



Call the Fire Brigade: Fighting London's Fires

Allan Grice

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A gripping account of the most dramatic emergencies attended by a senior member of the London Fire Brigade during the 1970s

Working as a fireman in London's East End during the early 1970s was no easy ride. In the years before workplace health-and-safety legislation had started to exert its grip, Allan Grice had to cut his fire-and-rescue teeth without the advantages of a breathing apparatus for each member of his crew. Back then, the time-tested strategy was to "get in"—to crawl below the intense heat and "eat" the thick smoke—in order to locate a missing child or to halt a rapidly spreading inferno. Here Grice recounts his most memorable experiences as a senior member of the London Fire Brigade working the city's East End, with its myriad commercial premises, brooding Thames-side warehouses, seedy tenements and colorful cosmopolitan community, ranging from prosperous manufacturers to down-and-out winos with their body-warming bonfires on rubble-strewn bombsites. Fires in factories, tenements, and warehouses, and non-fire emergencies such as the Moorgate Tube disaster of 1975, are graphically described, while the elation of rescue, the sadness of being too late to save lives, and the warm camaraderie of fire crews during some of the capital's busiest peacetime years are vividly depicted.

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