BOLTON REMEMBERS THE WAR

Transcript of interview with Allan Lord (AL) • War Worker

+ Dorothy Lord (DL) • Schoolgirl

Interviewed by Ken Beevers (K) 10.08.2005

AL: My full name is Frederick Allan Lord, although I am known more by the name of Allan Lord. I was born 1924 in Bolton at Haslam Maternity Home on Chorley New Road. My Mother didn't work as most women didn't in those days. My Father worked in a mill warehouse, and worked at the same company for all his life.

K: Which company was that?

AL: Fine Spinners and Doublers Association, Great Lever Spinning Company, and then Thomas Taylor's. I have a brother who is 7 years younger that I am. I went to Victoria Council School. I never went to another school.

K: Where was that?

AL: It's on Grecian Crescent off Weston Street. It's now a Mosque. We lived up Higher Swan Lane, put it that way. We lived at 269 Rishton Lane and I remember we had a radio, we hadn't had one before, and I remember hearing this about the War being declared and my Mother was weeping, but I wasn't very bothered. It didn't bother me particularly. So when War broke out, there had almost been a War and then it stopped in 1938.Then in 1939 in September War broke out.

K: Did you do anything special for the War effort?

AL: A little time at the beginning with the Fire Brigade. This was unpaid of course. I got a uniform and a better gas mask and a different tin hat but I had to provide my own bike, and I had to turn up at Sunnyside Mills Branch Fire Station, it had a Coventry Climax Trailer Pump with a French Delage car to pull it.

K: How did you become part of that?

AL: Well, there was nothing else I could do. I didn't want to join the Scouts. Well I'd been in Scouts but just like the other people who were in the Air Cadets and that sort of thing, you weren't really contributing anything directly. When the blitz started although it wasn't heavy here, you could see Salford and Manchester going up. Often their Fire Brigade would move some of the people. In its initial stage it was a lot of little fire stations, very different from now, and I think they almost hated each other. The problem was that when you came along and tried to get some water out of a stand pipe, they didn't always fit because nobody had thought to standardise the apertures. I was too young to actually go out fighting fires. You weren't allowed to have a hose until you were 18. I was there to take messages. Fortunately Bolton was only lightly hammered therefore we didn't have a lot of problems with phone communication. Otherwise we were backwards and forwards, but it was interesting.

K: Why did you end up at Tootal's?

AL: Well, it was the nearest to our house.

K: It wasn't anything to do with mill work then, it was just the nearest?

AL: Oh, it was nothing to do with the factory. They were always very good employers, Tootals, TBL. They had a school there, even when you started work, so I went there until we became able to work extra overtime and my Ma, of course, had me working the overtime immediately, and it was 60 hours, over 60 hours plus. A normal working week was 7.40am until 8.30pm with two breaks - one hour for dinnertime, as it were, and one at teatime. We used to sit outside on summer nights and look at the girls going up Chorley Old Road, and thinking, you know, they were finished they were, and they were nicely dressed. I don't think they objected to us appreciating them, but we never got anywhere else with that.

K: Was this at Atlas Mill?

AL: That was Atlas Mill.

K: You worked there straight from school?

AL: No, I worked at Bolton Union Mill on Vernon Street to start with, until I could get an engineering apprenticeship. I worked from June 1938 until Easter 1939 as a mill labourer and then I got a place in the engineering as an apprentice then and I stayed well after the War. Saturday we only worked 8am until 5pm and Sunday we only worked 8am until 1pm.

K: So you were working 7 days a week?

AL: Always

K: During the War?

AL: Oh yes, always. What's more we used to do some overtime on top of those hours I used to work. There were always spaces for you to come in and operate your lathe if it was there. Also there were also repairs and things like that. Mill engines - they always did some maintenance with them and we were the dogsbodies. At 17 and 18, you weren't in charge. They had 4 mill engines, 3 of which were the ones that were in use. The beam engine never needed any repairs, funnily enough. There were all sorts of things we had to do, you'd be amazed at the sort of things that they did and what's more, the ones in charge, at the top level, had got prodigious thirsts. The pub shut at 10 and they would make sure they got in for 10. I have worked until half past seven on a Saturday night and they've looked at me and said 'Shall we let him go.' I've gone home, got ready, gone to the Palais, walked it, come home, then walked it back to work on Sunday morning for eight, and worked all afternoon as well Sunday and then I started work, I was going on days you see, so I started work Monday morning quarter to eight. The number of hours you put in were absolutely incredible.

