

BOLTON REMEMBERS THE WAR

Transcript of interview with Arthur Orrell (AO) • War Worker

Interviewed by Ken Beevers (K) 14.11.2005

K: If you'd just tell me your name.

AO: Arthur Orrell.

K: When were you born Arthur?

AO: 1920.

K: And whereabouts?

AO: In Essingdon Street, Daubhill, Bolton

K: And is that still there?

AO: Yes.

K: And what did your parents do?

AO: They were in textiles. My Father, he was a cotton spinner, and my Mother used to work in the bleach works.

K: Which mill did your Father work in?

AO: He worked at different mills. He was at Preston, that would be at that particular time, after I was born, yes. I don't know which one at Bolton he was at.

K: But he worked in different ones?

AO: Oh yes.

K: And which bleach works did your Mother work at?

AO: At Back o'th' Bank, which is Waters Meeting. Well known.

K: So did you have any brothers or sisters?

AO: I had one brother. He was seven years older than myself.

K: And where did you go to school?

AO: First school I went to was in Bamber Bridge, Preston, and I was probably there for about 12 months, and from there we moved from Bamber Bridge to Farnworth and I went to St John's Church of England School in Farnworth. And I was there 'til 1927. From there I moved, with family of course, to Astley Bridge, and I went to local school there, Chalfont Street.

K: Where did you live in Farnworth?

AO: 118 Presto Street.

K: I know that's still there, isn't it, Presto Street?

AO: Yes, it was a shop actually. My Father and Mother tried to go into business, as a part-time income, but it didn't materialise, because it was an area that was predominately Catholic and as an example, my Mother was in the shop and we had a Catholic nun come in asking for donations, which my Mother refused, so (laughs) the nun indicated that they wouldn't get Catholic custom.(laughs). Fortunately, that was part-time and my Father travelled from Farnworth to Astley Bridge. This was when he worked at Sir John Holden's Mill, and then eventually, this was why we moved to Astley Bridge, more accessible for my Father's work.

K: And where was this, in Astley Bridge that you lived?

AO: Number 11 Fairhaven Road, which is off Ulleswater Street. Actually that house was previously owned and lived in by the lady who started Acdo washing powder. I didn't know that until about three or four years ago. (laughs)

K: You went to school at Chalfont Street?

AO: Until the age of 11.

K: And then what?

AO: We had an examination and I got to Folds Road Central School which it was then known. Then another step, if you were good at Central School, you went in for an examination, that, if you passed, you went to the County Grammar School.

K: And where did you go... then?

AO: I was at Folds Road Central School, until the age of 14, and then, of course, it's going into employment, there, which was a very bad time for seeking work.

K: I believe you were at school with a famous footballer?

AO: Quite a number famous footballers, in particular Tommy Lawton, there were also Leonard Martin there and the Mark brothers, two brothers, George Mark was one and I forget the name of the other one, and three or four others. Encouraged by one of the teachers who was a director and a scout for Burnley Football Club and he got these youngsters to go to Burnley as apprentice footballers and it was predominately that as being a good job.

K: Do you remember much about Tommy Lawton?

AO: Oh, I remember a lot about Tommy Lawton! (laughs) I was in the same class for quite a while, which was Form C, I think it was.

K: So you left school?

AO: I left school at the age of 14.

K: And what did you do?

AO: Looked for work (laughs), which was very short indeed.

K: So what year would that be?

AO: 1934.

K: 1934, and what did you come up with first of all?

