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Paper
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King's Heath Local History Society



**Memories of King's Heath
In The Second World War
Compiled In 1999**

By
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It was fairly obvious to people during the thirties that war was coming. No one talked about it as the memories of the carnage of the first world war were still fresh in people's memories but by 1937 the government instructed local authorities to begin preparations.

An air raid wardens' service was set up in 1937 and was open to men over 30 and women over 21. He or she had to be a responsible member of the community. They were trained to identify poison gas, administer first aid, summon rescue and medical services, direct people to rest centres and, above all, prevent panic. They also became responsible for keeping the black out regulations and testing gas masks. There was one post for every 500 people and our wardens' post was in Silver St. They certainly came into their own during the blitz. An auxiliary fire service was also formed and one of the memories is of seeing them in the early morning after a raid exhausted yet having to face a day's work.

First aid posts were set up and the one for Kings Heath was at the baths in Institute Road. There was a doctor on call, a nurse and volunteers. Another memory is of being on duty there and having to sleep in the basement among the pipes. It was very proper, however, as the men slept one end and the ladies the other.

Gas had been used in the first world war so it was believed that it would be used again. The government during 1937 produced gas masks for every man, woman and child although those for babies were not made until later in 1938. A consignment of masks was delivered to Colmore Road Girls' School in September 1938 ready for distribution. I think, according to the memories, that the two most hated things in the war were the gas masks and the black out.

The government also produced barrage balloons and local councils were instructed to find open spaces for them. One was put in the grounds of The Priory in Vicarage Road and there was another in Cannon Hill Park. One of the contributors tells of her husband stationed at Edgbaston golf course when the balloon came adrift and the fire brigade had to disentangle it from the chimney tops. Later, when material was short, balloon silk and parachute silk made the most wonderful underwear.

Air raid shelters were also provided and every garden had an Anderson shelter provided free or £5 to those who could afford it. A hole had to be dug, the steel shelter put in and soil piled on top. On Birmingham's clay soil, of course, they immediately filled with water so either had to be pumped out or duck boards fitted. Cellars were reinforced but failing that Morrison shelters were provided. These fitted in the living room and could be utilised as a table.

Apart from these private shelters there were also public ones. Three tier bunks were put in and Elsan type lavatories. Eventually shelters were provided at all schools. Householders were also asked to be prepared for incendiaries with a bucket of water, a bucket of sand and a stirrup pump which cost 12/6d (72p).

Although shelters were provided it was believed that the moment war was declared the country would be bombed by 500 bombers carrying 500 ten pound bombs and that casualties would amount to 200,000 in the first instance. I was surprised to read how much bombing there had been in the first war particularly of London. Planes did not have the capacity to reach

Birmingham but we did have raids by Zeppelins. If one was sighted the police would come round blowing whistles and shouting, 'Put out all the lights', and my mother said that she immediately put the candle in the cupboard and shut the door.

As the bombing was expected to be so severe all city councils drew up evacuation plans and it was obvious that a great deal of planning went into deciding who should go, how and where. First who – all school children from certain areas, mothers with young babies and the disabled. Birmingham was divided into three zones with all schools in the centre zone scheduled for evacuation - the inner ring schools near industry - and the outer ring to be left. This meant that in Kings Heath neither Wheelers Lane nor Colmore Road schools were to go, but Pineapple school did because of its proximity to the Kings Norton factory centre. Of course, anyone could be evacuated privately. At the height of the blitz the restrictions were lifted and the Kings Heath schools were evacuated. The children went by special trains and then by bus to their various destinations. Where they went had obviously been carefully negotiated with outlying councils and the children went off in all directions: Astwood Bank; Leicestershire; Ross on Wye; Derbyshire. Later Colmore and Wheelers Lane went to Sutton in Ashfield.

In September 1938 Neville Chamberlain returned from talks with Adolf Hitler and everyone hoped that it was 'peace in our time', but a year later in August 1939 it was obvious that war was imminent. All teachers were recalled by wireless message and on Friday September 1st the evacuation plans were put into operation. All schools were closed and teachers from the non evacuation areas went to help the rest. The children came to school with a gas mask, a label and a bag or case with a change of clothing and marched off to the nearest railway station. All went according to plan but the problems started at the other end. Billeting officers had found out which householders could or were prepared to take one or maybe two evacuees but as numbers were uncertain (evacuation was voluntary) no matching could be done before the children arrived. So there followed a sort of cattle auction with the evacuees on one side and the prospective hosts on the other choosing who they wanted. One contributor said that she really thought that she was being sold.

On Sunday September 3rd at 11.00 Neville Chamberlain announced that we were at war and immediately the sirens sounded but it was only a practice and we entered what was later called the 'phney war'. Blackout regulations came into force and schools opened voluntarily in October and compulsorily in January 1940. Although nothing happened to us it didn't mean that nothing happened elsewhere. On the day war started the British liner Athenia, unarmed and unescorted, was sunk with the loss of 112 lives. The battle of the Atlantic began in earnest, in September 29 merchant ships were sunk and in October the battleship Royal Oak.

In January 1940 rationing was introduced and lasted until 1954. The amount of food available varied but the basic ration remained fairly constant. For one week an adult had 4oz bacon; 2oz butter; 4oz margarine; 2oz cooking fat; 2oz cheese; 8oz sugar; 2oz tea (11 tea bags); 3oz sweets and 1/2d (6p) worth of meat. Offal was not rationed but sometimes formed part of the ration. There were 3 pints of milk augmented by dried milk and 1 egg augmented by dried. In addition one had 16 points each month for tinned fruit, meat or fish or dried fruit if available. One big difficulty was the rationing of soap. Babies were given orange juice and cod liver oil. Cigarettes and alcohol were not rationed but were usually under the counter for regular customers only. Clothes rationing came in June 1941. Bread was not rationed until after the war but it went a

very funny colour. Exotic fruits like bananas disappeared and oranges went to the children. All home grown fruit like apples, pears and plums were bottled or jammed or dried. Everyone was urged to dig for victory and allotments appeared everywhere including Kings Heath park. A tremendous amount of advice was given on the wireless on how to stretch out the rations and many and varied were the recipes. Elsie and Doris Waters with Grandma gave advice and the Radio Doctor talked about health matters although he did seem to be obsessed with the state of one's bowels and being 'regular'.

Everyone had an identity card and had to take it to the centres for a ration book – our centre was at the swimming baths. Everyone then registered with a grocer and butcher; the coupons were torn out each week, counted, bundled up and sent off to the Ministry of Food in Broad Street. In return a permit was given for the shop keeper to buy from the travellers.

The phoney war lasted until May 1940. Many evacuees had returned home as the expected bombing had not happened but on May 10th Hitler invaded neutral Holland and Belgium. Our troops were pushed back to Dunkirk and evacuated from there during the last week in May and the first in June. Invasion became a strong possibility and Anthony Eden appealed for all men under and over conscription age to join the Local Defence Volunteers later known as the Home Guard and later still as Dad's Army. All church bells were stopped as they were to be a warning of invasion and all signposts and railway station names removed. For a time all nuns were regarded with suspicion as a rumour had been circulated that the Germans would land disguised as nuns.

The invasion did not happen as Hitler waited for us to sue for peace – instead Churchill told him that we would fight on the beaches and in the streets etc. and we would never surrender. Hitler also needed air supremacy so the battle of Britain began in the skies over London and the Home Counties. We lost many planes and many pilots but the few triumphed and the invasion was put off until the following spring. Instead the blitz began.

Birmingham's first raid was on August 9th when bombs dropped at Erdington killing one man and injuring others. The night of August 26th saw the first big raid when the market hall was burned out. We probably had damage in Kings Heath but the first casualty was on August 29th when Mr Waldron of Wheelers lane was killed. September 27th was the evening when Albert Road and Alfred Street were practically wiped out. Seven were killed and three in Wheelers Lane. Both day and night raids continued throughout October and the town hall, council house and cathedral were all damaged. On the 25th the Carlton cinema in Taunton Road was hit and 19 were killed. Twelve people in Kings Heath died including one at Kent Street baths and one at Greys in Bull Street. All deaths are tragic but there was an extra tragedy in Elmfield Crescent when a man and his 11 month old son were killed. The owners of the house had gone away for a couple of nights and had lent the house to this family who had been bombed out. We have an eye witness account. The first aid post at Kings Heath baths was hit on October 29th and 6 people hurt. It was open for business the very next day.

Many people mentioned hearing and seeing the bombers going over on November 14th and seeing the glow in the sky when Coventry burned. One contributor's father was there and came home to find his own house bombed. Five days later, on November 19th, it was our turn and

during the 11 hour raid 450 people were killed in the city including 50 at the B.S.A. two of whom were from Kings Heath. Two nights later the bombers returned and used land mines for the first time. These could destroy a whole block of houses at a time. That night a nurse walked down Macdonald Street in town and counted 60 separate fires. Three water mains were destroyed leaving the city virtually waterless but the bombers did not come back so the fires could be put out. Eight people died in Kings Heath but I don't know how many were injured. It was then that the evacuation began again and 20,000 children left the city. There were further raids in December and on the 11th two houses in Swanshurst Lane were destroyed and 10 people killed. One of those was a little girl of five – a Czech refugee from Prague.

There was a brief respite over Christmas and bad weather kept us clear in January while Plymouth and Cardiff were hit. The last severe raid in Birmingham was on the night of April 9th/10th. 235 bombers dropped 40,000 incendiaries and 280 tons of high explosive. The Bull Ring, High Street, New Street, Dale End and the Midland Arcade all burned. In Kings Heath a bomb dropped on the railway above the shelter in the Horseshoe tunnel. It rolled down the embankment and exploded killing 15 people. The next night bombs dropped on the railway line in Westfield Road, by the Roman Catholic Church of St. Dunstan in Station Road and in Grange Road where three elderly neighbours were killed. The bomb by the church was a time bomb and did not actually explode until two days later when by a miracle the church was empty. There were further raids but not so intense and the last person to be killed in Kings Heath was in July 1942.

In June 1941 Hitler invaded Russia and at first seemed invincible. In September Leningrad was besieged and not relieved until January 1944 an incredible 2 years and 8 months later.

In December 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and brought the Americans into the war. We possibly thought that things would get better but 1942 was disastrous. The Japanese advanced rapidly and Hong Kong and Singapore both fell; the British had to retreat in the African desert and the Germans got within spitting distance of Moscow and besieged Stalingrad. The island of Malta became the most bombed place on earth. However in October the British won the battle of El Alamein; in December the Americans turned the tide against the Japanese and in January 1943 the Germans had to surrender at Stalingrad.

1943 was the slow beginning of the end. In September Italy was invaded and after desperate fighting Rome was finally captured in June 1944. On June 6th the Allies landed in Normandy but Hitler still had a trick or two up his sleeve and in July 1944 the south of England was attacked by doodlebugs. Kings Heath became host to evacuees from there.

On August 25th Paris was liberated but it was another seven months before the Rhine was crossed in March 1945. On May 7th Germany surrendered and most people celebrated V.E. Day with street parties and bonfires. Carefully hoarded tins of fruit were brought out for the sit down tea. The fighting continued in the Far East, however, and it was only after atom bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that the Japanese surrendered and August 15th was Victory in Japan Day.

The war was over at last!

Lewis's Air Raid Precautions Exhibition September 1938

List of Requirements for a Gas Proof Room.

1. String, hammer, nails and scissors
2. Gummed paper, adhesive tape
3. Pot of paste; paper or cellophane over cracks and window panes.
(Paste can be made from flour and water with cloves to keep it fresh).
4. Candles, matches, needles, cotton, material to protect windows
5. Bottle of disinfectant; clean rags; first aid box; dark glasses
6. Gas masks with owner's name on box; puncture outfit for mending masks
7. A food chest of some kind with airtight tins or jars; tin opener and corkscrew
8. Plenty of water for drinking, washing and dampening door blankets
9. Knives, forks, plates etc.
10. Flasks for tea and coffee
11. Paper pulp for resealing cracks
12. Sand or water for fire emergency and a simple hand pump
13. Shovel (long handled is best); tables, chairs, wash stand; basin, towels etc.
14. A screen for privacy
15. Spare blankets or rugs for resealing windows; overcoats and other warm covering
16. Macintoshes; goloshes; gum boots
17. Wireless set (battery is best as electricity may fail); records; gramophone
18. Books; writing materials; games; toys; pack of cards

Extracts from the log books of Colmore Road and Wheelers Lane.

Colmore Road Infant School.

