

My early years in the Supply Industry

Retired System Operation Des Crook also remembers visiting 'the hole' at the end of the war and has written this account of his memories of that time:

Des writes: "I began my career as a trainee of the London Power Company just before nationalisation had taken place, and though my training scheme was taken over by the British Electricity Authority (BEA) I was pleased with the fact that my London Power Company pay was much higher than graduate trainees who had joined under the BEA!



I received my first System Operation training at Ergon House, Millbank, which was the Control Centre for the London Power Company that owned Battersea et al., and what was then the 66kV London power network. At that time, the Central Electricity Board (CEB) Control Centre for SE England, together with a fledgling National Control Centre, was still 'down the hole' – the WW2 bunker, situated down the two lift shafts at St Paul's underground station.

The industry was nationalised in 1948; the BEA took some time to wrest authority from the private power authorities. The CEB, which had always been a government authority, became the power base in establishing a new control structure throughout England, Wales and Scotland.



In 1950, the staff emerged from 'down the hole' and together with the Ergon House staff created Thames North, Thames South and National Control, situated on a prefab site in Paternoster Square. National Control and Thames North staff largely comprised people who had previously worked down the hole, while Thames South staff were a mixture of new entrants and Ergon House staff, reinforced by a few from the hole.

I have many memories of this time and strangely enough of the next stage of the industry's evolution. Though I lived at East Grinstead for three years in anticipation of Thames South's move to Wealden House, by then I had been appointed Assistant National Control Engineer based at the new National Control to be opened at Bankside House in Sumner Street, Southwark. So I was in at the start of that as well!"



Written by Des Crook.

Edited by Tony Malins. Date: 7 July 2016