AO: Quite a lot of them in Bolton were out of work, and of course, it used to be the practice that the, get the Bolton Evening News, as soon as you can, and look for jobs in the job seeking section. To give an idea, shop assistants job for about three or four shillings a week wage, there would be sometimes in the order of about a hundred young fellows, outside a shop, available to be interviewed for the job. There were other jobs for youngsters which were very bad health-wise, particularly one was lead works that was in Tonge Moor, the trouble being that lead was poisonous. But a lot was used in the making of car batteries, wireless batteries and the like. It was handling lead which wasn't very good. Other jobs were cotton spinning as little piecers and sometimes, coal mining and a few labouring jobs and out of work for weeks or months at a time. I used to go to Manchester, to try and get jobs there as clerks, the thing being at school is to try and get a job which was what you might call a 'white collar job' - office job. I went to one in particular, an advertisement in the Bolton Evening News, for office job in Nelson Square, called Provincial Clothing Company. I got an interview but I were so slow in writing, I obviously weren't that type to be able to be of benefit to them, so, the first job I had I kept for two days, at an outfitter in Newport Street, called Ben Barlow. Just an assistant in a gent's outfitters, high-class gent's outfitters. Having said that, I was fortunate enough to have contact with a radio shop, one of two in Bradshawgate. One being Olympia and the other Universal, which were competing with each other price-wise and I had a job there, temporarily for a few weeks, because I was so interested in radio that the manager at the Olympia Radio asked me how I would like to have a job there over the Christmas period, which was quite good. It helped.

K: So, when was your next job after that?

AO: Looking around further for work, made application at Walker's Tannery, that was a local leather works where they made leather from cow hide and calf hide. I got an interview at Walker's Tannery in Bark Street which were a subsidiary of Walker's main place in Rose Hill. I had a chat with the foreman there, who, obviously had information of a written essay I did which was a requirement for boys being taken on by Walker's Tannery, to determine their ability, and having said that, he declared that, it would be in my best interest if I didn't have a job labouring at a tannery, I was due for something better. Which didn't materialise. Somewhat after that I went to the main office at Thynne Street, which was the main works, and I got a job at another subsidiary of Walker's Tannery, known as Bolton Light Leathers, which had a big factory down in Weston Street.

K: So, were you working there is 1939 or..?

AO: I was there for about twelve months and I left. It wasn't very good. There wasn't much choice about, there was short time and also I was suffering somewhat because of wearing clogs. And for comfort I resorted to using boots and the only boots I had then were Uskide soles. These were rubber-soled boots, I was at my work in the tannery and I left an imprint some mud of this Uskide, consequently the Managing Director's son, Brian, who was the senior manager there, informed my foreman, that, find out who were wearing them and tell him not to come in tomorrow, because he wore those boots (laughs). So consequently, I didn't feel like staying

there any longer and gave my notice in partly because of short-time. And then I went to the local Labour Exchange and they had a scheme there, nationally, known as a 'Juvenile Transference Scheme', in which the Labour Exchange found employment in various areas of the country known as 'distressed areas', particularly, Northumberland, Liverpool and Lancashire and Yorkshire. There were jobs available for industry which were being re-generated in engineering, motor-trades, as such as Birmingham, London, Home Counties and you could view cards in the labour exchange which gave the essential details of the job, referred to. Youngsters mainly fourteen/fifteen years old were found a position there in engineering works and other kindred industries. And they found you board and lodgings. They made sure you had a job to go to. You were under the control of the Labour Exchange and they gave you details, keep in touch with your family. For what you needed to go and live away, they had a facility where you could go to Bow's clothier shop, which was a big one in Bolton. You could make a claim and get pyjamas, overalls, boots and things that you would normally be expected to provide. And consequently a date came when I did get an answer to a job in engineering, at an engineering works in Bedford, and I proceeded to be, on the day of going, furnished with the necessary documents, to be met by a Labour Official, at Bolton, Trinity Street, who provided me with a ticket and put me on the train to Manchester. At Manchester, I was met by a Labour Official there with two Liverpool lads, who were going to the same firm that I was going to. So, I travelled from Manchester to Bedford with those two, and we were met by a labour official there, who took us to the place where we were due to be living. One difficulty being, that, these Liverpool boys couldn't understand my Bolton dialect, I couldn't understand the Liverpool, so we didn't say much between us at that particular time. (laughs) I told them I was going to come back home, instead, I had an intention to go to London, because I had met up with this boy at this particular works that had relations in London, and he got me interested in getting a job down there, so, I went to my digs, got my things in my suitcase and told them I was going back home. Instead of that I caught a one o'clock bus from Bedford to London, and arrived in London in the evening, about half past five, at a place called Golders Green. And from there, I'd got an address of this boy's relations, so I got fixed up with accommodation there. Following day, it's a case of finding a job. I did look around, there were a lot of vacancies and a lot at factory parks, you know, there was areas that contained nothing but buildings and manufacturers, rather than ordinary buildings, so, I had a look round following day at around twelve jobs, there was only one which I could afford to take to pay my way, you see. (laughs) That got me fixed up at a place called Williamson Manufacturing Company in Willesden, which is north west London, north west Thames, and eventually I got started there which was a small manufacturing which they used to make, survey cameras and certain Air Force photographic equipment, and of course, it was quite interesting because I was interested in photography at the time, you see. And so I started there and I used to get a bit of overtime, which helped, and I was there for quite a few months.

