

W&M28 Bill Eames

SPEAKERS

Bill Eames, Susan Kelly

Bill Eames 00:00

When the war started, I was still at school. I was at Portora Royal School, prior to that had been in the Enniskillen Model School, but we lived in the town of Enniskillen and I was born between the bridges.

Bill Eames 00:15

And I was in my final year at Portora. When I was coming up to sixth form, the war broke out. And of course, we all had been in the Officers Training Corps and it was before they formed the Air Training Corps, that came a bit later.

Bill Eames 00:37

So we were already very keen young soldiers, if you like, when war broke out, our main thoughts were going into the services, mainly the army, usually not very many people went into the Navy from Portora at any rate. Generally the Army and a few into the RAF.

Susan Kelly 01:01

And why did you think of the RAF?

Bill Eames 01:04

Well, it was a strange thing happened. I was going to join the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers which my family had been in. And two of us went on this was a bit later on in after we after Dunkirk, at the time of the Dunkirk fiasco. And we went to Omagh to join the Inniskillings.

Bill Eames 01:27

But we were kindly refused, because we weren't quite old enough. You needed to be eighteen in those days, and we were only seventeen.

Bill Eames 01:38

So, my other my good friend, he waited til he was eighteen, joined the Army and he was commissioned into the Royal Irish Fusiliers and killed at Cassino.

Bill Eames 01:50

But I got into the Royal Air Force under a different kind of scheme. So we went different ways he was killed at Casino and I... well, I honestly have been lucky.

Susan Kelly 02:04

Yeah, how did your parents feel about you joining up?

Bill Eames 02:10

Well like all parents, I think they were apprehensive, but they were not against it in any way. Of course, Enniskillen is a military town and most people, you know, it was expected that people would certainly in those days and at school, it was more or less expected that you would.

Susan Kelly 02:28

Yeah, but would that have been about 1940 you joined?

Bill Eames 02:32

No... Yes, that's right, the war broke out in September '39 and I did my Senior Certificate in the new following Spring. That was the time when the Germans were coming right down through Europe and the Dunkirk episode happened you see.

Bill Eames 02:58

So... I after after that, at that time, they also formed the Home Guard, and as we were all very keen and trained young soldiers, we were in the Home Guard and spending nights out you know, in case of parachute events, or that sort of thing.

Susan Kelly 03:18

Yeah. So you were you were well in it, even before you joined up. Yeah. And so what happened then once you joined up?

Bill Eames 03:27

Once I or when I did join the RAF, my first... I first went to Belfast for we did that very initial sort of medical just to see that you're standing up and all that.

Bill Eames 03:44

And after a time then, a short time while they processed that information, I had to go to Royal Airforce Padgate in Lancashire.

Bill Eames 03:54

Where I was sworn in, like many other people, we went across in a group and I was sworn in and then had a different kind of medical because I had applied for to become air crew.

Bill Eames 04:08

Many of the other people were going to be mechanics or one thing or another like that.

Bill Eames 04:17

But for a short time in Padgate and the main concern was the introduction to the RAF and as I say being sworn in and after that, I went back home and waited to be called up into the into the Royal Air Force as such.

Susan Kelly 04:36

So how long did that take? Was that a wee delay then?

Bill Eames 04:40

Oh, I've honestly forgotten quite now, but it was quite a time.

Bill Eames 04:46

Eventually then, I was called up and when I set off from Enniskillen on the train at Bundoran junction I was joined by this other man from Irvinestown who I'd known briefly in Enniskillen.

Bill Eames 05:01

He was a Methody boy actually not Portora and of course we came together and you know and well he's dead now like all the rest of my crew but, anyway we went off together and down to London.