

In this extract Alan Mayhew is describing taking an exam during the Second World War

TRACK ONE – 00:11:48 – 00:14:08

Jolly good. Alan, with a war on, how did that effect taking of exams and things like that?

Mayhew: Yes, I remember an interesting little bit about exams on my notes here. As we were all living together, we were three to a room in this house at Sherwood Park, Professor Fenn called us together one night and said [impersonates] “There’s been a proposal at Guys which I have to put to you, and the idea is that we might take ladies on the dental course.” Well I have to tell you there was a full no vote. But the following year six young ladies joined the dental course and doing examinations, yes they would--, in South Kensington at a place called Jehanger Hall, it’s just behind the Science Museum. And I was sitting doing one of my BDS exams there at a folding desk and ink wells because the biros hadn’t got to us in those days, and we were being invigilated by a series of clergymen and there was a large grand piano up on the stage where they were standing around and a V1 stopped popping and we all looked at one another and all we could do was to crouch under our folding desks, and this thing landed in the corner of the Natural History Museum on the--, is it Cromwell Road, the main road along there?

Attenborough: Yes, yes.

Mayhew: It went off, we were shielded from the direct blast by the Science Museum but the actual earth shake caused the dust of ages to come out of the roof of that, hammer beam roof of that hall and our ink wells popped up and down in the folding desks and we were given a ten per cent discount on pass mark on that exam. And I thank Hitler for that V1.

Attenborough: [Laughs] And the scurrying of the invigilators under the under the piano no doubt.

Mayhew: They looked like a series of crows diving, their gowns going up behind them as they dived under the grand piano. I can remember so clearly.