

Written by Norman Sampson

Firestorm

Incendiary bombs were raining down on Burgers paint factory in Morning Lane, Hackney, which was situated just across the road from the estate where I lived.

The night sky was red, sparks flying everywhere. We could feel the intense heat from the burning factory. Firemen worked through the night to get control of the flames and finally put out the fire which raged all night.

One of my uncles who also lived on this estate was home on leave from the army at the time was firing his rifle from his balcony at the German planes as they swooped over the paint factory to deliver their bombs, but apparently never hit one.

You just cannot imagine the sights and sounds that we witnessed in just one night, just one air raid, the sounds of enemy aircraft flying overhead sent shivers through your body. You just shut your eyes and prayed every time you heard the whistling of a bomb falling wondering if this was the one to blow you to smithereens, or blow your house up, the fire engines, ambulances. Our own anti aircraft guns situated in Victoria park trying to shoot the enemy planes down, the heat of the fire, the fear, and the next day we all continued our lives as though this was normal.

Civilians who are alive to-day who witnessed London in the 40s may seem to look OK at first glance, but we all carry scars of what the war has done to us, even if they cannot be seen they still cause so much pain especially when looking back to our past.