

Jack Lloyd's Reminiscences – Part Two

1939- 1964

We continue Jack Lloyd's reminiscences, as told to his grandson Edward (then 11 years old) in 1992.



The Auxiliary Fire Service – later renamed the National Fire Service was the wartime firefighting force. Here is Jack (centre) with colleagues from his watch in Coseley.

In 1939 the **Second World War** broke out and along with other men he had to register for war service. He was given six months to wind up his business before he had to report. During this time the Black Country was being heavily bombed and there was a campaign to recruit firemen, and so my granddad joined the fire service.

He encountered some of the most frightening experiences of his entire life. He was based with the local fire service in Coseley but was sent to the big cities of Birmingham, Coventry, Liverpool and London when the bombs began falling.

He remembers one night in Coventry when the cathedral got flattened and most of the city along with it. The bombing started at 6pm and carried on to 6 the following morning. German planes were flying over in waves and bombs were falling all around. He said the noise was terrifying and there was not much they could do because the water mains had been blown up and even the fire engines were out of use.

There were many people killed that night and one fire crew from Dudley was blown up, but he never lost any of his crew during the bombings.

There were never any lights on the fire engines and they only had a thin slit of light to guide them at night. Petrol was hard to get and each fire engine carried ten gallons of petrol around with them.

The men worked 24 hours a day and 24 hours off. "You were friends with all the other men because you worked with them for so long." He made a lot of friends that he kept in touch with for the rest of their lives.

He was sometimes allowed to go home when he wasn't working but if the sirens sounded: "I had to jump on my bike and report for duty right away, day or night."

Food was in short supply and rationed -mainly it was things like potatoes, powdered egg and a sort of meat called 'spam'. People kept chickens and pigs and grew what vegetables they could in their gardens. He was glad when it was all over and he was allowed to go home and begin life again in his shop. "It was a funny life," he said, "but we still got through."

My granddad hadn't been back at work long when he heard that a bigger and better shop was available to rent in Castle Street, Coseley, and he moved there as soon as possible.

He began to drive his Morris Eight car again that he'd owned before the war, but wasn't allowed to drive because of petrol shortages.

He married a Sedgley girl, Annie Evans. At first they lived with his parents in Springfield Grove in Sedgley, until they finally found a house of their own to rent.



Jack married Annie in 1946.

They had two children, Christopher and Alex and he continued to work hard: “Times were getting easier, people had more money and we were able to buy things. We had our first TV in the 1950s and I remember watching the Queen’s Coronation on it – it was a big occasion for everyone.”



Jack with Annie and their two children Chris and Alex in the late 1950s.

In 1964 after years of working in Coseley the whole row of shops was knocked down. He found a new shop in Dudley Street Sedgley. It was closer to home but meant setting up a new business. Fortunately most of his Coseley customers followed him and he continued to work there well past retiring age.



Jack and Annie.

He still lives in Sedgley (this article was written in 1992). Annie died some years ago but he finds plenty to do. Looking after his home, gardening, reading and playing the piano. He says he wouldn't be a hairdresser if he had his time over again. "I think I would have liked to work with animals – I would have liked the outdoor life," he says. "But as long as I've got no worries, I'm quite happy really."

Edward Lloyd 1992, aged 11.

Included in the service booklet published for Jack's funeral at All Saints' Sedgley, in August 2016.