September 1938	Gas masks were distributed.
August 1939	School closed on government orders
October 1939	Opened on a voluntary basis; two shelters had been built taking 50 children so the 150 who came were organised into two shifts – morning and afternoon
January 23 rd 1940	School closed – burst pipes so no heating
March 11 th 1940	Re-opened on a compulsory basis but still part time
June 10 th 1940	National Savings Week – 11 children have complete books of certificates
August 27 th 1940	First daylight raid at 1.40 pm
October 1 st 1940	Two daytime warnings
October 3 rd 1940	Three daytime warnings. The shelters were cold and damp and not well lit so difficult to provide any occupation. The youngest children need a lot of help in gas mask practice
November 1940	Night and day raids continued. Changed the time table and taught the three Rs in the afternoon
November 28 th 1940	31 children evacuated to Sutton in Ashfield
December 6 th 1940	15 children evacuated to Sutton in Ashfield
January 1941	Frequent inspections of gas masks by A.R.P wardens
September 1943	Harvest Festival raised £5 for the Merchant Navy Comforts League
July 1944	25 children came from London and joined the dept.
September 1944	£15 raised at the Harvest Festival sent to the Red Cross Prisoners of War Fund
May 1945	Two days holiday for V.E. Day

Colmore Road Junior School

August 26 th 1939	The headmaster and seven members of staff attended a meeting at Golden Hillock Road school re evacuation having been recalled from holiday by wireless message
August 28 th 1939	School re-opened after summer holiday
August 30 th 1939	School closed on order of the government
September 1 st 1939	The headmaster and five staff accompanied an evacuation party from Greet school to Cheltenham
October 13 th 1939	School re-opened on a voluntary basis
January 17 th 1940	School closed – no fuel for heating
February 7 th 1940	Shelters built in the playground so attendance compulsory but as only 200 can be accommodated it was decided to have one class full time and the rest part time
August 14 th 1940	Night raid from midnight to 3.30 am
August 27 th 1940	Daylight raid

Sep – October 1940	Day and night raids continued
November 13 th 1940	Daylight raid with a dog fight overhead
November 25 th	20 children evacuated to Sutton in Ashfield
November 28 th 1940	39 children evacuated to Sutton in Ashfield
December 6 th 1940	16 children evacuated to Kirkby in Ashfield
September 22 nd 1941	The chairman of the National Savings Committee visited the school to congratulate the children on collecting over £1,000
September 3 rd 1942	National Day of Prayer on the third anniversary of the outbreak of war and the school listened to a special broadcast
March 4 th 1943	An hour long daylight raid
July 1944	School closed and used as a rest centre for children and teachers evacuated from the doodle bugs in London and the Home Counties
September 1944	Another 25 evacuees came
April 1945	Swimming at Kings Heath baths resumed. The building had been used as a first aid centre and had been bombed
May 8 th 1945	Two day holiday for V.E Day

Colmore Road Girls' School

September 1938	A consignment of gas masks received and stored in the hall prior to distribution. Meeting of parents called re evacuation and luggage labels written and arm bands made
September 30 th 1938	A service of thanksgiving held following Mr. Chamberlains visit to Hitler
August 30 th 1939	School closed on order of the government
October 5 th 1939	Opened on a voluntary basis. There were no shelters but cloakroom windows were boarded up and buckets of sand placed in every room
January 22 nd 1940	Re-opened on compulsory basis as shelters had been built
February 1940	School closed – deep snow and no fuel for heating
November 25 th 1940	School closed – no water as pipes had been damaged in bombing
November 29 th 1940	57 girls evacuated to Sutton in Ashfield
December 6 th 1940	15 girls evacuated to Kirkby in Ashfield
December 1940	The hall, corridors and Domestic Science room blacked out by painting the windows so that the school could be used as a communal feeding centre if necessary
August 1941	Sir Ernest and Lady Canning came to present the 1,000 th savings certificate to one of the girls
October 1941	Warship Week – a talk was given to the school
October 1941	The staff room and some class rooms blacked out so the A.T.C could use the school for meetings
May 1942	Mrs Frw, Lady Corps Officer of St. John's Ambulance Brigade spoke to all the girls over 13 about the Cadet Nursing Corps. Those who joined met weekly at Wheelers Lane school
June 1942	Talk given by Mr. Bull from the Ministry of Supply on the need for collecting books and paper

July 1942	A representative from Bird's Custard Factory gave a wartime cookery demonstration
July 1944	92 children, 4 teachers and 3 helpers from London spent two days and two nights in the school while accommodation was found for them. 40 more came the week before the summer holiday
May 1945	Two day holiday for Victory in Europe Day and a programme of songs and dances from the Allies was given

Wheeler Lane Junior School

August 28 th 1939	School opened after the summer holiday. Two teachers absent helping with evacuation at another school
August 31 st 1939	School closed
September 1939	School still closed but staff meet twice weekly
October 13 th 1939	Notice to say that schools in the neutral area can open voluntarily. Four notices posted on school gates convening parents' meeting on October 16 th at 3pm
October 16 th 1939	Staff meeting at 2.15pm. Explained to parents at 3pm meeting that re-opening would be voluntary as shelters not yet complete.
October 18 th 1939	Re-open with full staff and 191 children – largest class size was 31 and smallest 12
October 25 th 1939	Numbers up to 275. Six shelters in use so had a rehearsal
November 10 th 1939	Shelters are in such a wet condition that they have to be baled out daily. No proper drainage has been installed
November 24 th 1939	Some rooms in the school have had windows protected from blast as the shelters are still in a deplorable state
January 8 th 1940	Shelters complete and drained so school opened on a compulsory basis
January 19 th 1940	One class still waiting for desks school having been opened since last February
February 2 nd 1940	18in fall of snow and severe frost + shortage of fuel so school closed. Notice posted on gates advising parents of closure until February 5 th
March 15 th 1940	Twice weekly air raid shelter rehearsal – takes four minutes from the signal to all children in shelters
June 21 st 1940	School garden making excellent progress – one hundredweight of potatoes were sown + peas, beans, carrots, lettuce and cabbage
August 26 th 1940	Attendance about 40% following raids on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights the latter lasting over six hours
August 30 th 1940	School opened at 10 am following night raids
September 20 th 1940	Raised £5 for Lord Mayor's Relief Fund by collecting one ton of waste paper and two lorry loads of metal. Most of the garden produce lifted and sold for £3 towards next year's seed
September 27 th 1940	Three H.E bombs dropped at 8pm within 50 yards of the Senior Boys Dept
October 5 th 1940	Daylight raid
October 7 th 1940	Three daylight raids. Dispersal to shelters is excellently done and behaviour in them is splendid

November 25th 1940 Notice from the Education Department – the eleven hour raid on November 22nd/23rd has deprived much of the city of pipe water. Children in this area can now be registered for evacuation. Parent’s meeting held to explain the situation

November 28th 1940 Meeting in town of all heads re evacuation. Sent all children home instructing those to be evacuated to return as soon as possible. Staff prepared triplicate lists and labels

November 29th 1940 No general school. 85 children with parents and luggage assembled – 64 juniors, 16 infants and 5 seniors. Buses left at 10.40 for Castle Bromwich station and a special train left at 12.10. Arrived Sutton Junction at 3pm and then by bus to Stanton Hill school. Each child had milk and refreshments; the adults ie 6 teachers, 2 helpers and some parents, had tea. All children billeted before blackout at 6pm.

December 2nd 1940 School reopened

December 3rd 1940 Due to severe blast effect on Senior Boys’ school 3 classes accommodated in junior school. Two younger classes in part time

December 6th 1940 27 more evacuees to Kirkby in Ashfield. With another teacher gone 4 classes now on part time basis

December 10th 1940 Supply teachers sent so full time again

May 23rd 1941 Fire watching duties commenced. Two bunk beds in Green room with 3 people on duty each night from 10pm to 7am. This continued during the holidays. Teachers also stand by in case of emergency when the school would be used as a feeding centre

August 29th 1941 Raised £9.15s for Wool Comforts Fund

February 1942 £1,000 raised in sale of National Savings so whole school left an hour early

April 1942 Dance in aid of fire watching equipment

June 18th 1942 Gas masks inspected by A.R.P wardens. A fair number needed repair or replacement

March 1943 Daylight raid

June 1944 Salute the Soldier Week - £620 raised

July 14th 1944 19 evacuees from London

September 1st 1944 43 evacuees from London – puts class sizes up to 55+

April 27th 1945 Permission to remove all blackout material

May 4th 1945 Closed for V.E Day. Remaining London evacuees will return home next week unless homes are uninhabitable

Extracts from the Parochial Church Council minutes of All Saints Church 1939-1945

Sunday September 10th 1939 (Special meeting)

Considered the times of the services: Holy Communion at 7 am; 8 am; 9.45 am. Mattins at 11.15am. Sunday school at 2.30 pm.

No evening service because of the blackout. (Later at 4.15 pm).

Weekdays: Communion at 7 am and Evensong at 7 pm in the Vicarage.

December 1939

Letters of greeting sent to church members on military service.

February 1940

Retiring collection for the Red Cross.

June 25th 1940

Extinguishers put in church in case of an air raid. Vicarage cellar walls strengthened to be used as a shelter. Stirrup pump bought and wardens drew up a plan of evacuation of the church.

November 10th 1940

Civil Defence permitted to use parish hall for dispossessed people.

February 2nd 1941

Donation sent to St Mary's Moseley which had been damaged by bombs. The bishop agreed to the use of the Vicarage as a hostel for the homeless so the clergy moved to a flat above Hedges the Chemist.

July 1944

41 evacuee children and mothers from London temporarily housed in the parish hall.

February 1945

The Ministry of Health moved out of the vicarage and the Red Cross took it over to use as a small hospital.

July 1945

Collection of clothing for people of liberated Europe.

Hall Green First Aid Post at the school on Stratford Road.

This equipment would have been provided for all first aid posts, including Kings Heath.

January 1940 equipment delivered:

- 64 respirators
- 6 pairs each men and women's gum boots
- 7 steel helmets
- 12 pairs each protective trousers, coats and gloves
- 3 stretchers
- 6 slings
- 6 blankets and 6 pillows
- 4 galvanised buckets
- 4 mops
- 3 soft brooms
- 2 hard brooms
- 3 scrubbing brushes
- 6 floor cloths
- 2 bleach trays
- 14 galvanised pails
- 6 decontamination clothing bins
- 12 pairs each men and women's pyjamas (for decontamination cases)
- 12 pairs different sized plimsolls
- 100 yellow decontamination labels
- 1,000 ordinary labels
- 200 towels
- 6 enamel eye douches
- 2 drums bleach powder
- 12 tins bleach ointment
- 51 storm lanterns
- 4 green waterproof sheets
- 1 stirrup pump
- 20 Elsan pans for use in the school shelters

Requested equipment:

- Tables, chairs, beds, bedding, crockery and cutlery
- 6 dozen enamel drinking mugs
- 4 primus stoves
- vomit bowls
- Suture needles, safety pins and mouth gags

The Kings Heath First Aid Post was based at the swimming baths in Institute Road and the equipment provided was essential during the raids of 1940/41. The laconic style of the log book hides the heroic work put in by all the Civil Defence workers. Most were volunteers and would have had daytime jobs. The book recorded the times of all raids including those in daylight and warnings were received before the sirens sounded. A yellow warning came first, followed by a

purple; a white warning preceded the all clear.

Ambulances were kept in Silver Street where the A.R.P wardens were also based. The number of casualties treated did not include those treated 'on the spot' as it were. Comments in brackets were not in the original but are from other sources.

Extracts from the Kings Heath First Aid Post Log

1940

- June 29th Fire fighting practices held. Yellow warning received 23.36 – 6 volunteers and 4 staff on duty; 13 volunteers arrived within 20 minutes
- July 17th Gas contamination cleansing practice
- August 18th A man brought in from a public shelter and put to rest in the shock room
- August 26th Nine casualties – 3 male; 5 female; 1 child. Sirens sounded 21.40 with All Clear at 4.10 (*6 hrs 30 mins*). Nine staff and 34 volunteers on duty. (*Bombs in Wheelers Lane*)
- August 28th – Sept. 11th Sirens every night with most raids lasting six or seven hours.**
- September 12th A lady taken ill in a shelter in Institute Road – brought in on a stretcher and treated for shock. Raid lasted from 20.13 to 04.10 (*8 hours*)
- September 16th Four casualties – 3 male; 2 female; 1 child
- September 27th 10 casualties – 3 male; 7 female. (*Albert Rd and Alfred St bombed with 10 deaths*)
- October 8th – 22nd Nightly raids**
- October 25th 10 casualties – 4 male; 6 female; 2 children. (*10 people died*)
- October 28th 2 male casualties
- October 29th Post hit by a bomb which demolished one part of the office wall – six people were hurt and a nursing sister was kept in hospital until the middle of November
- October 30th Damaged part of the post shut off so the rest of the post is ready for casualties
- November 19th Three casualties – 1 male; 2 female. Raid lasted from 18.55 to 06.30 (*11 hrs 30mins*) (*B.S.A. bombed*)
- November 22nd 14 casualties – 8 male; 6 female. Raid lasted from 18.41 to 05.53 (*10 hours*) (*Eight people killed*)
- November 23rd Message from headquarters – casualties requiring hospital treatment to be sent to Dudley Road; Q.E.; St Chads; Selly Oak or Queen's hospitals but not the General. Dead bodies to the mortuary in Station Street
- November 24th Telephones out of action so despatch riders used. General now open for casualties and dead bodies now to the Children's hospital mortuary
- November 28th Raid from 18.56 to 04.05
- December 3rd 8 casualties – 2 male; 5 female; 1 child
- December 4th Message from headquarters – three mortuary stations out of action – Dyson Richards Stratford Road; Summer Lane and Co-op in Ashsted Row
- December 11th 6 casualties – 5 male; 1 female (*10 people killed in Swanshurst Lane*)

December 12th – 23rd Raids continued nightly mostly starting at about 17.45 and ending in the early hours

December 24th Christmas party with 65 present. No raid for two nights

1941

January 1st – 15th Sirens sounded but no actual raids

January 19th Message from headquarters that snow must be cleared from the entrance to make a passage for patients. Fortunately the scouts were there and five lads cleared it

January 21st A quick thaw so drains had to be cleared

February 4th – 19th Time for checking gas masks and practice in putting out incendiary bombs

March 5th Anti gas lecture given

March 29th Sir Patrick Hannon visited – was interested in everything and met the staff in the canteen

April 4th Gas cleansing film shown to 45 local A.R.P

April 5th A member from the balloon barrage unit in Vicarage Road had an eye injury dressed

April 7th Night raids begin again

May 9th A Civil Defence respirator now costs 8s 6d not 7s 6d (*42.5p, not 35.5p*)
Came complete with haversack

May 17th Home nursing examination – everyone passed

May 26th The Lord Mayor visited

June 8th Open Day – 35 people came

July 6th Another Open Day

July 13th A bad thunderstorm put the phones out of action and brought the sandbags down outside the post

September 3rd Councillor Tiptaft visited

September 25th Parade in Holloway Head for all C.D members for inspection by Mr and Mrs Churchill

October 18th Parade for the beginning of Warship Week

October 29th Rev. Michael Parker, Vicar of All Saints Church, held a short service of thanksgiving on the anniversary of the post being bombed

November 5th Helped to distribute ration cards

1943

September 14th A man badly burned in an air raid called to show how well he was doing
December 19th 60 children for a party with a film show, Father Christmas, tree and presents

December 25th 19 people for a turkey dinner

1944

January 16th Concert – 45 people came

Extract from the diary of a gentleman living in Drayton Road.