K: What do they make there?

AL: They made things like the Churchill tank wheels which were turned by us, a horrible job. Also lorry fly wheels, fire engine fly wheels, screws for Merlin engines, and parts for torpedoes. We did some small and some big planed armour plating on a big planer, we planed it up on the edge. You got a tube, a steel tube and you dropped the shell in. It goes bang, and it's off. I've turned plenty of them; in fact I have one I could show you, the only thing I ever took as a souvenir. This is a stator case for Ferranti's. That was a very complex job, very close tolerances, you'd half a thou clearance, and in fact if you held them in your hot and sweaty hands for too long you were out of limits.

K: Did you keep the machinery for the Mill going as well?

AL: Oh yes, oh yes we did some of the machinery for the mill, I did hose reel wrappings and the wrapping machine for hose wheels at the beginning of the War, we did anything, we could make anything.

K: So did they use part of the mill for engineering, or was it engineering anyway?

AL: No, it was separate. 180 people worked there, it wasn't a tiny operation. It was quite a big operation for a mill, they kept extending it. It wasn't in the textile bit at all .We became quite innured to it. We weren't upset about it, and I used to come home most nights at 9 o'clock, quarter past 9, something like that. I wasn't doing it then but later I ran for the Harriers and I used to run after I'd been to an evening class. I used to then go and run round the streets for training, and then go back to work again.

K: So you didn't have much else, apart from work?

AL: We never got anywhere. Later on, Friday nights, Friday we used to finish work at 5.30pm, so I used to come home, get my tea. Of course we were filthy, we went out clean but it was a mucky job, it could be. I went up Green Lane to Mrs Potter and I had my piano lesson, then after that I used to go to the Grand Theatre if possible, second house, and that were a big treat, but it wasn't always like that. I always went to the piano lesson.

K: Do you remember any of the Wartime shows?

AL: Well, very much so, I'm very much into variety. Every book I could buy about variety I got it over here. I mean you saw the people you would like to see, Flanagan and Allen and these sorts of things, at the cinema, at the Lido for instance. In some cases I think they were really driven from London with the Blitz, but in the normal way of course all the entertainment of that nature thrived and we went on a regular basis and the thing is, the same show used to come round once a year, and it was the exactly the same songs and exactly the same words and everybody laughed at the same jokes they did a year ago. Talent wasn't swept away like it is now, but it's gone, the theatre. If you were on nights you could go. If I did without some sleep I could go to the cinema, so I used to go and get about 4 hours sleep and then go to the cinema. I were a bit tired that night, but that's how it comes.

K: Did you go to all the cinemas in Bolton or did you go to a particular one?

AL: Well, I hadn't got the time to go to them all. If I got to one in a week I did well.

K: At Atlas Mills did anyone ever come and entertain workers?

AL: Oh yes, Gina came didn't she Dorothy, Gina Harris. Where the mill, steam engine Museum is now, that building that's left up was a warehouse, but actually during the War it was a canteen. These mills had never had dining rooms or anything but of course this came up during the War.

K: So there was entertainment from what, lunchtime?

AL: Not a lot, there but there was some.

K: Was that ENSA?

AL: No, this particular time it was a local piano accordion band. They did some but they weren't very frequent. Of course you do realise that all the fine spinners' mills and some of the others all had a recreation ground. Great Lever had one on Settle Street, which is still there, it's very sad. Tootals have got one now that's a park, on the other side.

K: Sunnyside Park?

AL: Yes, and Thomas Taylor's, that one was at Lower Pools, and we used to get snowed under with people wanting to be made associate members, because they wanted to go and play on the tennis courts and that sort of thing you see, and we could go because we paid on a weekly basis.

K: It doesn't sound like you had a lot of time during the War to do that?

AL: I used to go up there and bang a tune out on piano if I could. I was a fast runner

K: Did you do much running during the War?

