family facts

* My name is Charles Harwood. I was born in London in 1910. Before the war started I signed up with the Auxiliary Fire Service. During 1938 and 1939 I continued working as a bricklayer. One or two evenings a week I would leave work and go to my local fire station for training. This training included knot-tying, training on equipment, ladders, extinguishers, pumps and jumping sheets. We also had lectures on hydraulics, water pressure, water

losses and safety issues.

- On the Friday evening before war was declared a message was broadcast on the wireless ordering all civil defence and fire brigade personnel to report to their local fire stations.

-I went home from work, had my tea, said goodbye to my wife and reported to Tooting Fire Station. At midnight the same day those of us who were to be drivers were taken to Fulham cab garage. As each cab came it was comandeered, fitted with a tow bar ready for a trailer pump. We drove these cabs back to the main fire station. By now it was the middle of the night and we were ordered into a builders yard 'Carmichael's' Wandsworth Common. We filled some old sacks with straw and slept on them.