1941

- 14th February Dustman came today to empty the bins for the first time this year.
- 23rd February Anti gas precautions lecture and practice – at the Public Works Dept in Silver Street from 2pm – 6pm.
- 25th February Shrove Tuesday. No pancakes – no eggs and no fat.
- 9th April Bomb on Goldsmith Road gas main and two bombs in Grange Road – people killed.
- 11th May In the early hours an aeroplane flew low and crashed in a field near Grimes Hill, Earlswood. Three crew killed and one taken to hospital.
- 1st June Clothes Rationing – 66 coupons a year but can buy anywhere.
- 5th July Bomb on St Agnes Church, Moseley.
- 7th July From today meat ration is 1s 2d and 7d for children. Eggs are four per person per month.

Bombs dropped in Birmingham's heaviest raids.

August 26 th /27 th	270 High Explosives * incendiaries
November 19 th /20 th 350 planes	646 H.E. 19 parachute mines. 17 oil bombs. 243 incendiaries
November 22 nd /23 rd 200 planes	870 H.E. 295 incendiaries
December 3 rd /4 th 50 planes	191 H.E. 300 incendiaries. 1 parachute mine.
December 11 th /12 th 200 planes	318 H.E. 200 incendiaries. 22 para mines
April 9 th /10 th 250 planes	650 H.E. 170 incendiaries

Altogether 5,129 H.E., 48 para mines and thousands of incendiaries were dropped.
Over 5,000 men, women and children were killed or injured.

Memories of Kings Heath during World War II

I was just six years old when war broke out. Life was good. For reasons that I didn't quite understand my mother whisked my brother and me off to stay with her parents in Bath while my father led a party of young evacuees to Leicestershire. Returning to Kings Heath in the spring of 1940 we were back in time for some major bombing. And then we were off again - this time to Nottinghamshire. Early summer 1941 saw us back in May Lane and for the rest of the war we remained in Kings Heath.

All of my memories are, in a sense, light weight - perhaps typical of a child to whom the war brought no personal tragedy. I recall time spent in the shelters - both at home and at Colmore Road school. I really enjoyed the, at times, nightly trip to our Anderson shelter. Here was MY bunk and I slept like a log. Mother, I remember, always brought the Housekeeping Case - a bit of a mystery to a seven year old - but an unfailing part of the ritual. I vividly recall the fury of a near neighbour (who was an Air Raid Warden) when I decided one night to turn my very, very small torch skywards as I walked down to the shelter. I could hear the planes and had learned to differentiate between 'theirs' and 'ours' and I wanted to see them. The warden was NOT amused. I was made to feel that I had nearly caused the destruction of May Lane - only his vigilance had saved us.

Shelters at school were a different matter. There was, of course, shelter drill and, I suppose, a few day time air raids. As we had no idea how long any raid might last some sort of entertainment was considered advisable. By the time I was top junior we were all expected to contribute to a class shelter concert. MY contribution was to sing 'Brother James' Air' with my friend Sheila Spencer - she being able to cope with the descant. I don't think we ever had to perform in a 'real' situation. Nightly air raids, especially during the times when they became predictable, brought one further bonus for me. On the grounds that it wasn't worth sending me to bed only to have to rouse me an hour or two later I was allowed to wait up for the sirens and thus got to listen to ITMA or 'Monday Night at Eight'. One night time raid I remember particularly. I stood in the garden marvelling at a fire works display that Hitler had laid on for us. Only later did I realise that on this particular night the market hall had been destroyed and that Mother had been worried sick as my father had been on Home Guard duty.

Our house backed on to Cocks Moor Wood Golf Course. Part of this was taken over for, I think, growing corn. Much more exciting for me, however, was the fact that sheep were grazed on what remained. The coming of lambs each spring and our largely successful attempts to lure them to our fence for supplementary feeding are very happy memories.

Then there are lots of little things - learning war related words for example. Travelling to town on a tram with my father I learned the word 'demolish' as we passed bombed houses at the top of Park Road. Evacuation, too, brought a new vocabulary. We seemed to listen to endless news' bulletins on the wireless and chart the progress of various armies. I loved the sound of the place names especially, I remember, the Russian ones.

But there were other names I recognised as having far from happy associations. At All Saints in 1944 (or was it 1945?) we put on a pageant 'Through all the changing scenes of life' It told the

story of what had been happening in the life of the world during the lifetime of our church. I was the youngest participant. At the end, I recall, three people came on to the stage draped entirely in white with faces also whitened. Each spoke just one word: Belsen; Dachau; Buchenwald. I didn't fully understand but, at least, I glimpsed the reality that while for me, growing up in Kings Heath, the war had been something of a romp for others it most definitely was not.

Marjorie Allen

We had a shop in Waterloo Road selling groceries, sweets and cigarettes. I don't know how word got round but everyone knew when we had had cigarettes delivered and came like a shot. We never had enough and usually were sold out within a couple' of days. For butter, tea, sugar and cheese we had to cut the coupons out of the ration books, count them, bundle them up and send them off to the Ministry of Food in Broad Street. In return we got a permit to buy from the travellers; no cash and carry in those days and in any case we had no transport. It was very difficult cutting up small amounts of cheese or butter. We didn't sell bacon or meat and so we and most of our customers registered with Mr Evans in York Road. It must have been a nightmare sorting out one and twopence worth of meat. I don't know how we managed with the rations but we never went hungry. One of the worst things was the soap ration as you could make do with food but it was difficult to find a substitute for soap either to wash 'yourself or your clothes. I was very fair over dividing the extras like tinned food or soap between my customers and myself but on one occasion I had one packet of soap powder left under the counter and intended to keep it for myself. A customer came in and I said that I was sold out, but Pam, aged three, and just tall enough to see over the counter piped up and said "But there's a packet here Mummy."

I remember the day after Alfred Street was bombed a small lad came into the shop. The plane had come in the early evening and he was waiting at the tram stop and saw it come down so low he thought it was going to hit the steeple of All Saints church. Everyone threw themselves on to the ground when the bombs dropped. The crew probably thought Wheelers Lane school was a factory but they missed it anyway. The blast didn't cause this house in Chesterwood Road as much damage as higher up although the French window has always been difficult to open so is obviously not straight.

I remember after the bomb dropped in Grange Road seeing clothes on the telephone wires as far as South Street.

On another occasion my husband was home on leave when the siren went. He was asleep in the chair and still half asleep grabbed his tin hat and ran up the garden where he fully woke up and wondered what on earth he had intended doing.

I didn't go into the shelter in the garden as I was pregnant and had difficulty getting in so we had a mattress under the stairs. We eventually got quite blasé and felt that wherever you were if the bomb had your name on it you would get it.

My husband and I had booked a holiday for the first two weeks in September 1939 but as he was in the Auxiliary Air Force he was called up immediately so we had to cancel. I cried when he went off wondering when I should see him again but he only went to Wythall and was back that same evening. He was posted to the balloon barrage site in Cannon Hill park. The crew slept in the Old Red Lion pub but it was very cold as it was open to the sky. Later they went to the Sons of Rest.

He was also on the balloon site at the Priory on Vicarage Road where Camp Hill school is now. During one severe raid he came home to see how we were and had to crawl in the gutter in Silver Street because of the flak. Later he went to Edgbaston golf course by the old church where the balloon came adrift and the fire brigade had to get it disentangled from a chimney. I don't think the authorities were very pleased. His most dangerous posting was to the Thames Estuary but he then volunteered for air crew and was posted to India.

We had a street party on V.E. night. The children had tea in the afternoon and we danced at night.

Elsie Bubb

In September 1940 I was living with my mother in Upper Cox St Balsall Heath. I had passed the grammar school entrance exam and begun attendance at Yardley in Warwick Rd Tyseley. Despite what many people may think the German bombers activity over Birmingham had already begun. In August we had goggled one morning at the first bombed building in our vicinity - a small shop in Mary St which had been demolished by a High Explosive bomb during the night and we, a small crowd of mainly children and women, watched in great interest while rescue operations were completed and the last person, a slightly injured man and the only casualty, was removed from the cellar where the family had sheltered that night. This sort of curiosity passed when these scenes unfortunately became commonplace

After about four weeks at Yardley I, along with many other Balsall Heath children and adults, developed scarlet fever and was transported by ambulance to Little Bromwich hospital. The infectious diseases of typhoid, typhus, diphtheria and scarlet fever being rife at that time. This hospital also known variously as the B'ham Isolation hospital or the Fever hospital is now part of East B'ham and even today has wards which are single storey and built a reasonable distance apart to avoid cross infection. Here I was, along with two local friends and others that I made in the ward incarcerated and away from parents and family and not seeing them for over a month until the rash and sore throat had gone and so had most of my outer layer of skin in the resultant 'skinning' stage. During this time I regaled my mother by letter with details of the air raids from my 11 year old point of view. Again to avoid cross infection the patients were not removed to shelters but fairly thick red blankets were draped over the bed heads forming a tent over each patient with the nurses sheltering underneath. I was able to cheerfully recount the fact that several bombs had been dropped in the hospital grounds on various nights. Fortunately, as far as I know, no one was injured. It was said that the bombers mistook this hospital area from the air for a factory because of the widely spaced buildings.

Returning home from Little Bromwich the instruction was for a month's recuperation before returning to school. This time was delightfully spent sleeping each night in the Anderson shelter either ours or in the one of my aunt and uncle who lived next door. The usual evening programme was for mother and myself to go into aunt's shelter as soon as it became dark and as it was early November that meant as soon as Mum had arrived home from work and we had eaten our tea. The next arrivals were Auntie Edie and her son Edgar accompanied by Uncle George's dinner which he would eat in the shelter as soon as he arrived home. There we stayed and rarely did the warning sirens not sound during those nights. If the night was 'busy' Mum and I remained there for the rest of the night but we usually managed during a 'quiet' period to leave the shelter at No 6 and retire to our own at No 5 where my cousin Ena who lived with us would join us after her shift as a tram conductress. On the 'busy' nights our shelter would often be occupied with our permission to the local warden by an overflow of tram passengers who had been evacuated from their tram at the corner of Upper Cox St and Cox St West. This being when the brick surface shelter built in our opening was full!

Daytimes of my recovery period were spent in shrapnel hunting around the district with the boy who lived next door but one. We also made a habit of inspecting new bomb craters and one day to be surprised to find that a previously inspected crater in Calthorpe Park had been cordoned off as it housed an unexploded bomb.

We spent the night of November 14th listening to the bombers crossing over to destroy Coventry. My mother who worked at that time as a supervisor over a team of salvage collectors for the Excelsior Philanthropic Society based in York Rd Kings Heath was due to take her team, by van, to Coventry the next morning. They set off but were turned back at the city boundary and not allowed to travel any nearer. This and the intensified raids quickly spelled the closure of the EPS and my mother had to look for another job. She quickly found one as wages clerk at the Dunlop Rim and Wheel at Tyseley. This was very handy for me later to call in on my way home from school. However, I suppose on the night of the Coventry bombing we must have had some inkling of what might follow for Birmingham.

There was a raid on the city on Monday night 18th November, the kind we were getting used to and the 42nd since the raids had started in August. Then arrived the momentous night of November 19th/20th. The official accounts are well documented but to us in our shelter it proved more so. The noises I can still recall. Although the whistles of descending bombs and their explosions were spine chilling the huge explosions of those we had not heard falling were worse. My thoughts were with my dog Judy left in the house as she would not go in to the shelter. What I remember most was not just the nearby explosions but what seemed like a few seconds silence then the rumbling of falling bricks and the tinkling of breaking glass. Would we have a house left the next morning? I think that, even all through previous raids, this was the first time I had felt frightened. When the morning dawned and with the All Clear we crawled out of the shelter and, yes, our houses were still there but minus windows. Our dog was quite safe although the front door had blown in. The houses over the wall in Mary St had disappeared and it was the blast from those bombs which had damaged ours. We had been so lucky as our Andersons must have been given some protection by that wall as they lay between the wall and our houses. Inside the house there was no water coming out of the tap for a cup of tea even if there had been any gas to boil the kettle. Uncle George and Edgar went off to work without a shave for the first

time in their lives. The warden arrived to say that yet another house in Mary St nearer to Balsall Heath Rd had also been demolished killing the three people sheltering in the cellar. These three were my mother's uncle, aunt and cousin.

Another cousin arrived to check on our well being. He and Mum took Judy off to New canal St dogs' home to be boarded until such time that we could have her home again. Then we packed a case, boarded a tram and went to stay with my cousin, Laddie and his wife Gwen at their home in Avenue Road Kings Heath. What plans and schemes were discussed between the adults I cannot say but I was overjoyed to find that not only had we two moved into No 69 but also newly arrived were Gwen's mother, stepfather and stepbrother George blasted out from Olknow Rd Small Heath. George and I were old friends. Ena stayed elsewhere with friends and Auntie Edie, Uncle George and Edgar spent their nights with another relation living in Kings Norton with Edie visiting the Balsall Heath homes every day.

In Avenue Road we had water, gas and electricity so the inner man could be cared for. However, Laddie and Gwen had no shelter or cellar and had been availing themselves of the facilities of the public shelter built underground in Kings Heath park with an entrance almost opposite Station Road. The shelter had been constructed below the surface of the slope beside Avenue Rd where it slopes steeply to the railway bridge. We new arrivals planned to avail ourselves also and to meet up with Mum's sister, Doll, mother of Laddie and her husband Ernie. They lived in Westfield Road and would walk round to the shelter carrying their blankets and bag of provisions while we merely crossed the road with ours.