AL: Oh, only late on because it was very difficult. You'd no shoes, nothing. I did my running with plimsolls that had been taken from servicemen being demobbed and put in great heaps, allowed to rot and then delivered to us to use as fuel for the boilers. We went through them to try to get a pair because everything was rationed. It went on of course. They were still rationing when we were married.

K: So they used old service men's plimsolls as fuel?

AL: Oh yes.

K: For the boilers?

AL: Oh yes, we used tyres as well. They bought some second hand huge head stocks from a big old lathe, and you put the tyre on the chuck and you got a knife in as it turned. It was outside in the yard and they used to turn it and cut the rim with a wire, feed them in and then saw them up on a circular saw. Then those went in boiler. On one occasion when there was a shortage of fuel they asked for a volunteer go out on the lorry. Well the lorry wasn't a tipper and it was freezing and we found out just how hard it was shovelling coal, but that was quite unusual.

K: You had to work very long hours. How did they keep you motivated? I mean obviously you'd get paid for it?

AL: Well there was the point, when I was doing work study, when I was in training later, in company, and these companies weren't on piece rates, you were paid by the hour, which after Dunkirk worked 70 hours every week. Then they dropped the working week to 60 hours and production increased. You really have no idea what it was like. I mean I was 16 when I started. I was working on a large lathe as everybody else did and you got the skill but you were at it the whole time. You'd no real time; you couldn't go wandering off or anything like that. It wasn't a severe way, you just kept on, you couldn't just wander off and do what you wanted, you were running a machine and you had to keep at it. I worked on all sorts of machines, but we'd two of us on shift and we'd compete with each other as to who would do the most, and there was no payment for it. I'd do 300 of them a night which meant you were going all the time and it was unpleasant because the coolant, what they called mystic, a soluble oil in water, used to go green with the copper and if you got a little cut or anything your hands weren't very clever. On some of them like the forged wheels for the tank, Churchill's was an infantry tank and it would only do about 12 miles an hour, when we doing these and there was no coolant used, chips used to come off red hot and they'd come out. I've had them on my arm, across my eye, and finally we got some pieces for over our face and if you had leather shoes it burned through the soles, and they were rationed. So we bought clogs and on the inside of the iron we used to cut a shape just to fit inside and then nailed it into the wood and then when you stood on these hot things they didn't burn the wood away. I mean that was alright, the company wouldn't complain about you doing that, it was OK but you daren't make cigarette lighters. If you got caught making cigarette lighters you were in the trouble. De Havilland was the place for them, they used to make model aeroplanes, and they made Spitfires.

K: Little ones and sell them?

AL: Oh yes, they were making them, about that big (demonstrates), and cigarette lighters were made. They used to scrounge from somewhere a piece of aluminium or duralumin, slice them up then slice them up again. You'd no trouble because it was the man on the milling department who was doing it. If for instance you had a machine saw and if it became too dull, you took it off and took your spanners with you. I know one fellow, he died not long since so, and he told me he always stole that size, he had a drawer full of spanners that size because they pinched them. He used to take it to the labourer, Old Harry, and he'd say can I have another blade, he'd give him the old one and he'd give him a new one. They were high speed steel; he then took it to the grinding department. There were only two of them worked on it and they ground them and polished them and they got a source of file handles. Somebody was adding numbers of file handles to their chit you know, and they were making bread knives. You couldn't buy a bread knife and all that sort of thing.

K: So this was a kind of, not a black market, a thriving economy?

AL: Oh yes, we had three lorries and they were out of the First World War. All our lathes were out of the First World War as well. The thing was you were looking what could you put in if you got a cigarette lighter. Well they had a pump of their own and if you stole out during the night, like, and took the pump handle off, it were locked and it wouldn't supply, but there was a bit left, and you could just fill a tiny bit up. Oh they were up to everything. It wasn't really that bad. If you worked in a works like that and there was something you needed and you couldn't get it, it could possibly be made, it depended what you wanted, I can't say very much.

K: Part of the motivation for working would be towards the War effort wouldn't it?

