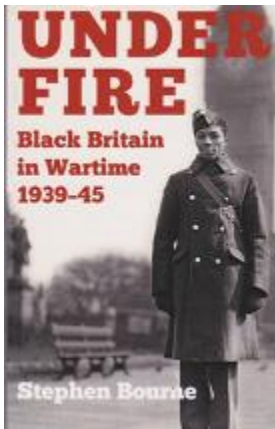




Book Shelf Book Review Page



UNDER FIRE **Black Britain In Wartime 1939-45** **By Stephen Bourne** Reviewed by **BRIAN WATTS**

Anecdotal first-hand testimony from Black Britons who supported Britain during the Second World War, superbly researched and written by author, Stephen Bourne.

Coincidentally, I have recently undertaken a little research into a black firefighter who was based in London during the Blitz and I'm pleased to say that Stephen has documented the story of **George Roberts** within his book **George Arthur Roberts** was

born in 1890. Leaving Trinidad, he arrived in London at the outbreak of World War 1 and he joined up; he was nicknamed "*the coconut bomber*" supposedly due to his ability of throwing bombs behind enemy lines! He sustained wounds from the Battle of Loos and the Somme.

After WW1 George settled in Lewis Road, Camberwell, got married to Margaret in 1920 and had two children. When WW2 began, he joined the fire service, working from New Cross Fire Station and saving countless lives during The Blitz. He was later awarded the British Empire Medal.

In 2017 when there was an online vote for people to nominate who they thought deserved a blue plaque on their home and George was declared the winner. He was not only one of the first black men to join the British Army, but was one of the first to join the fire service. Stephen writes about many black people from over the world, mainly the commonwealth, and goes into great detail about the racism and other challenges that many of them faced when helping to defend their country in our time of need..

Some of what they faced was shocking and many of the accounts really surprised and disappointed me at the colour bar and hate they faced, not least from the troops from other nations such as USA and South Africa where racism was much more extreme.

The book gives a really good insight into the way that black people went above and beyond for king and country.

For those who have Amazon Prime membership a bonus is that at the moment this book can be obtained free!!!!!!

Brian Watts

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Brian Watts