So it was on the nights of November 20th and 21st. Although the shelter was crowded and there was no room to lie down we did have a little space along the seats even though the usual users had been swelled by our party and others who had in turn joined their local relations and friends. The usual procedure had been for Doll and Ernie to arrive as soon as the shelter opened and to reserve seats for the rest of the family and as far into the shelter as possible. Unfortunately, this was also the area nearest to the two 'bucket' toilets which were screened from the rest of the shelter by sacking curtains. Looking back, I presume that these toilets were emptied each day when the shelters were locked up until the evening. However, on the night of November 22nd the bombers arrived in force. Buses on the route which passes down Avenue Rd and the Outer Circle in Vicarage Rd were stopped with lights out for the duration of the raid and passengers were directed to public shelters including the one we were occupying. A fairly full shelter became full to overflowing as did the toilets! There was no room for people to sit so had to stand shoulder to shoulder along the centre and between the knees of those sitting. This, of course, was the time for the bombers to give some attention to the railway running from the city through Kings Heath, behind the houses in Westfield Rd and over the bridge in Avenue Rd and very close to the shelter. Most of the earlier noise was muted because we were underground but not now. There were no warnings just the crump of the explosions and at one time the ground holding the shelter shook and the emergency lighting flickered - it may even have gone out - I don't know as I had my hands over my ears and my face under the blanket. I know that there was some panic and I knew also for the first time in my life the terror of claustrophobia - I can no longer enter caves, I am unhappy in tunnels and I do not like bridges. How fortunate we were the many in that shelter that night for I believe that one bomb missed the shelter by a very small distance. When I think of that night I can still smell the odour of the toilets and the

surrounding bodies maybe even terror. However, I do remember a man telling everybody in an authoritative voice to keep calm. The sounds of the explosions became distant but people realised there was no way of getting out of that shelter quickly and settled down again.

Mum and Laddie had already realised that there was no way so many of us could cram into that shelter again and had decided that four of us should evacuate ourselves to Bidford on Avon travelling there by bus on Saturday morning. We had holidayed there in 1939 and Laddie had contacted the house owners and booked two rooms for us for as long as we wanted. Laddie, Gwen and my mother would commute to Birmingham for their work. For me there would be a transfer to Alcester grammar school.

Buses to Bidford ran from Station St each hour so on Saturday morning we carried our cases and luckily caught a tram along the Alcester Rd. In Station St we were amazed to find a long queue for the Bidford/Evesham bus the 147. We had intended to catch one around 10am. At 2pm we were nearing the front of the queue but people were still arriving hoping to get a bus before nightfall. When the bus arrived they rushed the queue. We did not make that one but were much nearer the front when it left. My mother was a 'lady' and nothing would have persuaded her to have pushed her way onto a bus. But on the arrival of one and having stood in that queue for five hours I pushed as did Laddie and Gwen. Clambering up the steps I looked back only to see my mother further back in the queue than where we had been when the single decker arrived. Whatever possessed me I do not know but I turned round, spread my arms across the doorway and grabbing the rails on either side. "Nobody is getting on this bus till my mother is on" I shouted. I think people were more surprised than anything. I was now joined by Laddie who acted as a further barricade. The conductor then told the crowd, "You had better let her mother get through else we'll never get away." The crowd parted and my very embarrassed mother alighted. You might think that she would have thanked me, but no, I was in the doh house for the entire journey as I had shown her up in front of all those people.

The next months were an absolute delight to me as I waited for my transfer to Alcester grammar school although frequently at night we could see the red sky over Birmingham as the city burned. I was able to go with Mum to fetch Judy just before Christmas and have her with me in Bidford. By the beginning of April 1941 Laddie and Gwen needed to find other accommodation as Gwen was expecting her first baby so as things had quietened down in Birmingham we came home. Our windows now had glass, some of it wartime opaque glass and water was running through the taps. We arrived back in time to spend yet more nights in our Anderson shelter for raids which included the severe raid of April 9th/10th.

While we had been away Kings Heath had again been visited by bombers. Aunt Doll and Uncle Ernie having decided to give the public shelters a miss were sheltering under the stairs when an oil bomb landed and exploded in the entry junction between their house in Westfield Rd and next door. It made a dreadful smelly mess and, as I recall, the shrapnel gashes were still in the gate in 1962!

During my waiting time in Bidford I often came into Birmingham by bus and often dropped off in Kings Heath to consult the lists of casualties posted on a board between the library and the police station.

Joyce Finnemore

I lived in Livingstone Road during the war with my in-laws as my husband was in the army. We had a shelter in the garden and spent every night there. The nearest bomb fell in Brandwood Road but it shook the foundations of our house.

My father-in-law was in the Home Guard in the barracks in Mossfield Road and at the Priory in Vicarage Road. I remember going down to the police station in Kings Heath when they first formed and watched them march down the High Street – no uniform but a band, a few dogs and broomsticks as makeshift weapons.

Ada Baker.

I lived in Fordhouse Lane and went to Pineapple School. I remember the bomb dropping at the back of Fordhouse Lane in Oakley Road and the windows were blown out in alternate houses.

The night that the tunnel was bombed there were also bombs in the fields opposite the school and a horse was killed.

I remember being out with another lad in broad daylight and a single plane came over, a Heinkel, and he was so low we could see the machine-gunner. I tried to hide behind my mate and he tried to get behind me. The bombs he dropped landed on Triplex.

Italian prisoners of war built Brandwood Park Road and a path goes off to the canal and on a low wall by the bridge are the initials, P.O.W.

Ken Booth.

I lived in an Off Licence or Outdoor as it was called then in Middleton Road. It was one of the first A.R.P posts when the war started and the reason for this was that we had a telephone. It had to be manned twenty four hours a day. Mum wasn't too happy about this because we only had one living room so had no privacy.

When the bombs dropped in Alfred Street all the windows in our house and most of the windows in Middleton Road were blown out except the plate glass window of the Off Licence. This was a big talking point of the residents of the road until the window fell out about two weeks later.

A gun called Big Bertha used to come round the roads firing at planes and it caused more broken windows than the bombs.

A sniper plane came over in daylight and machine gunned down All Saints Road but I don't think there were any casualties.

We didn't have an air raid shelter so we used to sleep in the cellar with all the barrels of beer. If a bomb had dropped on the house and not killed us we would probably have drowned in the beer!

Sheila Cole

I lived in Springfield Road during the war with my mother, sisters and brother before he went into the Air Force. We used the cellar as our air raid shelter covering the coal over and sleeping on mattresses. My mother insisted on having her cups of tea so my brother rigged up a stove so she could have an endless supply. Neighbours also joined us including two small children. We made the place as comfortable as possible and even hung up pictures. We had no windows in the house as they were blown out almost immediately.

I slept there every night during the bombing except when I was on duty at the first aid post at Kings Heath baths. I did a civil nursing course lasting six weeks at St Chad's hospital on Hagley Road and then went to the Accident hospital where I emptied bed pans and held bowls for those being sick but the matron could not cope with us even doing such mundane jobs so I went to the first aid post instead for two or three nights a week. We slept on stretcher beds in the basement among the pipes with a blanket but no sheets and the men at one end and the women at the other. The ambulances were in Silver Street at the old fire station where the A.R.P was based. After duty we went home to change our uniforms and go to work.

I worked as a telephone operator in Lionel Street in Birmingham. Information came through on a colour code as to where the German bombers were heading so if B'ham was the target I didn't go home but slept in the basement. Next morning you either went home if on late shift or straight back to work. I can still remember the scenes of devastation and the exhaustion of the fire fighting crews most of whom were volunteers and so would have to go on to their regular work. The trams were marvellous and managed to keep going despite the destruction and I used to sit on the tram knitting operation stockings on four pins - yards of them. The wool was provided by the Red Cross. One of the worst nights was when Coventry was bombed and waves of bombers went over and you could see the glow in the sky.

At the bottom of the garden we had some old stables and we converted one of them into a pig sty and gave up some of our bacon ration coupons to buy a pig. All the neighbours brought 'their scraps but he became almost like a pet so the whole family had to leave the house when the slaughterer came. The meat was divided between those who had helped to feed him and we cured the hams in brown sugar and salt petre and hung them in the cellar. We also kept chickens and two ducks but when Mother had the ducks killed and served up for dinner we couldn't eat them. We had two pigs but by then my sisters had married and left home so it wasn't worth the effort after that.

One memory I have which is very clear although I have never found anyone to verify it. One evening I was coming home from work, in daylight, when I saw a bi plane so low that I could see the swastika and watched as it dropped bombs, on either Albert Rd or Middleton Road. I was in Heathfield Road and ran for shelter into someone's porch as I was afraid he was going to come back. There was no one else about and the plane seemed to be on its own.

On another occasion my brother was home on leave and a bomb dropped in Cambridge Road in front of the Methodist church. He was asked to stay in the crater and shine a torch to prevent anyone falling into it. Unfortunately, no one came to relieve him and he was there all night. As he was on leave he was not best pleased.

I remember going to a concert at the town hall to listen to an orchestra from Czechoslovakia. They had just managed to get out of their country but had had to leave everything behind so even had to play with borrowed instruments. I still remember them when I hear the New World Symphony.

I was at Clent when the lights went on again and I remember looking across and seeing the city lit up - it was just like fairyland.

Val Cole

I lived in Brent Road during the war and went to Colmore Rd school. St Dunstan's Roman Catholic church was just a small corrugated iron building in Station Road on the corner of Westfield Road. I used to go there with a friend, Peggy Reeves, who was a Roman Catholic (I wasn't) and she taught me how to anoint myself with holy water upon entering. I have always had fond memories of those Masses that I attended as a child though I was an imposter! In Highbury/Uffculme park there was a section of it which bordered Shutlock Lane and which had always been a playing field shared by several local schools. Upon it stood a wooden pavilion and during the war some Royal Air Force ground personnel appeared with a barrage balloon. The men had to live in the pavilion and they tended this balloon for some years. Local rumour had it that the path (tarmac) running through the park shone a silvery colour in the moonlight and the bombers may have thought it a run way so the balloon was there to protect both it and the nearby railway line which had upon it a powerful anti aircraft gun pulled by an engine which used to shake the plaster from the walls of our house when it went off.

As has been noted in the Colmore Road occasional paper the school was closed at some stage and, subsequently, re opened for mornings one week and afternoons the next. I was going home from a morning session and had just reached Colmore Rd school gates when a German bomber flew low over head and machine gunned us as we were leaving school. I remember no one was actually hurt but several mothers who had come to meet their children with babies in prams and push chairs went hysterical. One mother, Mrs Perks, whose daughter Marie was in my class, was very distressed indeed. It was said that the plane had also machine gunned the people leaving the Austin (as it was then called) to go home to lunch and some were changing shifts.

I was not evacuated although my mother had bought all of the necessary things such as a rucksack and warm clothing but as the time drew near I had to go to the Royal Orthopaedic hospital for yet another operation and so was spared the trauma (I had been born in 1932 with a club foot which was corrected by Mr Wilson-Stuart and his team. This was pioneer surgery in those days and I am grateful it was so successful.

Whilst in hospital there were many wounded soldiers from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary and when they were able they would come and try to talk to us. Visiting days were so infrequent we seldom saw our families so their social calls were very welcome.

Kings Heath village was quite different from today and these are the shops to the best of my Recollection:

Chemists: Co op on the corner of Poplar Rd; Boots where it is now; Harbour's next to Chowens the cake shop on the corner of York Rd; Hedges opposite the public lavatories by Vicarage Rd;

Banks: Municipal next door to the Kingsway cinema; Barclays on the corner of Bank St near to the Cross Guns (now Goose and Granite); Lloyds on the corner of Heathfield Rd; National Provincial I think was where the Natwest is now but I am not sure.

Post Office: Near to the Baptist church next door to the Co op

Grocers: George Mason was near to Coopers the greengrocers opposite All Saints Church; Maypole was on the same side about where Macdonalds is now; Newmans and Perks opposite near to Harbours; Rowbottams near to Vickers cake shop was what the French call a charcuterie but I suppose we call a cooked meat shop; Home and Colonial - I cannot remember where it was or if there was one.

Drapers: Taylors was on the corner of Addison Rd; Dixons was opposite the Kingsway where Argos is now and took up most of the space between Grange and Station Roads (there was also a branch in Acocks Green)

Hope chapel was next door to the library and is now used as the children's library and where the Local History Society holds its meetings (Hope Chapel is now nearer town)

Profitt and Westwood, seed merchants and animal food opposite Station Rd.

Decorwalls interior decorating shop where the Superdrug is now. There were several of those kind of small shops selling paint etc as there were no D.I.Y shops like Texas or B & q.

Jewellers: Turtons ; Cowans; Cohens ; Webbs.

Pamela Cotton

It was during the war that this story happened and it happened right where we are now, here on the Allenscroft Estate. There was a little girl called Barbara who loved this school and spent many happy days here but when the war came all that changed. Everyday they had gas mask drill and Barbara hated it. They all stood in a great line and the headmistress Miss Duncombe would watch each of them putting on their masks. Barbara hated it; she hated the smell of the rubber that made her feel sick and she hated the way the glass by the eyes steamed up when you put it on so that you could not see out. She hated the war.

Each and every night she and her sisters would have to sleep in the Anderson shelter at the bottom of the garden. She was lucky to have a shelter, really, and a mattress to sleep on but still she was scared, lying there in the darkness hearing the thuds and feeling the trembles as the bombs shook the ground.

Many people did not have shelters in their gardens and they would have to go to the shelter underneath the horse shoe tunnel. There were bunk beds there, three high, but some people still had to sleep on the floor because there was not enough room.

One night she and her sisters had eaten their tea and were sent down to the shelter. When they were all inside and her parents the bombing started. She heard the sirens and the thuds from outside. Her mother and father talked in the corner saying that the bombs were near. Barbara curled up as small as possible in her flannelette nightie, hugged herself tight, then suddenly there was a huge bang and everything shook.