AL: No, no, not really, it was just working. You didn't know my Mother! I worked 51 year and I never had a week off, I never had a day off while she were there. In fact when I first started there was a shop, it's still there, on Mornington Road, against the museum, used to do dinners with a basin, - and you took a basin. When you first started you were an errand boy .The beauty of that was, for cleaning their brew cans some used to give you penny a week, which was big money. Well I was only on seven and six a week you know that were it. I went home one day and I said I've been sick today and she said "Had you bought your dinner?" I said "Yes", and she said "Well you shouldn't have bought your dinner". Oh she was very difficult, a greedy woman.

K: I was going to say, she was money conscious was she?

AL: What! I wanted to be an engineer, I didn't go because there was a War, there was no War when I went to there, I was only 14 when I started at Atlas Mills, Easter, I was 14 the previous June when I left school, so that was some time before being called up to the forces. It never worked that way; she was very, very keen. On one occasion, she sent my Father after me to batter me in the hallway and I was this much higher you know, than they were, and I just got hold of him and I said you're never going to come and touch me again, not ever, don't ever even think about it, that was the way it was.

We had an airman billeted with us during most of the War.

K: Did you, tell me more about him

AL: He worked at the Tech.

K: He worked there? It was a training place wasn't it?

AL: No, it was training but he was actually he was part of the permanent staff and it was electrical aerials and all sorts of stuff, they had one floor which was used for the RAF. Looking at some of the things that happened, it was interesting. Where you go down to Stoneclough, there were smoke pots on the road and if there was a warning they used to light them, and put a smoke screen over Kearsley power station.

K: Were you ever involved in any air raids?

AL: Oh yes, they did drop some bombs on Bolton, the one that could have been the worse one was the Odeon, it was full of people, and it held 2000 people. The cinemas didn't close when there was a warning, they actually used to dim it, say there's a warning, and then put it back on again and watch it. At the Odeon here in Bolton, next to it, now it's a heath centre, but it used to be tax offices and a bomb dropped down and it hit the corner, hit the building. Apparently it dented some of the structure, but didn't go off. If it had gone off, and if it had been just a few yards distance, it would have been right through the roof of the Odeon with 2000 people sitting there. We had an Anderson shelter, I went in it once and I never bothered going in it again because I had a special tin hat. You got a more elaborate, not quite forces tin hat, and another gas mask which had a little thing that opened and closed on the front. I mean eventually we stopped bothering about the gas masks you know, but that worried them, another thing that worried them

was the explosive bomb which was a fire bomb. Initially they were light alloy on fire. It burned at high temperature, but with a stirrup pump you could cool the flame and keep pumping until it died out, but then they put in an explosive charge, so when it got going suddenly it went bang, and if you were there spraying it you got the benefit of it. There was shrapnel coming down, and that was your biggest trouble, anti-aircraft stuff. I remember in Division Street one shell came in and it hit the front door just above the lintel. It didn't go off I think, but it damaged the door.

K: Do you remember a plane crashing on Mornington Road?

AL: I didn't actually see it but he were having a flight for the girlfriend wasn't he?

K: I don't know, was he?

AL: Yes, I think he was having a flight for the girlfriend and he came down on Mornington Road. There was another one, at the top of the farm here, I did go and see that, I went from Plodder Lane and it was high and it dropped way after. It was one of those rotten aeroplanes, I think it was a Wellington, it weren't much good, it crash landed, just crash landed, didn't kill anybody, and it had been on dropping leaflets.

K: Which farm was that?

AL: Top O'th' Height Farm, still there, still working. I were never afraid of anything like that, no, never bothered me at all, I'd go out, if there was an air raid I'd go out.

K: What about food during the War?

AL: On the day shift we could get a canteen meal at lunchtime but at tea time there wasn't anything so you'd got to make your own arrangements. If you were lucky you'd get in pie shop or something like that, you wouldn't get pies at tea time, you'd have to get them earlier, and it wasn't easy. The big thing to remember is that shops shut, the shops were all powerful, the shops would have you stand there if you wanted cigarettes and they'd sell you a packet of them Turkish monstrosities as if they were giving you a big thing. The hairdresser at the top of Rishton Lane when I used go there, he was friendly with my Mother and Father, and he used to come in, and he used to go like this, under the sheets when I was having my hair cut, and put me a packet of cigarettes in my hand, ten cigarettes, and he used to take the money for them but even to buy them was difficult.

