

## I REMEMBER ... The World War 2

### A BBC See Hear! Production

Directed by Joe Collins

Produced by

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*With the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War coming up in the next month of May, it would be appropriate to feature a review on the TV programme recounting deaf people's personal war time experiences, as seen by a Deaf viewer who was born in the Swinging Sixties.*

An interesting insight on how members of the British Deaf community lived during these years. We all hear stories of the war – how foods were rationed, going to the air raid shelters, how Jews were treated, children being evacuated, Mondays being wash-days, etc. The backdrops to the narratives were cleverly selected to provide the moods and grim times of these years.

The narratives given by Deaf individuals having firsthand experiences in the manner of "I was there" were amusing such as how on the trams some of the back seats could be adjusted in whichever way the tram was going. For deaf people they were used to aid communications so all could see each other (much better than buses!). The doorbell consisting of some string from the letterbox and a tennis ball on the other end, to dangle when it 'rang'. The buses were blacked out and how at night if they were out, deaf people couldn't hear the conductors shout out the destinations, instead they used to memorise the route by the movements of the bus, i.e. round a bend, over a bridge and so on until they knew where they needed to get off. Deaf people were able to use other senses to survive. How they managed to get news, as there were no televisions and had to make do with going to the cinemas with other people. Access to what was being said must have been hard as we now have subtitles to assist us with this.

If it wasn't a gathering at someone's house with people standing outside, much to the amusement of the neighbours, having a cuppa to catch up on news in their own means of communicating. There was a Deaf centre with only the provision of serving tea and coffee, potted meat sandwiches and no alcohol! Just imagine that on a Saturday night! Employment within the Deaf community was typically boring and low paid if one was employed. Deaf rights were established and for many it was accepted what was available without questioning what was fair. The Deaf Rights leaflets were sold for a penny, but most would prefer to spend £1 in a pub than purchase this!

Badges that glowed in the dark to show one had a hearing loss must have been a good invention by the BDDA but members of the Deaf community quite rightly did not want to be labelled, though it was a way for wardens to let them know of an air raid, etc. With so many memories of the war years, there is the strong distinctive memory of the celebrations to mark the end of the war. There were street parties, bonfires burning the clothes worn during the grim times and the excitement of a new economic future.

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