"We've been hit" said her father. Barbara started to cry so did her sisters. She heard cries from outside. "Help, help, the tunnel's been hit and we need help."

"I am going to help" said her father "make some hot drinks, love, and bring them out, people will need them." With that her father left and her mother started brewing up cocoa to give to people. Then her mother left telling the girls it would be all right but Barbara and her sisters cried scared and shaking into the long night. When the morning came there was no school only sorrow with 15 neighbours dead and a community that grieved for them.

Told by Barbara Eames as part of the Allens Croft Project

I was born in Pineapple Grove but spent the war years in Reeves Road on the Pineapple Estate and went to Colmore Road school. It is difficult to know how much is remembered perhaps just a rehash of what was second hand or merely rumour. I saw incendiary bombs fall and the brilliant effect they had. Dad rushed out to help the A.R.P warden with stirrup pumps, bucket of sand and a shovel at the ready. I remember I caught pneumonia through sleeping in our damp Anderson shelter but was helped in my recovery by Dr Kennedy prescribing the new antibiotics M & B tablets. I never saw a dead body and only one house in the immediate neighbourhood was bombed. The local horseshoe tunnel which ran under the railway line making a pedestrian route between the bottom of Allenscroft Road, close to Pineapple school, and the worthings and Fordhouse Lane had been converted into a shelter with fitted bunk beds. This tunnel was bombed and a number of casualties occurred. It was rumoured that a number of people had come out of the shelter to smoke whilst the raid was on and the glow from the cigarettes attracted the bombers! I think it more likely that the anti aircraft gun mounted on bogies to travel along the line was the object causing the attraction. A piece of very bad planning to my adult comprehension.

After our shelter became unusable we certainly did not rely on public shelters but slept under our dining table on a mattress which we abutted to the double French windows leading to the back garden. I also remember the sound of the powerful naval gun used as part of the anti aircraft defences more, with hindsight, a morale booster than an effective deterrent. It had a memorable boom which shook the windows. I never knew of any air craft being brought down despite, also, the searchlights which swept the sky. These, I believe, were sited in Swanshurst Park.

There were a number of bombs off loaded by enemy bombers around the Pineapple Estate. My father had a photograph taken standing in a crater! This is what we considered to be our childhood and it seemed a very exciting one but for my parents, I realise, it must have been a very frightening time but any apprehension they felt was not apparent to me.

I was then an only child and not evacuated. My only time away from home was spent convalescing from my illness at Blackwell and staying for an occasional weekend on a farm at Great Witley which we were able to reach by Midland Red bus. The convalescent home was run by the Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund. My father, a long time employee at Cadbury's contributed to the Ideal Benefit Society and this fund provided us with good medical attention during this time in Kings Heath. My younger sister was born in 1944 in the Hazelwell Nursing Home and our G.Ps were from the practice in All Saints Road.

The Kingsway cinema never closed and I can remember my parents booking to see 'Gone With the Wind' there. I can also remember seeing Disney's 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' which gave me nightmares. We also collected my birthday cakes from Vickers cake shop which, as the war progressed, became more austere and the icing was replaced by a chocolate coloured covering. All my relations lived round Kings Heath and, as my cousins were not evacuated, our parents continued to give us birthday parties. In fact there were always family events in the offing: weddings; parties for relatives home on leave or about to embark abroad on active service.

No blood relatives lost their life during the war but some subconscious elements remain in the psyche or why do I still shudder when I hear a siren which resembles those sounded when an air raid was expected?

Joan Gameson

My brother and I were evacuated with Pineapple school to Astwood Bank. I didn't really want to go but as my brother was going I wanted to be with him. He treated the evacuation as an adventure. We were billeted with an elderly couple at a small holding in Dark Lane but when my mother visited she asked if we could be moved and we then went to stay with a younger couple further down the lane at a private house. Our schooling was very patchy as we had to share the local school building and so did only part time. My brother who was two years older than me passed for Camp Hill Grammar school but due to bombing he was transferred to Moseley Grammar school and was evacuated with them to King Charles Grammar school in Kidderminster. I then came home but my mother was afraid of the bombing and made a private arrangement for me to go to Hopwood. My father worked as a male nurse at Monyhull Colony and also carried out his fire watching duties there.

Jean Gotrell

I lived in Allenscroft Road and went to Pineapple school but had left before the war started. We had an Anderson shelter in the garden but it constantly filled with water so my father rigged up a pump to get the water out.

I remember the incendiary bombs - there were 13 of them one night on the recreation ground and we used to look for the remains in the morning.

My father had an allotment behind the school and was awarded three certificates of merit from the Lord Mayor and City Council for doing his bit in the Dig For victory campaign. There was no water on the allotment so I used my trolley - two pieces of wood on wheels - to ferry five gallons of water at a time. All of us, girls included, had trollies and with no traffic on Allenscroft Rd had a lovely time speeding down the hill.

The organist from St Mary Magdalene lived in Allenscroft Road and I remember an incendiary bomb dropping in his garden. Everyone rushed over with sand to put it out and the place ended up looking like Blackpool beach!

Vince Gotrel

My brother John and I were sent to Cromford in Derbyshire to live with relatives and we attended the local school for over two years. Occasionally we came home to Bank St as Dad was living on his own. Before we went to Cromford we were issued with gas masks and I can remember so well being fitted with one and how I hated it on my face. I believe we had to go to York Rd near the milk dairy to be fitted. We had a shelter put in the garden and took sheets and an eiderdown with us to keep warm + candles for light. One of the nights Birmingham was hit by bombs the sky was a brilliant red through fires and you could easily read a newspaper in it all, I remember, too, going into our next door neighbour's one night and I heard an aircraft and then it went quiet and then a great explosion was heard and a bomb had landed on houses in Grange Road killing some people.

Dad told me once that a bomb exploded two gardens away from us in Bank St - he was in the shelter at the time' and he thought his end had come - not nice.

I started working in the city in 1946 and the ruins and the craters in the street were enormous and the corner of Bennett's Hill where I worked was completely demolished.

I remember ration books and Mom trying to cope with very little food - how I hated corned beef and potato pie as that was the only meat you could get apart from spam which I liked. It doesn't taste quite so nice today somehow.

Our shelter got water logged a few times and then when 'Gerry' struck we had to get under the table in the kitchen. Dad joined the Navy and saw a lot of action. He was stationed at Devonport and then went on the destroyer 'Renown'. There is now another 'Renown' I believe. While Dad was away Mom kept the allotment going down by Uffculme park so that we could have vegetables. I know she worked very hard as she also had a job at Barclay's Bank on the corner of Bank St as a cleaner.

Just after the war I used to send away to Gibraltar for nylon stockings as you couldn't get anything like them in England. When I was confirmed I wore a pair and I felt 6ft tall!

Dorothy Gould

I was eight years old when the second world war started. I lived in Yardley Wood Road near to Swanshurst Road. There was a Royal Artillery unit in the park with a gun emplacement on the corner of Brook Lane. A barrage balloon floated from a site off Oakcroft Road opposite our house. This was a sand pit where I watched the men filling sandbags which were used to protect buildings from bomb blast.

I remember sleeping night after night in the Anderson shelter in our back garden - very damp and crowded with three adults and two children during the air raids.

When the shelter filled with water in winter my parents got an indoor table type Morrison shelter. This filled our front parlour but it was warmer to sleep in there. I slept through an air

raid one night even when the bombs fell in front of and behind the house.

One of my school friends, Patsy Evans, was killed with her family when a bomb made a direct hit on their garden shelter opposite the park.

At one stage in the war American soldiers were stationed in Swanshurst Park. They were popular with local children as they gave away gifts of sweets and chewing gum.

I remember wartime food shortages and queuing for ages to get apples or eggs when the shops obtained them. My father used to buy a weekend joint of meat at the butcher's near to his work place and we were sure it was horse meat a few times.

My school in Trittiford Road closed for a few months at the height of the bombing and most people were evacuated. My sister and I didn't go with them so missed some months of schooling. We had a few lessons in people's houses by teachers who were not evacuated.

When I was attending Camp Hill Grammar school in the war I worked as a volunteer in a day nursery at the entrance to Billesley Common. It was a holiday job, which my school asked me to do. I enjoyed the work with young children. Their mothers were working in factories on munitions.

My brother had two close shaves with bombs. He was at night school at Wheelers Lane when it was bombed and was working at Highbury as an admin. assistant when it was an old people's home when it too was bombed.

Some shops were hit by incendiary bombs and I remember being able to buy fire damaged toys very cheaply soon after they re opened.

Beryl Groombridge

In 1939 it didn't register with me what was happening just that my brother was in the army and had gone away. My parents thought, like everyone else, we were going to be bombed right off but that didn't happen. We all got fitted with gas masks and had to carry them everywhere with your identity card. We dug up the garden for an Anderson shelter and to grow vegetables in 'Dig For victory'. We soon got tired of eating them but they helped to fill you up.

1940 was the fall of France, which we remember well as my brother at 19 got shot on the beach at Dunkirk with the B.E.F trying to escape the German army. He was shot in the head and had some eye damage but was rescued by boat. He was in hospital in Chester but we only found out weeks later. I had to grow up very quickly. My sisters worked long shifts in a war factory and my Mom worked in a factory as well as looking after us.

We lived in Grange Road and can remember the night when two houses further down on the opposite side were bombed. It was the same night that St Dunstan's church on the corner of Westfield and Station Roads was bombed. You can tell where the bombs had dropped as the houses are different. It couldn't have been a bad raid that night as we were not under the stairs where we went when the bombing was bad. We had the shelter in the garden but my father was an invalid so he could not use it so we put a mattress under the stairs and went in there.

My sister who was married with a five year old son lived in Alfred St. It was not yet dark when she saw the bomber come over. She dashed to the shelter but didn't reach it before the bomb dropped destroying her house and the whole corner of Albert Road and Alfred Street. She had a nasty cut on the top of her head but her neighbours inside their house were killed. She and Martin were taken to the first aid post and then brought to us. My other sister and myself went back to the house to see what we could salvage as she had nothing. The police came and nearly arrested us as looters but we proved who we were and were able to get some things including the chandelier which remarkably had not broken. We were not allowed to go upstairs as it was too dangerous.

My other sister worked at Triplex on the Kings Norton factory centre but was home the night it was bombed. We could see it - just like fire works. She was grieved as she had left a pair of shoes there.

I remember the rationing and wonder how we managed on so little. Meat at one and twopence worth a week and with an occasional sausage. A man in the road kept chickens and we helped to feed them so managed to get a few eggs in return. At Christmas he got his brother in law who had a farm near Hollywood to keep us a pig which we all helped to fatten for our Christmas dinner which was then against the law but an exciting thing to do. I got stopped by a policeman when I was on Yardley Wood Rd at Christmas 1941 while delivering contraband to my sister who was lying in after having a baby. I had eggs and pork hidden in a bag on my cycle but the policeman said that my cycle lamp was too bright and I had to walk the rest of the way but I was frightened!

I remember that all church bells were stopped from ringing and the stained glass was taken out. Kings Heath Park was dug up from Grange Road to the railway for allotments.

The queues everywhere seemed endless and you often joined one and found out afterwards what they were selling. After the war we had our first banana but I didn't like them much and still don't.

Dorothy Jones

I lived in Allenscroft Road and attended Pineapple school. On the day the school was evacuated we met at the tunnel with our labels and gas masks and change of clothing. One girl was crying and said that she didn't want to go but her mother was not pleased as she had 'bought her a new tooth brush special.' Anyway she didn't go new toothbrush or not. we walked up to Lifford Lane station and boarded the train. I was convinced that I was. going to the sea side as we had always gone to the sea side by train and I didn't believe they went any where else. We got off the train, not at the sea, and went by bus to Crabbe's Cross where we sat in a hall and were given a bag, I think, of sweets. Adults came in and names were called out and children disappeared with them. I was billeted with another girl with a lady who worked at the needle factory so she gave us breakfast in the morning and, I think, our dinner but as we were only doing part time schooling we were locked out all afternoon. I had long' plaits which my mother replaited twice a day but only being done once they got very tangled so the lady cut them off and put them in the dustbin. My mother couldn't visit as my father was ill so I was visited by the newspaper shop owner in Allenscroft Rd and showed him my plaits. Next thing I knew I was moved and billeted with Jean Lee and her brother.

As nothing was happening in the way of bombing I came home after six or seven months just in time for it. We had an Anderson shelter in the garden with duckboards and a Valor heater which on occasions smoked and wreathed everywhere in soot.

We later had an Anderson shelter in the front room and it nearly filled it. It was in there that I was told that my brother had gone down with the Hood in May 1941 - his first ship and just 18.

On the night of the big raid on Birmingham we were at the Kingsway to see a George Formby film. The manager came and said that the sirens had sounded and we could either leave at once or would have to stay to the end. I pleaded with my mother that we stay but the raid got so bad that she demanded to be let out. She was told it was dangerous but she insisted and an A.R.P warden escorted us to an underground shelter in the High Street. It was packed not only with regulars but with casuals like us. We stayed there quite a while but then met a couple from Allenscroft Road and decided to brave it together. We just reached All Saints church when a plane came down low and machine-gunned us. We got along Vicarage Road by stooping and keeping as close to the wall of the houses as possible. I later saw the marks of the bullets. We managed to get home and my mother put the milk into a saucepan for some cocoa. We heard a bomb coming and dived under the stairs and both laughed when we saw that she was still clutching the saucepan. We spent the rest of the night in the shelter and I can still remember seeing the glow from the city as it burned.

My father was too ill to go to the shelter and he would sit in his arm chair wearing his hat and overcoat and the local A.R.P warden used to call regularly to see him and then would report to us in the shelter. I think that the wardens 'did a marvellous job.

It wasn't all doom and gloom as I remember the mowers drawn by horses cutting the grass on the recreation ground and we used to have 'grass' fights - Allenscroft Rd v the Rest! I also remember that the night the tunnel was bombed another bomb landed in the field leading down to the cana and the following summer the crater was covered in a glorious display of buttercups - everywhere else was grass.

