it was supposed to work, (much of which I already knew from fire service diagrams), and why, in this case, it didn't. We found that the firing pin was too short and would never have made contact with the detonator on impact. His opinion was that the bombs had been sabotaged during manufacture, probably by sympathetic factory workers, in occupied countries. To prove the point, dad did no more than put the detonator in his vice, and with a nail on the end of a broomstick, give it a clout with a hammer from outside, through the slightly open door. It went off with such a bang that it disturbed all the accumulated sawdust, so that we couldn't see inside the shed for hours!

Needless to say, I didn't dare report this to the fire service chaps, but I expect they soon found out for themselves why so many bombs, on that night, failed to detonate.

We occasionally had tests to see how proficient we had become, with the possibility of becoming Leading Messengers. During my test, one Saturday morning, the Fire Chief took me out in his car; I think it was a Morris Eight. He stopped at the side of Harestone Valley Road and asked me where the nearest water supply was. I got praise for thinking of the nearby Caterham School swimming pool, but when he asked where the nearest hydrant was I couldn't see one anywhere. Then he revealed that he had parked right over it!

I was then asked to go to the 'phone box opposite and 'phone in to the fire station with a message asking for assistance at an imaginary 'incident'. Having a good imagination, I described a situation and asked for all the equipment I could think of, including a turntable ladder for high buildings, which were not the easiest things to handle. On our way back to station we heard fire bells, and two fire appliances, one with a turntable ladder, went by going hell for leather in the opposite direction! The chief turned to me saying, 'You did tell them it was just a test message, didn't you?' Was my face red! My name was mud, especially as some of the crew had been up all night at real fires. The chief mollified them somewhat by praising them for a turning out in record time. Strangely, I got my LM rating.

WARTIME FIRE SERVICE IN CATERHAM

About three months before my 16th birthday, my pal, 'Knocker' White and I, were on duty in our cricket pavilion fire station, when reports started coming in of many explosions and very heavy anti-aircraft fire, all over the south. We could hear some of it in our area, and some chaps thought it was an unusually high number of enemy bombers being shot down, but we weren't called out to any fires. Then we received reports that it was a new weapon, the flying bomb!

Having spent all night on standby, Knocker and I left the fire station that morning and cycled to the Clifton bus stop where I normally caught the 447 single-decker bus to Redhill where I attended school. I had decided to tell the other boys waiting there for the bus, that I would not be coming in that day. While we were sitting there on our bikes telling them about the night's events, we heard a flying bomb approaching. Suddenly, its engine cut out and we knew it would land nearby. I jumped off my bike and ducked behind a lamppost, and the bomb landed at the bottom of the hill, only about 50 to 100 yards away. The lamppost swayed back in the blast and hit my nose and forehead! (The Germans certainly had it in for my nose). Knocker, who was still sitting there on his bike unscathed, asked me, 'Do you think we ought to put our tin hats on?' We usually kept our helmets attached to our gas mask case. 'A bit late now', I replied, but then, out of the sky, came a deluge of water and then it rained pieces of slates, bricks and earth.

We found later that the bomb had landed on a bit of waste ground that had been used to site a large static water tank, and the water came from there, a few thousand gallons, probably. The slates came from a row of terraced houses by the bus stop where the blast coming up the hill had blown part of their roofs off, and broken all the windows. If the terrain had been level, the damage would have been much worse. The whole road was covered in debris and people were running out of their houses, covered in dust. I saw a little girl, about three or four years old wandering about in the road, and she had several cuts that looked bad. Without thinking, I put her on the crossbar of my bike and took her to a first aid post, which was at the end of Westway Common, near the library.

When I got back to the bomb site, I found a woman, in hysterics, running around in the rubble screaming for her little girl. We calmed her down enough for me to explain, with the result that she gave me a good telling off! I don't remember too much of what happened after that, except that no boys from Caterham went to Redhill Tech. or Reigate Grammar, that day. (I don't suppose the 447 got through anyway), and that my face was bruised for a week. I dread to think how much worse it would have been if the bus had been there when the bomb, the V1, later known as the Doodlebug, landed.

1944 was my last term at Redhill Technical College, and I started work, as an apprentice at an engineering firm, L M Ballamy's, in Whyteleafe, doing 45 hours a week, so had no time to continue in the fire service. The V2 rockets started falling during my first weeks at work.



Des Burnell 2012

JOHN SMITH REMEMBERS CATERHAM

By Jill Tassera

THE DATE WAS 13th June 1944 and the V1 bombs (Doodlebugs) had begun their bombing raids. The children had to be evacuated. A line of buses stood outside the infant school in Chaldon Road, Caterham. The children waited in the playground, each clutching a gas mask and a parcel, saying their goodbyes to parents before boarding the buses that would take them to Upper Warlingham Station in Whyteleafe and from there to Yeovil in Somerset.

Seven year old John Smith was in the playground that day. He had already experienced the upheaval of family life at No. 10 London Road, sleeping each night under the stairs in the larder with his brother, Frank, and sister, Kathleen, and mum and dad, Frank and Winifred sleeping under the kitchen table.

On the 6th November 1940 a bomb had fallen on the cottage next door and their neighbour, Mrs Brush, was killed. The blast blew the windows and back door open of No. 10. The family emerged from their 'shelters' to find John missing. He was found later wandering in the back garden.

While the house was being repaired, the family went to stay with Mr & Mrs Chapman and their two children, Colin and Judy, at No. 87 Chaldon Road and John and Colin became friends. Once again, all were sleeping at night under stairs and table, while the raids were on. They soon returned to their home that now had fabric over the windows and a repaired back door.

John was born in 1936 at No. 10 London Road and at two years of age contracted mastoid and meningitis and was in a coma. Dr Heber drove him in his car to a children's hospital in London, where he was successfully treated and a postcard was sent to his parents to inform them that he could be collected and taken home. John still has that postcard. (*see page 22*).

His mother, Winifred, when her children were older, returned to nursing and worked at St Lawrence's Hospital for 24 years.

His father, Frank, was a watchmaker and jeweller by trade and had done his apprenticeship with J J Browne & Son, of Caterham, in the early 1920s. During the war years he worked at Shalles Engineering in Whyteleafe, machining parts for aeroplanes. Government inspectors would visit regularly to check that a high standard of workmanship was maintained.