Then eventually I came home and I worked 1938/39 one or two local jobs, at Dobson and Barlow's for instance, and then eventually I got the urge to go down London again and eventually I got one or two odd jobs, and then I contacted the original company that I did work very well, for and could they take me back on again, which they did. So, I was there as an instrument maker and machinist, capstan lead machinist, and assembly of photographic machinery.

Approaching Wartime now and they eventually agreed with the government to make a shadow factory, they used to call them, as an offshoot of the main building and this was at Reading, in Berkshire. So I made application and went with them to Reading. I was the twelfth person to start, and this brought me to the fact of the outbreak of War. I was starting there and I was waiting for one of the work people at Willesden, who was also moving to Reading, and they agreed I would be able to go with him and his wife. He was in his fifties, and I would be able to take digs with him. In the meantime, I had a tent and I was camping out a mile away from the factory on the side of the Kennet and Avon canal. It was in the grounds of a public house there who agreed to let me use my tent there, which I did. And I used to go from my tent to my work three quarters of an hour's walk in a morning and back at night you see. And within three weeks, the chappie came back to Reading. Reading on the outbreak of War. Sunday night/morning I think it was I was in Broad Street, Reading, along with a friend of mine, and that's when War was declared.

And it came to be that anyone camping had to camouflage their tent, but in the meantime, I went into digs with this particular chap. I was there for twelve months to two years and then eventually I was concerned about my parents in Bolton so I made application to come back home. In the meantime this particular factory was on the fringe of the Battle of Britain, and we used, on occasion, see enemy fighters coming around the factory, but apparently they didn't drop any bombs on us, but they dropped one or two not far away because they were trying to trace

Reading Aerodrome which was only about a mile away. And, of course, with the War starting, the factory were part and parcel of the LDV - the Local Defence Volunteers. That was Anthony Eden started recruiting part-time workers so we had an armband and we used to do night duty there, and when we were on night duty, as such, we were given a rifle and we also had two or three bullets and one night, I well remember when it was my turn, we went outside, patrolling, and anyway, we were allowed to go back home and have some breakfast. Anyway, I got back to my digs, and I was starting my breakfast and one of the chaps from the factory came and said 'Oh, you've got the bullets!', you know, I still had them in my rifle (laughs) 'You've got the bullets', 'Oh yes, see here they are' they turned out to be bullets that I'd got anyway, (laughs), you know oddities like that. And things like air raid sirens, and quite a number of examples where people couldn't tell the difference between 'alert' and 'all clear'. There were examples of people dashing into the air raid shelter and that was the 'all clear', that happened all the time.

K: What was the name of the firm you worked for?

AO: Williamson Manufacturing Company.

K: Oh yeah, Williamson Manufacturing... and they made these survey cameras, so?