After my father died and my brothers were in the forces there was only my mother and myself so we had people billeted on us. Two girls came from Glasgow to work at the factory centre. One wore a turban even in the house and my mother asked her why. She burst into tears and said that she had bleached her hair with pure bleach and her head was terribly burned. It took a long time for the scars to fade. We also occasionally had the drivers from the balloon barrage site in Vicarage Road - they usually came for one night. There was a WAAF station at Wythall and we had a girl from Torquay with us and she became a family friend.

In 1944 we had an evacuee from the London doodlebugs but she had aunt living in Birmingham so moved to her. One family came from London with father driving a big car at a time when petrol was non-existent for private cars and in the boot were parcels of food and the father promised to be back the following week with more. My mother asked him where he had got his petrol and food from and he said "Have you never heard of 'red' petrol and the black market?" She didn't often lose her temper but she did then "My eldest son Jack is in the RAF and BOB is in India and I have one dead and you talk of the black market so you are not staying here."

The German POWs built Brandwood Park Road and I used to walk past them with the dog but, having been taught that all Germans were bad, took no notice of them. Then just before Christmas I heard them singing 'Silent Night' and it was so beautiful that I cried. I thought they are only lads just like my brothers and a long way from home.

The Italian POWs were in two big houses on the right hand side at the back of the Alcester Road going from Kings Heath to Moseley.

I remember the Yanks coming and a couple of girls from the estate married and went off to America.

Betty Joiner

War was declared on 3rd September 1939. The next few months were spent in quiet preparation. The ARP, the barrage balloons; air raid shelters were rapidly made and a total blackout organised. Buses had their windows blacked out and every shop and house hastened to cover windows and doors with curtains or plywood - no crack would be overlooked by the ARP warden. Gas masks were issued and the evacuation of children carried out. Optimists thought it would be over very soon.

In August 1940 the silence was broken when the bombing started. Gradually we became used to the disruption. In Kings Heath the sirens dominated sleeping time so as soon as dusk came people took their bedding and walked out into the country to find accommodation out of town - a sad and sorry sight.

We were married on 10th September 1940 at Kings Heath. People said how sad it was to be married in wartime. Guests carried their gas masks. The organist was Marjorie Wilcox, the aunt

of Toyah Wilcox, because Clifford had been called up. We both had to go to the town hall to have our identity cards changed and then thanks to friends who helped us with petrol coupons we drove to Shrewsbury.

We returned to our house in Alcester Road South to find everyone had been evacuated because 18 bombs had been dropped on the golf course opposite. The police had kindly looked after the house and made it their centre. It was quite a shock to wake up in the night from our mattress on the floor and hear the cheery voice of two policemen "Just come to see if you're all right" They became firm friends and often called in for refreshments when on the beat.

As our house was the last one on the Alcester Road before Broad Lane we eventually rented the corner piece of land to dig for victory and we grew vegetables and strawberries.

Further up Broad Lane near the cemetery there was a barrage balloon unit and we were frequently asked for drinks and milk. The local farmer continued to bring the herd of cows down the main road to the field and kept us supplied with fresh milk.

The raid on Coventry was terrible. The sinister noise of the planes that continued to throb their way to completely destroy Coventry, killing and maiming hundreds. The 19th November was bad for us.

As the war continued the Germans made several attempts to bomb the Austin works. One day as I was walking along Grove Road with a friend a plane dipped down quite low and there was a splutter of machine gun fire. Luckily a kind lady living nearby gathered us into her house.

As the bombing increased life became more difficult. There was much bombing in Kings Heath. Institute Road baths, a first aid post, was bombed injuring several people. Houses in Westfield Rd and Mossfield Rd were destroyed and Albert Rd was more or less wiped out. Station Rd had damage including the Roman Catholic Church of St Dunstan. Father Michael, Vicar of All Saints, went to visit the scene and offered the church hall for their services.

We were restricted with food rationing and often queued in Alcester Lanes End. There was a shop called Betty's and I used to get the pram out and push the children up the road to see if Betty would kindly allow me one of her delicious pies. She could only make a small number because of the rations she was allowed. Occasionally she would make Bath buns which we cut into halves. Sadly she and her husband closed after the war having nobly tried to help us survive.

We had a coal fire on which I tried to make a meal with an oxtail. This was classed as offal so was useful to expand the meat ration. We were about to eat our meal when the siren went off at one o'clock. We all looked out into the garden and my children were horrified as the German plane flew so low that it touched the hedge. I called out "We can see his swastika." This became my children's favourite story especially the bit about the swastika.

Later in the war we gave hospitality to American and Canadian soldiers who needed hospitality.

Doris Minns

Although I was only eight years old at the beginning of the war, memories of air raids and days and nights spent in the shelters are indelibly printed on my mind. Strangely enough, the memory that stands out with absolute clarity is of an air raid I wasn't directly affected by. What I remember so clearly is my godmother's account of it several days later. It probably remains in my memory for other reasons other than the horror of the tale itself. For thirty-two years we lived in Haunch Lane and the sitting room wall had a large, elliptical bulge in the plaster. We knew that this was a grim reminder of the blast from the Alfred Street bomb, as we called it. Our route to the Kings Heath shopping centre always took us up Alfred Street and the incongruous mixture of architectural styles to be found in that little backwater was a direct consequence of a terrible evening in 1940.

My godmother's story was brief and simple but very moving. She was happy, chatterbox of a lady, not given to morbid fears or doom laden gossip but her account of what happened was proof of her feeling. It was a dark but pleasantly mild early evening in winter. The sky was clear but because of the strictly enforced blackout it was very dark, so that when my godmother asked her twelve year old daughter to, "Pop to Miss Greaves and buy a quarter of spam for your dad's tea", she was given a small shaded torch to take with her. The family lived at the corner of Howard Rd and Wheelers Lane and Miss Greaves' tiny shop in Albert Road was not only the nearest general store but the centre for local news and gossip. Those were the innocent days when one could send a twelve-year old child on a simple errand after dark without fear of harm. People walked home from work, posted their letters, stopped to exchange news and generally continued to socialise after dark in a way that wouldn't happen today. In spite of wartime conditions or perhaps because of them communities remained close. It so happened, nevertheless, that that was very nearly the last innocent little errand Edna ever undertook. She strolled off to the shop, crossing Howard Road and stopping only to stroke next door's cat as it sauntered across the grass verge. As she walked up Alfred Street she saw groups of children playing hop scotch in the road and enjoying the odd game of tig before they went into tea and bed usually followed later by the siren and a scuttle to the shelter. But they were all used to that. As she turned into Albert Road Edna called "Hallo" to the two wardens about to start their nightly patrol. Before many minutes she was in the cosy overcrowded warmth of the shop in company with two or three other people. The light in the shop was dim and the area around the door was cloaked by a thick black curtain ensuring that no light could be seen as people entered and left the shop. Edna made her purchase, chatted to the gregarious Miss Greaves and edged her way out of the shrouded doorway. Something seemed different. Above the normal friendly sounds of an early winter evening was the soft, barely perceptible hum of an engine. It was getting louder and Edna knew at once what that might mean. Enemy bombers! But the siren hadn't gone. Could it be one of 'ours' coming back from a raid? The engine noise became even louder and Edna's stomach lurched. She wanted to be home and safe with Mum and Dad and her brother Jack. She started to run. Suddenly there was an explosion, followed by another. The sky suddenly lit up and all hell seemed to be let loose as she ran faster. A wailing siren started as a burly figure reached out from an entry way in Albert Road pulling her into a huddle of grey faced people only seconds before a third, shattering, brain numbing explosion lifted Alfred Street's little houses into the sky to fall in storms of rubble filling the air with thick dust and the choking, smell of burning. Had Edna been ten yards further she would have been in the thick of that hellish inferno. She was aware only of screams and shouts and of the 'other worldish' sensation that extreme shock creates. She might have been in the entry for minutes or hours. She

was never able to remember even years afterwards. Eventually the All Clear sounded and Edna was taken to the emergency first aid post in Wheelers Lane school and given strong sweet tea to drink.

My godmother heard the first two explosions and rushed from the house. Never in her life had she left home without wearing a hat and gloves but she now ran in slippers and pinafore seeing that third catastrophic explosion that changed the map of that bit of old Kings Heath for ever. She doesn't remember calling out but was told she shouted "Edna, Edna" again and again. She was prevented from going any further by the police and wardens but refused to go home. The rest of the story was simply a painful nightmare and she was quite certain of Edna's death in that horrific pile of burning rubble. Somehow she was taken to the first aid post and after what seemed like hours they were re united. My dear godmother's typical response was "I don't know what your father will say." He, in fact, for the only time in his life said very little. The shock was too great. He had walked from his small factory in Camp Hill, the trams having stopped, and seeing the skyline of Kings Heath becoming brighter and brighter as he drew near. He talked of that night more often than he talked of his First World War experiences.

Edna knew that the children playing in the road, the two wardens and the people who were served before her in the shop were either dead or seriously wounded.

For many years when I returned from shopping I often saw an old man pottering in his garden in Albert Road. He always seemed to want to chat and I guessed he lived alone. One day he told me his version of that story and said, as I could well understand, that it was the night that changed his life for ever.

Janet Morris

Sixty years ago Dad, my brother and I started to dig. Firstly, we planted an Anderson shelter half way down the back garden in Shutlock Lane and then we went to Oakfield Rd, Cannon Hill to plant one for Grandad. On our way back we stopped at our allotment half way up Russell Rd to plant potatoes and other vegetables. These events took place during the exciting time of the Munich crisis and soon we were issued with identity cards, ration books and gas masks - my baby sister had what looked like a small suitcase into which she had to be placed if a gas raid occurred. We soon found that the shelter filled with water and needed rapid modifications, successfully carried out by Dad. Then we fitted it out with bunks, a heater and camouflaged the top to look like a rockery garden. So far, so good! Nothing further happened for several months when, at the end of the summer holidays, I was told to report to New Street Station with the rest of King Edward's School for evacuation to Repton in Derbyshire. After three months there all seemed peaceful and I was brought back to Birmingham to rejoin the family. I was to spend part of the next year having part time schooling at Wheelers Lane school and Kings Norton Boys' Secondary school.

One sunny afternoon in the Autumn term of 1940 I was cycling up Donkey's Hollow to Moor Green Lane and I watched a German plane fly low over Kings Heath firing its machine guns. Chipped bricks in a house at the corner of Shutlock Lane and Dad's Lane still bear witness to this attack. Worse followed in frequent night bombing raids when we spent many uncomfortable

night in the Anderson shelter. On two occasions bombs landed in our road disrupting public services and Italian prisoners of war repaired the water mains whilst we obtained our supplies from stand pipes. By day my brother and I searched Highbury Park for A.A gun shrapnel (especially bits with letters or numbers on) and fire bombs which were located by black patches left in the grass.

At this time Dad was number E601 in the Kings Heath Wartime Emergency Police and one night after he had been directed to assist his Coventry colleagues during their devastating blitz an H.E bomb landed in our front garden and demolished the front of the house - 26 Shutlock Lane. Mud and rubble fell in our shelter but we were unhurt and moved down the road to stay with Mr Stanley the Air Raid Warden at No.36. After this we moved to Cannon Hill to stay with Grandad for a while. For some days we knew nothing of Dad's whereabouts because he was helping with the Coventry casualties and he returned to find his house bombed and family missing. We were reunited and the following month, re-housed in a house with no electricity but with an indoor shelter which became our table tennis table. My brother and I started a fuel collection service for ourselves and a few elderly neighbours. We took our trollies on a regular basis to the Bournville factory premises by the railway where Cadburys piled up unwanted packing cases and timber.

The blitz continued unabated for the rest of that winter but didn't prevent me from making twice weekly trips to the Kingsway and Pavilion cinemas and adding to my shrapnel and fire bomb collection.

Ken Morris

We lived in Elmfield Crescent on the Kings Heath side of Moseley. The end of the crescent backed on to the top of the steep railway embankment above Queensbridge. We were rather too close to the railway we subsequently realised as German bombers off loaded their bombs on the tracks which gleamed in the moonlight.

My sister was thirteen and was to start at Sparkhill Commercial School. Sparkhill was considered to be in a danger area so the school was evacuated. Two days before war was declared the evacuation took place and poor Brenda was sent off with a new school to an unknown destination. She was doubly unfortunate in having a bad billet. The evacuees in her house were only allowed upstairs once a day and so, if she forgot to bring everything she needed down at breakfast time she got into trouble for not having it at school. She was very sensitive and Mother and Father did not know these things for many months. When she was ill with 'flu in her attic bedroom Mother sent 10/- (50p) for comforts but Brenda only had a ½d orange.

I fared better in those early days. On the day war was declared I felt mounting excitement mixed with foreboding. Soon after Neville Chamberlain's radio announcement the sirens sounded. The day was a lovely sunny September day with a cloudless blue sky and not a plane in sight so it did seem silly to rush in and under cover as we were bidden to do. We had to memorise our identity numbers and Mother sewed mine inside my clothes. Later we had identity bracelets and I still

have mine.

I was eleven and my school was Moseley National school at the Wake Green Road end of School Road (it is now known as St Mary's school). It was thought to be in a neutral area so did not evacuate but just shut down to avoid having too many children gathered in one place. For three weeks I went to Malvern to the aunt of the girl next door then returned home to complete freedom for several more weeks. Father did his own work during the day and became a full time A.R.P warden at night at the post in Cotton Lane. Mother got a job to do with coal rationing and I spent my days with Grandma at her shop at 110 School Road. Her shop was an Aladdin's cave. She sold silks and cottons, maid's uniforms, underwear, children's books, vanishing cream etc. There was a dolls' hospital but she also sold paraffin oil which worried my father greatly on account of the fire risk.

Preparations had to be made. Blackout curtains were, of course, essential. Tape was criss-crossed over the windows except in the front of the house where there were leaded lights. When these windows were blasted out the lead hung in twisted ribbons.