K: But it helped if you knew the shopkeeper did it?

AL: Oh yes, they were all powerful. Down Crescent Road there used to be an engine shed, and that engine shed had a canteen and it was Joan, Joan Smith who was running it and she was doing really first rate meals and they were coming up from Hick Hargreaves on the bus to dine there and she never turned them away of course, but then the shop at the corner told on them, because he wanted the dinners. During the War, it was the standard of cooking, on one occasion, midnight, we had our break from 12 till 12.30 and the foreman used to put out the dinner that had been left, and it was mutton, what was it called 'haricot mutton' and it had been kept just nice and warm, but not hot, not cold you know what I mean, and it was completely bad, awful, but you'd no choice, you couldn't go and buy any food. I remember we were working on an engine, the little tiny bowery engine, the wheel on its bearing, it had worn about that much gap in it and he'd never been looking at it, putting oil on it or anything so they came and remonstrated with him, he was lucky he wasn't fired. Anyway, when it came to working on on Sunday he went out and got somebody, it wasn't summer, but somebody with a greenhouse got some tomatoes and of course bread was never rationed, so we got a tomato sandwich. The shops couldn't care less, you were treated like a nuisance value, they weren't anxious at all, you'd see, they'd all got allocations of the foods and they were laughing, weren't they? But during the War he had a business and he got fats and he actually supplied most of the co-operative bakeries, the point really is that you couldn't go along and buy it anyway other than these people. If you got an allocation, like a butcher, you were absolutely in charge; there was nothing you could buy really.

K: And they made the most of it I suspect

AL: Oh, there were a lot of people that did very well because they didn't have to bother, I mean some missed. There was a shop in Bolton, a tool shop, down in Bridge Street, just after Woolworth's, he came either one or two evenings in a week and worked on a milling machine and he was down as being employed which exempted him from National Service, and I know, he actually paid out a deal of money to the people concerned.

K: In Musgrave's during the War were there many women working there, on lathes?

AL: No, none, we hadn't a woman in the whole shop, not one, not for anything.

K: A lot of women were trained weren't they, and worked in engineering?

AL: Oh yes, oh yes.

K: But you didn't have any?

AL: No we didn't have any, well we got a full quota anyway and apprentice rates, we weren't getting paid anything like De Havilland, they got huge amounts of money, they used to have a big bulge here, we used to call it the De Havilland rupture, it was a big parcel of money, I would have gone to De Havilland except there was no way I could transfer, they were doing well.

K: So they paid better did they?

AL: They were dealing directly with the Government on their screws and they were no problem at all. I'll tell you a little battle that used to go on, I remember this was 1942 and we were at Morecambe on holiday and Fred and his wife, he knew I was a turner, just 18 and he said 'this fellow has been trying to rub it into me, but I showed him'. They weren't really very skilled and he got the tool and he packed it, he packed it up too high, not a lot too high, but too high, and he couldn't manage, he worked opposite shifts you see, so he set all the tools like that when he went home. This fellow couldn't manage, he said he learned to hold on a bit, he thought he knew everything but he didn't. I could do that with anybody but I never have, never thought about it. I mean another thing was scrappers, we did all sorts of things, we were working on very old machines, we were doing our limits, and those are less than half a thou. limit and you could put a bit on if you knew what you were doing, you could hammer it and make it go a bit longer, or some cases if they were down you could plate them and then re-grind them and they were perfect, quite acceptable. In this particular case somebody was going home and I know which mill he was passing, he was passing one a bit further down Chorley Old Road, not on the road, but at the back, one of our mills but belonging to a different section. The engineer said 'hey, do you know anything about this', and he showed me this small forging and he said 'he scrapped it'. So what he's done this fellow, he was going home, he'd threw it away and it hadn't gone in the lodge, so they'd found it and as they knew he was the only one who went past, they knew he'd done it. You lose them; they were very, very difficult. Some of the machinery was terrible, they had a grinder I worked on, I struggled with that for a long time and really it was quite terrible because you put it in a small shaft and then ground across and it was a 'Brown & Sharpe', American, they are well known, very good make, but not when that old. They would taper a thou. smaller here and there, you could adjust it a tiny bit, but it never gave out the same measurement. What you tended to do is get it, check it where it was and then just touch it and then slowly challenge it to take a bit more off. It made you able to do things with machinery but it really was a bit of a job.