AO: They were the main suppliers of photographic equipment for the Royal Air Force, and other air forces. Survey cameras, and also they were the main manufacturer's of target cameras, which were shaped like a machine gun. Made of aluminium, simple in construction, but, instead of firing bullets they fired a exposure trigger which would respond at a pre-determined target and this had a canister which held two films which were exposed, so that when they pressed the trigger of this imitation machine gun, they would show the results on the negatives that was exposed. And from that it was developed. And this had a target graticule on so they were able to be assessed, that is the aircrew, who were becoming Air Gunners etc, would be able to determine their ability as to how accurate they did you see.

K: So, obviously it was a very important...

AO: Yes, more important, they made gun cameras, cine cameras, 16mm film and they were used in conjunction with machine guns, so that when they were attacking enemy aircraft they would fire this camera trigger that would shoot, when the actual machine guns, which were fixed in the wings, they would be able to determine if they'd shot enemy aircraft. You know, determine a particular, English, British pilot who'd shot the enemy plane down. These cameras where modified so that they could follow the enemy aircraft down to an extent and determine when the machine gun wasn't being fired, initially they were unexposed when the machine gun trigger was pulled, you see, and so, you know, this was one of the main things, they made thousands of them, in conjunction with Kodak companies and other ones as well. So that was the main job of that particular... being able to feed survey information into a machine that fed at the start and came out as a finished product at the end, which was quite an automatic machine, you know, particularly for those days. We had a chappie come from the Air Force to give us, kind of a propaganda talk one afternoon, and he put different questions to us and one question he put in, he said 'Can you determine - do you know what plane this is?' and this was a British fighter plane, and this turned out to be, this is a photograph managed to get, which was a British fighter plane captured in France, and used by the Germans, so things like that were on the go.

And eventually, I made application, came back home and I got, this would be about 1940, and made application at labour exchange and got a job with Ferranti Limited, at Hollinwood, they were on War work.

K: Using your skills that you'd..?

AO: Yes, I worked in the experimental instrument laboratory, where they made the designs and prototype of instruments used in aircraft. And they also did a lot of work on making apparatus used for Maglip which were used in conjunction with anti-aircraft guns and batteries and the like and they were used in plotting the positions of enemy aircraft. And we used to do a lot of experimental stuff there, making indicating instruments.

K: Hollinwood is..?

AO: Hollinwood is near Manchester. Within twelve months we moved to Bury, where they took over a bleach works on the outskirts of Bury town centre there, and this is where the instruments was concentrated.

K: Where were you living then?

AO: Living at Bolton, Astley Bridge.

K: In Astley Bridge, back at Fairhaven Road?

AO: Yeah, I was there until about 1952, I think.

K: So, did you work long hours?

AO: Oh yes, I did overtime. Saturday mornings and Saturday afternoons as well, you know. And of course, they had fire-watch, I did a stint. I never went into the Home Guard, because of the job and I was taking exams and things like that you see, so, I just kind of managed with doing fire-watch. I don't know whether you aware of or not, they used to have people come from, what were known as ENSA.

K: Yes, tell us about that.

AO: Well, they had entertainers, vocalists, pianists, and, you know, that type of thing to relieve tension. And these groups used to visit the factories, and during the lunch hours, for instance, part of the lunch hour, they used to give entertainment, you know. Some were fairly good and others, they got booed actually. (laughs)

K: What kind of things did they do ...a comedian, singing?

AO: Yes, they were things like that, they were third class really, but nobody famous came.

K: So they used to come to the factories at lunch hour.

AO: Yes, yes, that's right.

K: Was Workers' Playtime going then as well?

AO: Yes, it was, ah! Workers' Playtime, Ivy Benson and a girls band. That used to be one of those things. I used to like the programme before, which was the, you know, classical music, and then switch off and this Ivy Benson used to come on time and time again.

K: Did you have any badge that said 'War Work' on or anything?

AO: I don't think so, there used to be one that the Air Raid Wardens used to have, yes.

K: What about air raids?