Life proceeded within the limits forced upon us. Mother was used to economising during the depression and now did wonderful things to stretch the rations. The margarine was mixed with cornflour to make it go further and she claimed extra sugar to make jam. Bananas disappeared (when they did reappear I waited in a long queue for our first taste in years. They were under ripe and a bit of a disappointment)

Mother made life easier for the shop keepers by machining round the coupons in the ration books to perforate them and make removal easier. Father bought the meat and prided himself on getting the best possible value for the ration. Cheap cuts gave us more for our 1/2d worth and every drop of dripping was saved. I remember one egg sitting in the pantry while it was decided what to do with it.

In the summer of 1940 Brenda returned home with her school because there had been no air raids but then, of course, they started. One early Autumn evening in 1940 Father took us to Sparkhill baths on our bicycles. The sirens went and we leapt out of the water and got dried and dressed in record time, fearful of being bombed with no clothes on! We emerged from the building to an almighty explosion. We lay flat on the ground then retrieved our bicycles and headed for home (uphill all the way). We rode up Anderton Park Road to School Road amid ack ack guns and search lights and then shrapnel began to fall like rain. We crouched under a privet hedge until the tinkling sounds had ceased and then gained the comparative safety of home. Mother was frantic and we never went out at night again during the months of the blitz.

I kept a tin box full of shrapnel but it rusted away. Throughout the blitz life went on and work and school continued whatever the previous night had been like. Sometimes we would be allowed to rest our heads on the desk for a while after a long raid. The longest was 13 hours and we had no electricity, no water and only a flicker of gas. We spent hours that night trying to get upstairs to the lavvy and each time we got half way up another German bomber came over and we dived back under the kitchen table. Grandma was with us that night so we were very squashed and Grandma held on to her keys all of the time.

Father had strengthened the kitchen table and hung carpets over the side for protection. This was fortunate because on Oct 26th Mother had a premonition that it was urgent that we get under cover. The three of us were under the table for the night before nine o' clock. There was a noise like an express train roaring through the house. When the crashing and roaring came to a stop there was total eerie silence. Then we heard the crying of a baby. That was the only sound. Next we heard the footsteps and voice of an A.R.P warden. I peeped out from under the table. The kitchen was brick strewn. There was no front door and I can still feel the astonishment and chill of seeing straight through from our kitchen to the distant moonlit horizon. There were no houses opposite anymore.

The warden found the baby on top of the rubble and Mother wrapped it in my dressing gown. The baby cried and could not be comforted. He was bleeding and when medical help came the baby was taken from us but died soon after. We were told not to go back into our house for fear it would collapse so we fled to School Road to where Grandma lived.

We thought about that baby because only a little girl of four lived at that house. It turned out that our neighbours had had the opportunity to spend a week-end in the country and lent their house to friends who had been bombed out. So father and baby died and mother survived. In the next house a newly married couple died. The family of the third demolished house survived in their Anderson shelter in the garden. We were told that it was two 5001b bombs chained together which caused all the damage. For many months, even years, there were clothes and rags high in the branches of the trees round about. There were quirky things like a teddy bear sitting in the forked branches of the tree outside our house and a match embedded in the hardwood door. Our guinea pigs survived but my bicycle under their cage was demolished. We could see through our roof to the sky. There was debris on my sister's bed and long shards of glass embedded in the carpet which protected the sides of our table shelter. I was frightened that there might be a body in our roof. Many years later a neighbour confided to me that he had found a hand in his kitchen sink when he cleared out the rubble. He quietly buried it so as not to upset anyone so my imagination was not far from the realms of possibility.

Father did not want us to stay at Grandma's. Although she had stopped selling paraffin oil the floor-boards were probably soaked with it and they were a serious fire risk. At night we went to relatives in Anderton Park Road but the next night an incendiary bomb set fire to their attic. Then we went to their neighbours' brand new surface shelter. They were very good and made a great fuss of us children. Mrs Goldie kissed us all as we arrived each evening which cousin Tom, aged 15, did all in his power to avoid! Mr Goldie fed us with chocolate which was wonderful for us and we never knew where he got it from. Mrs Goldie wouldn't let Mr Goldie out of the shelter unless my uncle was wearing his tin hat. When the ack ack guns started she nervously put up her coat collar. The bombs she didn't seem to mind. These happenings amused and to a certain extent took our minds off our danger and fear.

On moonlit nights there would be a smoke screen to hide the city and the atmosphere was thick and acrid as we walked home for breakfast. One night the sirens went off later than usual and we heard Big Ben on the radio and a speech by Mr Churchill. Then the National Anthem was played and we all stood up for it.

After about a month our house was temporarily patched up with sheets of tarfelt over the windows. I think the roof had the tiles put back on again instead of tarpaulin. Roof laths lay around the garden for months. We returned to sleep under our kitchen table again but the first night a stick of bombs dropped. We heard the whistling whine of the first ones each getting closer and knew that the last one may be for us. In fact it blew up in Green End Road at the back of us and blew the kitchen door in with a bang and shattered most of the remaining glass in the back of the house.

It was said that if a bomb had your name on it, it would get you - meaning if it hadn't got your name on it you would be all right. This didn't help a lot because when they were coming down you didn't know whose name was on them! In fact, one didn't hear the whistle of the bomb which was a direct hit. I used to pray each night that I would still be alive in the morning. To make sure I got superstitious about always using the same hair slide and was upset if I mislaid it. Even now I can smell the cordite and burnt timbers.

We then went to sleep nights in the cellar of the big house at the top of School Road (now Birches Close). It was Mr Young's school and we and Grandma were grateful for the safety of his cellar.

My aunt and uncle came to visit us from Stourport a few days later. They were appalled at the state of things and the way we were living and took my sister and me back with them. Brenda only stayed a week because of school but I went to school in Stourport and stated for nine months. At night when there were air raids I looked out of my window and could see the glow of the fires in Birmingham lighting up the night sky and I was thankful to be away from it all.

I sat the exam for Sparkhill Commercial school on my own in Stourport. Mercifully when it was time to start there the raids had mainly ceased.

Life revolved around coping with the black out, tighter rations, clothes coupons etc. Mother did marvelous things with food and clothes. My fast growing frame was clothed in Grandma's cut down dresses when I wasn't in school uniform. Underwear was made out of parachute silk. Elastic - or rather the lack of it - was a problem. We had new voluminous white pyjamas which were army surplus snow suits from Russia. By this time we slept in a Morrison shelter which was like a cage.

During the long summer holidays I went harvesting with the school. We camped with the teachers in bell tents at Dunnington and each day taken by lorry to pick apples, beans, plums or pack fruit into tins for canning - whatever was needed and wherever we were needed.

When we ventured out into the blackout we wore luminous chrysanthemums on our lapels. One would see luminous badges or flowers bobbing around in the dark and it helped prevent people bumping into each other in the dark. Italian prisoners of war were housed in School Road in the big Victorian houses.

Once when Mother was away I bought and cooked a huge whale steak for Father's meal. It was

dark and fishy but off coupons and he loved it. Sometimes shops ran out of paper so we often took our own for wrapping goods.

Father broke his leg later in the war. He managed to get into the house and, having gained my Girl Guide first aid badge, I put his leg in splints from thigh to foot. I used the laths which still lay around outside wrapped in newspaper, tore strips of cloth from the rag bag and tied it all neatly with reef knots. My efforts were admired by the doctor and the ambulance men and Father was taken to the hospital with my splints in place. I regret that I felt more pride in my work than sympathy for Father's misfortune.

Friends of ours who were killed in Swanshurst Lane by a bomb included a little Jewish girl refugee who they took in. The child's mother survived the concentration camps only to find that her child had died here where she was sent for safety. The memorial to them all is in the churchyard at Kingswood Unitarian Chapel in Packhorse Lane, Hollywood.

My other grandparents lived in All Saints Road and Grandpa kept a diary of every raid. He called the barrage balloon in Kings Heath park 'Bertha'. When V.E day came we had a party. We weren't the sort of road that normally had street parties but we had one that night. It was a wonderful evening with a big bonfire on the corner - no blackout any more -and we sang the evening away. Someone lit a candle in a jam jar, which was hung on the street lamp, which hadn't been lit for five years.

Rationing went on until 1954 but the war was over.

Barbara Osborne

I lived in Westfield Road but attended St John's Roman Catholic school in Mary Street Balsall Heath so when the war started the whole school including myself, my four brothers and little sister were all evacuated to Coalville in Leicestershire - not that we knew that it was Coalville until later. We went with our label and gas mask and small suitcase by tram to the railway station and then by train. When we arrived there were trestle tables inside a large shed and each of us was given a brown paper carrier bag with a tin of fruit, a tin of corned beef, a packet of biscuits, a cake and some sweets. Unfortunately it was pouring with rain so the bags soon got wet and we had to carry them as best we could in our arms. There were other schools evacuated with us and the teachers had a difficult time keeping us altogether. We then stood in the rain facing some railings behind which were adults and they pointed to a child or a couple of children they wanted. I really believed we were being sold. No one wanted a family of six so my brothers went to three different houses leaving Hetty and me. We were the last and the man organising everything gave a piece of paper with an address on it to a lad and told him to take us. We set off but he didn't want to walk in the rain so he gave me the piece of paper and told us to find it ourselves. We walked nearly two miles and came out of the town and that didn't seem right so we turned round and walked all the way back again to try and find somewhere to get out of the rain. A woman standing by a bus stop saw us crying and she took us to the house which was back the way we had come. Hetty stayed until Christmas and I stayed until February 1940 although my brothers stayed longer.

My father refused to have a shelter in the garden because he grew prize carnations and dahlias so when the bombing started my mother put a mattress in the hall and we slept on that with another mattress on top of us. On one occasion she heard a bomb coming and dived under to join us but couldn't get right under and left her bum sticking out. She wanted to know what we were laughing at but we thought it very funny that her backside could have been bombed!

We used to go to Mass at St Dunstan's church on the corner of Westfield Road and Station Road. On the night before Easter 1941 bombs dropped on the railway, the church and Grange Road. The church was not badly damaged and on Saturday morning we were getting ready to go to Mass when we heard a loud explosion. My mother rushed to see what had happened and came back to say that the church had blown up. I remember that the only thing left standing was a statue of Mary. That, now is in the new church and used in the procession at Ascension. Before the new church was built we went to the big house for Sunday school and were taught by the nuns.

I went to Uffculme Open Air school until I was 16. There were always people in the park looking at us especially on May Day when we danced round the maypole.

My brother had an accident on the railway. The fence by Highbury Road had been broken down by the bombing so he and his friends used to get through and wait for the coal wagons to come past. They had to slow down and then pick up speed to get into Kings Heath station and the lads used to jump on the wagons and have a short ride. Unfortunately he fell off and the train went over his foot and amputated the toes. The guard heard the screams and jumped off and came to him while his friends, terrified, ran off. The guard carried him to a nearby house and knocked on the door but when the lady opened the door she took one look and fainted! They got him to hospital where it was found that he also had a fractured skull and broken ribs. The guard apparently went back to the railway and found the end of the shoe with the severed toes still inside and buried it on the embankment.

I remember hearing about the High Street being dive-bombed and my mother pointed out the bullet marks in the underground lavatories in the High Street.

Betty Pace

It was in the summer of 1940 that my friend and I (both just ten years old) were deceived by two girls in my Colmore Road school class - one was certainly Margaret Cansdale and the other, may have been called Hazel Brown - into believing that a gentleman named Mr Rigby who lived in Livingstone Road or Featherstone Road was in fact, a dangerous German spy who had a secret transmitting station in a room over his garage behind the houses in the alleyway. We bought a notebook. Every afternoon on our way home from school we hid in the area and noted all movements. We had a secret pass word which was 'Riggerruggerbigger'¹ By the end of September our researches had proved that he was either an accountant or an architect whose professional office was above the garage. When we told the girls of his innocence they said that they had known it all along but thought it would be rather amusing to watch our activities. I have only recently got over this deplorable con trick -at the time I felt that no words could

adequately describe how contemptible was the behaviour of Margaret and her friend, but I now see that they really deserved congratulating for a first class deception.

At the end of October 1940 we went off to Nottinghamshire and returned home when most of the big air raids were over. I started at King Edward's in September 1941 - in short pants, of course. Shorts cost fewer clothing coupons than long so boys wore shorts until they were in middle school or even the fifth form. One of the Heatherington brothers held the record for being the oldest boy still in shorts at K.E.H.S, that is, until the sixth form.

The Junior Training Corps at K.E.H.S held an annual field day. In 1944 we were sent to defend the Lickeys against attack from an imaginary Panzer division which was moving north from the Worcester area. I was in a section comprising Sergeant Peter Iles who lived in Wheelers Lane, a radio operator whose call sign was Zebra Zebra Dog Nine Charley and seven ordinary soldiers including me. We were ordered to go to the easternmost point in our front, take up a hidden position and keep in touch by radio. We did. We lay in a grassy hollow surrounded by trees and ate sandwiches and played bridge and poker while the radio operator tried to 'keep in touch' After six hours we were informed that the Panzer division had been driven off and we returned home.

Many householders in May Lane realised the good sense of growing vegetables and we, like others, had an allotment. Three houses up the road the family Haynes decided to grow vegetables in place of lawns and flowers. They purchased a mountain of manure. They were townfolk who did not appreciate that rats might find a heap of manure warm and comfortable. When they went to take the manure for spreading they were suddenly faced with the situation - but they were equal to it. While Mr Haynes threw out great loads of manure with his fork Mrs Haynes, wielding a huge broom, exterminated the fleeing rodents. The Pied Piper was not needed and it was a stirring sight for neighbours like my father and I who watched from a bedroom window.