K: So despite the War they didn't improve the machinery?

AL: They couldn't, what would they get, we never got any new lathes. And remember in those days we had to buy our own tools. All your spanners and that sort of thing, we had to buy them, we used to have a buying thing from Turner's, they used to go along and you put a pound in, everybody put a pound in, and for that the joiners shop, a very big joiners shop, they would make you a tool box and then every week they drew out and the winner that week got a pound's worth of tools, which was, it was a good way of say, getting you to buy tools. Guess who didn't get that?

K: You.

AL: I never got it! Of course one thing was for the first time you were being paid with money and you got a receipt, very detailed because of tax.

If you ask if I carried a gas mask, no, I never bothered.

K: You never bothered with a gas mask, no?

AL: I remember the air raids, but they weren't like the centre of London, we never got those, I mean like Coventry for instance.

K: We talked about food didn't we, did you grow vegetables?

AL: No, no we had a small garden, but not a very big garden and nothing grew. We didn't have any problems really with vegetables, things like potatoes and that were alright, you weren't queuing up for them, you had to queue up for a chicken because they were rationed, the meats and things were rationed, so they were on allocation and if you were friendly with the butcher.

K: Did you go to the Palais during the War?

AL: Well I went to the Palais on a Saturday night; if possible. We took an exam for dancing.

K: You went to ballroom dancing?

AL: Yes and it was on Manchester Road right next door to the Nissan Garage.

K: What was that called?

AL: Chorlton's - his brother was the MP for Bolton at one time. The Cinema was a great thing, you usually had to queue of course to get in, it was quite difficult to get in, and you had to queue all round the cinema. The pubs shut at ten o'clock. What else was there to do? If you're are talking about taking all the girls out, well the lads without the uniform had no chance, no chance at all, not if they'd got one of those smart ones with polished buttons and things on. 'Would you like a pair of stockings?' (American accent)

Well anybody who were from anywhere, they could have been from Outer Mongolia, they'd have snatched them, the girls didn't seem at all bothered. You wondered sometimes would I be a lot better with a uniform on. You could go round to the Palais and you know, they'd be chasing you. Well I hadn't much money; I was being pushed all the time. My Mother, she didn't work until very late on in the War and then she went doing a day or two in a shop and my Father had a very low wage. In fact I finished up having my Father work for me. I was Assistant Manager and he was running the warehouse and my brother had never turned anything in, so there wasn't a lot to do.

K: But you did do some running as well?

AL: It would be late. It would be the end of the War, when I was getting 20/21 something like that, 21/22 perhaps. First of all I hadn't the time, you were never free to go, and in addition I took evening courses here and I won prizes from the Master Cotton Spinners Association, I've got quite a few actually.

K: What about your efforts to join the Air Force?

AL: That didn't go down well, I tell you, I went and volunteered, and I think it was 1944.

K: Yes, you'd be 20 wouldn't you?