AO: I don't remember a lot about air raids. The one that I do remember was coming back from Reading, on Christmas leave, coming through Manchester and seeing a lot of buildings there ablaze. Transferring from Piccadilly Station to Victoria Station and seeing all the debris about and whatever. That was awful.

K: Was that a bit of a shock?

AO: Well, it was a shock, yes. One of the most agonising moments was in Reading, which was 36 mile from London, and they used to take a lot of the school children from London, and to see them getting off the train at Reading station and being delegated to different people, you know, by the voluntary societies. To designate where they had to go, but, oh the agonising. And of course, along with them were various soldiers that, you know, had managed to escape from France. Foreign ones, in foreign uniforms and one particular lad, he was a, well he seemed to be, like the typical village yokel you might say in those days and he was just dying to get back home to see his mother. I often wonder what happened to him, you know, he'd obviously deserted at the time but it was a really pathetic case. I never spoke to him, but you got things like that, yes.

K: Did you always carry a gas mask?

AO: Well, when needed be. Not always, but, you know, it was there for...

K: And what was the blackout like?

AO: Oh, pretty strict, oh yes. You looked after your blackout, you put things up and you made sure that you weren't having stray light. But having saying that, the contrast, I remember being in Bradshawgate, Bolton and a great big Yankee... two or three Yankee lorries came along and they had great big headlights on, they hadn't even got the... oh the headlights used to have a metal cover over the top, with louvers in that pointed it just direct. My wife's sister, she was the youngest ambulance driver in Bolton at the outbreak of War, my wife was yes.

K: Your wife was?

AO: Oh yes, she could have told you a lot. She joined up actually, she was one of the elite Army units which were Princess Alexandra Unit or something like that. She went into the Forces and she was on Overseas Allocation, which was part of the set-up of up on Scotland, up in Stromness and that way on. In her training and in use, the only thing she couldn't drive or ride was a motorbike. She used to do transferring of lorries, to different places and eventually, one of the main jobs she had was chauffeuring for military personnel officers etc. and driving a Humber Snipe. Small stature and when she was driving she used to be able to see through the spokes of the hand wheel, she was so small. Yes she enjoyed it. She was up there at Scapa Flow and what have you.

K: Was she?

AO: Yes.

K: You don't remember any air raids in Bolton much then? Well there weren't many really...

AO: No, but there was one in particular, in Bolton. The dropping bombs, one either side of the Odeon cinema when I think the audience was inside, one dropped on the Lever Chambers and one dropped on the market. Small, small size.

K: But there would be about a thousand people in there wouldn't there?

AO: Oh yes, but the thing is they were good value at the Odeon Cinema. You could reserve your seat for sixpence.

K: Could you? So, did you go to the cinema a lot during the War?

AO: Oh yes.

K: Well you said all the cinemas you used to go to.

AO: Well that was in Farnworth, I used to go to them all in Bolton, I can rattle them off, there was about 20, 24 altogether I used to go to them all, yes.

K: Do you remember Wartime food particularly?

AO: Oh yes, Spam and black coated workers - prunes

K: Yes, did rationing affect you?

AO: Yes, well Mother did a good job, four of us of a family you see. My brother, he was on War work.

K: What did he do?

AO: He was err, worked at Avro's, I think and he worked at Dobson and Barlow's, worked at Trafford Park on air work, particularly Chadderton was Avro's where they were making aeroplanes, you see.

K: What was your least favourite food, in the War?

AO: Oh, I should think Spam, I suppose

K: Spam. Did you grow any vegetables at home?

AO: No, we didn't grow vegetables, we'd no plot and we'd no facilities. There were a lot of people did have allotments, but we didn't. It was a case of queuing up and the like. You used condensed milk a lot, even as a spread and then dripping. It makes you wonder how we did manage.

K: Did you do anything special for the War effort? Like any voluntary work?

