

A.F.S. "MEMORIES" by BEN

In Nineteen Hundred and Thirty Eight,
'Twas felt old England's life was at stake,
And so, 'in answer to the old Chief's call,
Some local gallants, about forty in all,
Besieged the Station in Bury Street,
Clean chins, clean boots and clothes all neat,
To offer their services to the Crown
As well as this old English town.

Auxiliary firemen, he said you will be,
If after twenty drills you are he
Who knows all the workings of hydrants and hose,
Of pumps and ropes, yes, don't forget those,
Like little boys with some new toy,
We donned our tunics and, oh boy!
Constantly drilling mostly in the dark,
Little thinking 'twas more than a lark.

Some of us departed for jobs that were drier,
Some of us drilled until covered with mire,
But most of us stayed to see it through,
Completely in ignorance of what was ado
In far away Germany where Adolf was plotting
The destruction of England whose soul was rotting
'Neath the shade of umbrellas and papers and pipes
Awaiting his time until things were just ripe.

Then it came; this was it, bombers galore,
The Battle of Britain off Dover's shores,
And then every night for hours on end
We stood by for duty at the town's three ends,
Three crews, three pumps which were just the ticket,
While others the Town Hall and Thames Street did picket,
Bemoaning the watch on the eerie Town Hall
With some so-called men who were ready to "ball."

Alerts, All clears, morning and night,
Yes, we remember 'twas a peculiar sight

To see butchers, brickies and even a printer
Dashing to stables at the height of winter
To unleash the "hounds" that lay cold within,
That when started up made such a terrible din
As they charged up the High Street, the Ock and the Vine
In low bottom gear until, Action Post reached,
We stood on the brakes with a terrible screech.

A page of history is now turned
As Regional Call began to be heard.
All innocence and as bright as day
We merrily drove and wended our way
To the towns and cities of this fair isle,
Stopping now and again for nature a while,
Little thinking of horrors to come,
Of what we should do, before we were done.

Yes! it was horrible while it lasted,
Bombs, death, in fact everything blasted,
But we kept our tails up while there and we knew
Our fellows at home were standing by too,
So that at home and abroad our duty was done,
And come what may, we smashed the Hun,
Yes, we, the pioneers of the A.F.S.,
Have, in my opinion, given our best.

And, finally, I propose to name a few of those
Whose presence here to-night recalls the past,
The Johns and a Cyril, the Franks, Bill and Jacks,
Gilbert, a Bob and, course, old Ben's back,
Macky and Walt, old Vic and young Wally,
Harold and Percy but not Goering's Folly,
Maurice, the Harrys, Dudley and Jeff,
A Henry, two Ivors two Dicks and, what's left?
Why! Macky, Bob and Ernie in full battledress,
Awaiting demob and a jolly good rest.

So let us be gay, be cheerful, no tears,
For these are just memories of six terrible years.