AL: I went to Great Moor Street to start with and then I went to Padgate and then I was accepted and then I was flung out to my great disappointment. I'd written up twice to tell them to hurry up. I was thick. Well you see the problem is this, if you're pushed like I was to get working, and my Father kept talking to me about why don't I go in the Army as a drummer boy, I was appalled, that's before the War, I think he wanted to see the back of me, I thought you know, I must try. However when I did finish school in class 7 I couldn't even do decimals, nothing, and so that meant that you were useless. I did some textiles and I've got some with distinction on the preparation to go into textiles itself but then I got this business about no, your not good enough. However I decided I was going to do something, so the man in charge of our department, our charge hand, George Whittle, he'd a degree in engineering actually, he said 'Come on, do this' and he fixed me up with Bolton Tech. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and I could finish work at half past five and go there. You got two hours or two and a quarter hours, and you'd got to do homework each time, and then in your spare time after that you could entertain yourself. As a result, I did school certificate in two years whilst working seven days a week from not knowing any maths at all, and then continued and I did pure and applied maths, physics and chemistry A Level in two more years. Of course, the trouble was there was no hope for me getting a University place then, my Mother couldn't care less, my Father couldn't care less and what do you do. So I actually decided I'd try for a job in textiles, and go further on. This is after the War of course, which I did, and they said 'we want you to do some textiles' so I did textiles. I did ordinary, national and higher national and city and guilds and Associateship of the Textiles Institute which would pay you as a degree if you went teaching. You know it's on the Burnham scale and then I did a few others. The company refused to let me go fifteen minutes early to do Institute of Management classes at Manchester Tech. I was summons by the Managing Director, they were an awful lot actually, so I thought, well I'll do something, so I got the Associate of Bolton Tech and I've got a big certificate and all that sort of stuff. I've done a few things since and I wanted to prove that I could do it.

K: You obviously did

Looking at certificates and letters of appointment

AL: £7.10 a week.

K: The Ocean Cotton Spinning Company Ltd

AL: Pulled down now.

K: Great Lever, Assistant Over Worker, £7.10 a week, James Fletcher, General Manager, that's a nice letter head isn't it; these are all where you've been working

AL: Yes I was buyer, I bought the cotton.

K: For this firm?

AL: No, no, I bought it for all our group.

K: Which group?

AL: I only stuck three years there.

K: What was the group?

AL: It became Coates Viyella.

K: Until you retired?

AL: When I retired I was Sales Director. Yes, they decided to save a bit of money so they took them on from Liverpool, and gave me his job as well as my own.

K: So really you moved out of the engineering side?

AL: Oh yes, from 1951 I did the two years advance staff training. I've got the letter where they've asked me to apply for it and they took me on, but I just intended to show I could do it. The only reason I didn't get called up was they examined me again and said 'I'm not going to let you be sent overseas, your class one but not to be sent overseas'. After the War most of those who'd been out of the War went overseas, a pity really as I'd have been all right at that, and I'd get away from my Mother as well.

It just shows what can be done; I treasured this particular one because that was my first episode. (Looks at certificate)

K: Joint Matriculation Board School Certificate.

AL: And you had to take them all at one go, and I was 21 then when I did that, and I gave up my week's holiday to take the exam.

K: Well done.

AL: And I never got any thanks or anything from my Mother, and I didn't have any time off work, even to take an exam.

K: Do you remember VE Day?

AL: Very well.

K: Why, what did you do?

AL: I was working. Well you know, Stalin made them hold off VE Day for several days didn't he? And finally Churchill said 'It's going to be tomorrow regardless' so the foreman, it was twelve o'clock, there was no transport, no nothing, you know, said 'OK have your meal and then go home when you want' so we didn't go home until it came light, and wandered down to town. There were no buses or anything and I actually climbed on the left hand side lion at the Town Hall Square. We weren't destructive or anything like that, people were coming down to town.

K: Even though it was early morning?

AL: Yes, even though it was early morning, coming light. I don't know it would probably be about four or five o'clock in the morning. It was really quite a celebration, although honestly it didn't make much difference to us.

Oh no, no, no I went home then.

K: You went to climb the lion and then went home?

AL: Well I'd been up all night; we didn't have drinks or anything like that.

K: So when was the official announcement during that day?

AL: I believe it had been announced the night before, late on, like midnight or something like that. Kevin Bushell who was the foreman said, "It's come through, today it's going to be", and he more or less said "well you can have the time off", but remember we were bereft of sleep and it was so nice to go home, one thing working shifts like that, you went home and you just dropped to sleep, you fell asleep, so I didn't do anything.

DL: I remember going down to the Town Hall, I don't know whether it was VE Day or which one it was but I've no recollections of anyone being drunk.

AL: Oh no, there were no drinks.

DL: Everyone was just dancing and that.

AL: There were no drinks being sold.

DL: Somebody picked me up and you know the railings, the stone railings outside the crescent, somebody picked me up and popped me over those.

AL: You'd be still at school then, yes?

DL: Yes, I'd be 14.

ENDS