AO: Yes, I was attached to the... just on the fringe of the Labour Party and aiding Russia, that was one thing, Bolton they had a committee there and knew all the local councillors and whatever and we created a fund there. I think we managed to get £500 and present a cheque to an official from the Russian Embassy in London and put on things like entertainment, a brass band on at Capitol Cinema, and also I got one of the people who used to work where I used to work, called Winifred Halliwell, and she was a classic pianist, yes, and very good. So we had a brass band entertainment, a pianist and also Pollitt, one of the Communist leaders, come and gave a talk, so there was a lot to do. Emphasis on Russia trying to get us to create a second front, much earlier than we did, you see, it took a lot of keeping back that, otherwise we could have gone too soon or Hitler could have gone to soon, and things could have been different today.

K: How did life in Bolton change, during Wartime?

AO: Well, it must have done to an extent, it was good in those days. There was a camaraderie there.

K: I suppose being a manufacturing centre, a lot of people were on War work weren't they?

AO: Yes, of course, the cotton mills were. To be honest there were a lot of little odd places, you know, like Crossley's, for instance. They did things for armaments. And Dobson and Barlow's and small ones like Profitt's, for instance, you know Profitt's? They went into radios afterwards. I'm not sure whether they started off as plumbers or not, but they went into radios and they were doing, you know, small electrical assemblies, opposite the Victoria Hall, they were doing power packs and, you know, military stuff there. Victoria Hall, in those days, they used to have Saturday night entertainment, chappie there, Vicar, Hannah, but they used to have regular, local concert parties, like, groups, maybe three or four artists, you know, singing and pianist and what have you. And that would be one half of the night and the other half used to be a full-length film. Yes, it used to be fourpence I think.

K: Sounds good value that! (laughs)

AO: Yes, it was, not quite as good value as the Odeon for sixpence, but.

K: So what do you remember of VE Day particularly?

AO: Oh, I don't remember much about VE Day, though I did go down to London, you know, when it were, there were street parties and things like that, you know.

K: What about VJ Day? Similarly?

AO: Just similar, yes.

K: Did your job end with the end of the War, or did it just...?

AO: Yes, to a degree, it would be, a lot more got made redundant. The factory closed, they terminated the contract work. And they moved back to Moston which is quite close to Hollinwood and from there I did a few odd jobs, but still, I never got called up, even after, you know, the War was over, because, idea being that industry was still being required and if you kept in your particular job you did during the War, like machinist, and engineering and particularly on things like electronics, they were kept going. If you kept your job, like I was a instrument maker, experimental instrument maker, when you kept to that your were OK, but if you'd have left that job and gone into brickie's assistant or something like that the labour people kept control of where you were and what you were doing.

K: What was Christmas and birthdays like during Wartime?

AO: Not a lot, you were restricted, but we weren't a bit family like a lot more. We kept to ourselves without much contact with brothers or sisters or relations. There's probably even less nowadays I should think because people are more mobile. We had relations in different streets but never particularly made contact, apart from saying hello.

K: Is there anything else we haven't covered, to do with Wartime?

AO: Speaking generally, south of England, and that's were I were, you couldn't get down to the coast without permission.

K: Couldn't you?

AO: No, there used to be a so-many mile band. I don't know whether you've come across it or not, which were related to the south coast, you had to have special permission to go there, this is why, was it Mulberry Harbour was such a success. Oh, by the way, when I started at Ferranti's, you know, after was War started, they were talking about dishing out pikes to the Home Guard.

K: Pikes?

AO: Pikes, yes.

K: Did that ever happen?

AO: No, No, I don't think so, but that was the state of things. Another thing that people don't realise, and I remember it particularly, is when I was working away from home, it were a case of, you know, when you get these newspaper media trying things out, you know when they, try to get into somewhere secret without doing any qualifications. And one newspaper got some of their staff walking about London in enemy uniforms, yes, and never got picked up as far as I know. Yes, oddities like that, you know.

K: Did anyone ever come along and tell you what use your equipment had been put to and how successful it was and..?

