

Walthamstow Memories: **W. B. Bawn & Co. Ltd**

I remember walking along Blackhorse Lane in the 1960'S and saw this figure on the wall of a factory.



The figure is called the '**Helmsman**' and he is the emblem of **W. B. Bawn & Co. Ltd**. Who originally were manufacturers of agricultural tractors, boilers and road wagon tanks. In the 1960's they were the major British supplier of steel lockers. They moved to Blackhorse Lane in 1940 after being bombed out of Poplar. Proving that lightning can strike twice, they were hit by a rocket at their Byron Works in Blackhorse Lane in 1945.

'Walthamstow was not so lucky during the afternoon of 19th February when a rocket impacted directly in front of a factory owned by W. B. Bawn and Company on Blackhorse Road. Much of the factory was destroyed and a total of 51 nearby properties suffered damage. As the rocket hit during working hours, casualties were heavy. 18 people were killed outright while another three died later as a result of their injuries. A further 35 people were listed as seriously wounded while an additional 120 suffered minor injuries. A sundial stands today as a memorial at the spot where the fateful rocket landed.'

Ross Wyld in his excellent book 'The War Over Walthamstow' says: '***This was our worst rocket attack....the whole of their office was demolished and all except one of their office staff were killed outright***'

The company moved to Bury St. Edmund's in Suffolk in 1970, taking with them the life-size figure of the 17th-century naval helmsman. He was once again erected outside of their new premises. The company is still trading and makes partitions and cubicles.

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