AO: No, not a lot, we used to get things coming to Ferranti's, and that was interesting. They used to make lots of aircraft instruments, you know used in aeroplanes, you know, fighters, and altimeters and things like that. And we used to make things about this size, electrical instruments, and the Germans, we got examples of German ones coming in and what they'd made. And were ours were heavy aluminium, theirs were paper, varnished paper, there's a name for it, like thick passe-partout. And we have various instruments to test and see whether they were constructed differently. And another thing generally was at the start of the War that all factories were asked to declare what stocks they had - nuts and bolts and things like that, you have to give a... so that, if somebody were short, they could get them. There were oddities that cropped up as well in that field, yes.

K: Did you have to be, you know, particularly careful, about what you said?

AO: Oh, I remember, that's another thing, I was interested in photography, and you know, start of the War I was working in this place in Reading. I used to get about on a bike a lot, so. But when I worked at Reading, come weekend and on a Sunday which I didn't work, I thought, oh, being interested in walking and you know, I'd get to know places, so, and at that time I had a camera, cameras were like a big fuse box, folding chimney on the top, you know, the old type of press

camera with the lens that size. I'd got one of those, you see, but I'd only three plate holders and it was using glass plates, not roll film, these were glass plates, 9 x 12 centimetres in size which were a bit bigger than English ones were 40 plates, so I say a bit smaller. So I thought I'll have a walk out, and so I took the local bus from Reading bus station and got to a place called... near to Goring which is along the River Thames there and went towards Ridgeway, which is a Roman road, and nice scenery and things like that. And I'd no camera case, I had a piece of brown paper, thick brown paper that I'd covered my camera up with to keep the rain off if need be. So I was on my own and walking there and there was a Fairey Battle came flying over me. I thought eeh, be a good shot that, anyhow, I deferred from doing that. So, and then continued my walk and came to a very high spot where it looked down to a place called Streatley which isn't far from Wallingford which is going towards Oxford, and I was carrying this camera and I hadn't got my brown paper over it, it'd got tattered so I'd disposed of that, or wrapped it somewhere, and I was walking with my big camera you see, and there was a few people with parked cars quite close by. Anyway walking along there and then there were a car coming behind me and so I just waved it on as such and they stopped and said 'Oh excuse, what have you got there?' and I said 'It's my camera' and it happened to be an Air Raid Warden, you know, with one of these badges on, you see, and this were when things were, you know, state of anxiety, and the like. And I said 'oh it's just a camera' and I think I had my identity card but I hadn't filled it in, that's right, and I'd got my birth certificate, and we stopped and picked up a chappie just a short distance away, an Army officer, you see. So they started questioning me, where did I work, what did I do, and things like that. So they said 'Oh you'd better come with us' so they took me down in the car to Wallingford police station, (laughs). Anyway I was living in digs in Reading at the side of Kennet canal there and the like, so I was there about two and a half to three hours, and I'd gone by bus up to Streatley but I'm in Wallingford police station, putting everything out, you know, and asking me about my camera, where did I work, and in the meantime when I'd got back to my digs, they'd had the police round there checking on me!

K: Where they?

AO: Oh yes. And the funny part about it, is this, there was a Sergeant there and a PC there, he was brought out of retirement, fortunate in a way, he'd come from Oldham so we were quite on level grounds there. I finished up taking their photographs (laughs) So when I'd got back home there were quite a to-do.

K: So, you were arrested, yeah?

AO: Well, I wasn't arrested.

K: Well, you were taken in for questioning.

AO: Reprimanded... (laughs)

K: Why, you were only taking photographs of the scenery weren't you?

AO: Ah well, this is it, you see, when the factory first opened there, at the start of the War, one of the technical staff in the design staff at this camera place, he took a photograph of the works, from the road, just out of interest, and the police came to the factory and arrested him. I did get a picture of the factory, I've still got it, a small, three and a half, two and a half one, but that was taken before War was declared. And the other thing is this, you couldn't get film, you know, I couldn't take up photography. If I think of anything else I'll let you know.

ENDS