One day in late 1943 a boy in my form started crying in class. This was most exceptional in a class of 13/14 year old boys who were supposed not to be 'weak'. The form master asked us to return at 3.45pm and when we returned the boy was not with us. The form master told us that in 1941 his mother had received a telegram telling her that her husband had been killed in action; in 1942 she had a telegram telling her that her eldest son had been killed in action; that morning a telegram had informed her that her second son had been killed in action. Our friend, Graham, was the third son.

Half of Cocks Moor Woods golf course was ploughed up including the entire ninth fairway behind the upper part of May Lane. In the dip in the eighth hole behind the lower part of May Lane a mobile anti aircraft gun took position during the worst raids and the noise it made was as violent as many of the bombs. At the far side of the course and round the whole perimeter of Birmingham was the line of oil burning smoke stoves intended to create a smoke screen and the barrage balloons were an encouraging sight. According to my late father, who did tell some outrageous stories, when one balloon was accidentally shot down, it was torn into large sections by women to make silk knickers.

I remember the sombre mood after bombs at the top end of May Lane had resulted in casualties and the racket of the bombs falling in Warstock Lane; collecting shrapnel; food shortages (even harder just after the war), but for many children of my generation (10 - 15) there was a freedom from some restrictions. School uniforms were caps and ties with other clothing whatever could be acquired on limited clothing coupons. With parents at work and the general population almost never threatening it was possible to explore. I remember, with young friends, crossing the marshes beyond Kings Norton and, with one friend, going up Warstock Lane to the old man who, until 1944 or so, used to hire wooden rowing boats for an hour at a time on the canal. We got all the cushions in the boat wet and on our return turned them all upside down, made a hasty getaway and told no one.

I could continue indefinitely and describe situations some awful, some absurd but the poignant memories for me are simple sensory experiences - the wail of the sirens; the hurry to the shelter; the sound of the bomber engines; waiting for the big bang; the swinging searchlights; the silence after the bombers had left; the wait to see if there was a stray bomber; the grey mornings when the all clear went; feeling tired, unwashed but relieved and thinking of the day about to break as an interval between the last night and the next.

Ken Pearce

My memories of local events during the trying times of 1939 -1945 are mainly connected with my schooldays, as I was nine years old at the outbreak of war and fourteen at its end. I lived in Mossfield Road and went to Institute Road and Wheelers Lane schools.

I rememberlarge wooded obstructions erected on Billesley Common to prevent enemy aircraft landing and going there with the rest of the class to dig up potatoes as our contribution to 'Dig For Victory'

Also..... digging the ground between the air raid shelters at school for more vegetables to be planted.

And of course the teacher laughing when I told him that one of my classmates had been bombed out and gone to live with his sister in Warsaw. Even as I said it I realised there was something amiss "The Germans are in Warsaw, I thought. "I think you mean Walsall" , he said.

The nights of terror.....waking up in my Dad's arms as he carried me, blankets and all, from my bed to the Anderson shelter under the apple tree and seeing my mother in a frenzy of fear as the bombs fell and shook the ground.

Next day..... going around with my brother to survey the damage and collect shrapnel.

Evacuation..... only if I could be billeted with my school chum. The coach journey to Sutton in Ashfield, standing together among all those others in a large church hall, carrying our gas masks, wearing our labels, being selected like prize cattle, till we were the last ones left, refusing to be separated. I was horrified to hear one lady say "Mrs Bullimore will have them" We looked at each other in dismay BULLIMORE what a name! After three weeks we begged our parents to take us back as we preferred the bombs to the home sickness and the puritanical attitude of our hosts.

There is more, much morethe seemingly endless agony of silence while waiting for news of brothers caught up amid Dunkirk and the North Atlantic convoys. The dread sight of the telegram boy steering his bicycle into your road.

Yes.....I remember

Gordon Price

I was bombed out in Institute Road in October 1940. The bomb fell next door on the removal firm and destroyed the vans. our wall 'corrugated' and did not meet the roof. One thing that grieved us was that my grandmother's beautiful cut glass in the sideboard shattered while Woolworth's remained whole. There was no compensation, of course, even if we could put a price on the glass as it was considered to be a luxury item. A family in Gaddesby Road took us in and then about six weeks later we moved to Clarence Road.

The bomb damage was very odd. A terrace house in Melton Road was just 'taken out' as a dentist would remove a tooth with the houses either side not badly damaged.

My sister and I went to night school at Wheelers Lane school for shorthand and English three nights a week so we were able to go ballroom dancing on Friday for free. It was black and really black on moonless winter nights. One night there was someone smoking a cigarette in a doorway at the school. We could only see the glow so went home a different way.

On fire watching nights we used to congregate at Randall's garage in Billesley Lane. My sister and I both had tin hats. One lovely moonlit night - a real 'bombers' moon' - when the sirens had sounded and we got close together to whisper something. Our tin hats pinged and everyone ran for shelter. Mrs Randall hid behind a petrol pump! One night a German plane crashed near Earlswood Lakes with a loud explosion and we all ran for cover not knowing what the noise was.

We had been in Clarence Road for a few weeks when a bomb blew out the side of a corner house killing an elderly lady. All our windows front and back were blown out and were repaired with a waterproof white material which blew in the wind and sounded like gun fire. We got used to it but visitors got very upset.

There was a greenhouse in the garden with a wooden back and glass three sides. We found a large piece of shrapnel the size of a man's fist embedded in the wood and we were unable to move it. No windowpanes were broken so it must have come through the door

Later in the war we went to a youth club. When we got home Mother and Gran, who was a little deaf, said that our dog had been barking most of the night at the foot of the plum tree near the back door and they were too nervous to go and see what was wrong but they thought someone was hiding up the tree. We got a torch and shone it up the tree but there was no one there. We looked down at the dog who was still barking and saw that all the fuss was about a hedgehog. Being relieved we came in to tell Gran it was a hedgehog. She said "A red dog, so it wasn't our dog barking at all?"

All over 18 had to do 48 hours per month voluntary work. Dad was a special constable and did his work mostly at weekends. A friend and I joined the W.V.S; she was hoping to serve tea to the firemen in the raids but, having been bombed out, I was reluctant to do this. We were sent to a fire station in St Agnes hall in Billesley Lane to cook suppers once a week although neither of us had a clue about cooking. Fortunately there was an elderly gentleman there who supervised and he could cook. Periodically there was a 'turn out' to test how quickly the men could get to a fire. The 'fire' was at a certain point and the tele-operator was phoned and told to get the engine there as soon as possible. Someone had prior knowledge of the time of the practice and the driver

sat in his seat waiting while the men hung about in the kitchen working out the shortest distance. When the signal came the driver set off but unfortunately hadn't waited for all the men to get on so arrived with only a small crew - the authorities were not impressed!

I worked at the L.M.S (London, Midland and Scottish) railway at Lawley Street. We arrived one morning to find the office burnt out. Next day we were put on the back of a mechanical horse and transported to Sutton Park railway station where the waiting rooms were taken over by the accounting machines and we clerks worked in railway coaches on tables. When the weather was very cold we had to wait for the ink to thaw out before we could start work (no biros in those days). There was an engine chuffing away all day to provide some warmth.

A mechanical horse was a three wheeler engine which pulled a trailer to deliver goods. A tarpaulin cover was put over the trailer to keep us dry and we sat on long benches. Later we went by bus and later still by train to Sutton station when we walked on to Sutton Park.

Some of this may sound amusing but there were many sad times with the dark days of Dunkirk or when girls you worked with having brothers killed or taken prisoner.

We had virtually traffic free roads due to petrol rationing. Being young and energetic we had weekends or holidays away cycling and staying at youth hostels.

One Saturday lunchtime there was a dogfight over Kings Heath and everyone dashed for cover. On another occasion, also in the High Street, a lone plane came down and machine-gunned the street. He was so low you could see the pilot. He dropped his bombs and killed people in the Albert Road area.

Edna Rashacis

I was married in July 1938 and moved to a newly built house in Chesterwood Road. I was working in Ladywood and remember coming home one night in the black out when the sirens sounded. I went into the Kingsway picture house to wait for the all clear - they used to flash it up on the screen. As it didn't come I left the cinema and walked down to the police station where my husband was on duty. He had been called out so I walked home. When I got there I couldn't open the front door with my key so, in pitch darkness, I went round to the back and fell over piles of bricks or something. The back door was open so I thought 'burglars' and called to my neighbour who was the air raid warden but he said that bombs had dropped in Albert Road and this was blast damage. In daylight you could see that all the tiles were off the side roof and the side-wall was damaged. The front door still doesn't fit properly and has to have a piece of wood against it to keep out the draught. The people opposite cleared away the tiles as they were building a rockery so a piece of our roof is still in the garden opposite.

The second bomb dropped within six weeks at the bottom of the garden on the left-hand side next to my neighbour's shelter - fortunately she wasn't in it at the time but there is still a bottle of wine buried there. My husband and I were sheltering in the pantry with our heads under the meat safe and a piece of shrapnel came between us and is still buried in the tread of the stairs. My brother was staying with us at the time but he was in a shelter in Wheelers Lane. This time the pantry door had to be replaced plus all the windows.

My family lived in Edgbaston and I cycled home each Saturday from there and I called into Wimbush the cake shop where I overheard two women talking. One said "Isn't it a shame that No 23 has been hit again?" I said, "Which No 23?" "Chesterwood Road" she said. I cycled home not really believing it. This time the bomb had dropped again at the bottom of the garden but this time to the right. I was so stunned that I couldn't even cry. This time the house was uninhabitable and my lovely new curtains and carpets were all ruined. A lot of the furniture and most of the crockery and glass were smashed. I struggled upstairs and found, in the bath room, my neighbour's dog pressed against the side of the bath terrified out of its mind. This time we had to leave and went to Edgbaston but worse was to follow for, while we were away, looters came and took what they could even to the washing powder under the sink. My husband had managed to retrieve the dining room door from the others which were blown off, got it back on its hinges and fixed a padlock. We then removed as much as possible, including our first crop of potatoes from our new garden and locked it all up safely as we thought until we could get over again. When we came the next Saturday the only day we could manage both being at work all the week, we found the front door which we had managed to refit and lock, had been forced open and the dining room padlock removed. A lot of stuff had been taken and a lot more put ready for the next invasion including the damaged pieces of the dinner service, (another wedding gift)

We eventually received, much later, as compensation from the War DAMAGE Commission which had been set up - £250.

Six houses in Haunch Lane, whose gardens adjoined ours, were also badly damaged and condemned but much later the authorities patched them up and used them to house the girls manning the ack ack guns on Billesley Common.

My husband and I stayed in Edgbaston for six months and then moved into digs in Shirley and remained there for 3½ years until our house was made habitable.

Win Rowland

I lived in Barn Close which runs between Fordhouse Lane and the Worthings. As I recall on the occasion when the bomb hit the Horseshoe Tunnel I was in bed - time unknown. We had an Anderson shelter at the bottom of the garden but I rather think we had grown complacent to the need to take shelter and that perhaps the shelter itself was full of water. At some time the shelter had a brick wall and concrete floor installed which caused the flooding. - I used to sail my model R.M.S Queen Mary in it!!

I remember hearing the whistle and crash of three bombs each one getting nearer. The third one hit the Allenscroft Road side of the tunnel entrance killing several people. My Dad, a disabled Great War soldier - he had an artificial leg - immediately set off via Fordhouse Lane, Pineapple Bridge and Allenscroft Road to see if he could help - a true old Contemptible! By then, of course, the emergency services had arrived. Before setting off to offer help he had found time to rebuke my sister Peggy for using a cosmetic face pack in situ.

Next day I went round to view the damage which was considerable. In Farmer Reynold's field adjacent to Pineapple school was the second bomb crater with a dead bloated horse near by and the first bomb had landed somewhere near Lifford Reservoir. I have always thought that if there had been a fourth bomb it would have arrived at the top end of Barn Close judging by the line of the existing three. The date of the event I do not recall.

I had left the junior dept. of Wheelers Lane school at about nine o'clock in the evening, again date unknown, having attended a night school class or meeting, the subject of which escapes me. The sirens had just sounded the alert. I walked down Albert Road, up Howard Road, along Vicarage Road, down Fordhouse Lane and turned into Barn Close when two air craft whooshed over the roof tops accompanied by the rattle of machine guns. A few seconds later I heard the crash of an explosion, which, I believe was the result of an enemy aircraft jettisoning a bomb or bombs. Presumably this was the cause of the deaths in Albert Road and Alfred Street. Was this the same date that a plane crashed at Wythall?

As a youth of 14 - 15 years my task as part of the Barn Close community was to deliver the steel helmets, whistle, stirrup pumps and 'On Duty' notices to whoever was on evening stand by on the air raid warden's rota. When we first issued with the stirrup pump our warden in charge decided to demonstrate the use of same. He was a small and, to me, a 'cocky' sort of man. Came the demonstration:

He placed the stirrup pump in the fire bucket (also issued.) and asked a fellow volunteer to place his foot firmly on the foot of the pump and be ready to commence operating the plunger. He had placed a brick to be assumed to be an incendiary bomb at a considerable distance from the pump. He then grasped the nozzle of the hose and 'charged' at the bomb. Result: he was pulled up short and finished on his backside to many chortles from his pupils!

I worked at Maxim Press Tools which was part of Hancock's garage in Fordhouse Lane. The company, very small, had been bombed out of Summer Lane in the middle of Birmingham and located here. All of the staff with the exception of a couple of pals and myself commuted daily from Aston, Erdington etc despite the distance and travelled by tram or bus although one had a motor cycle and another an Austin 7. We all took our turn, in pairs, to stay overnight in a room with two bunks as fire watchers. It was quite cold on occasions. Eventually as the frequency of the air raids diminished fire watching died out.

Because of the black out most people carried some kind of torch when out in the hours of darkness. The supply of batteries and availability were very limited. Many of us solved the shortage as follows: At that time most radios were powered by a wet cell accumulator (which

needed re charging periodically) and in conjunction with a multi cell dry battery which eventually ran out and needed replacing. However it still had its use. We used to split the run down battery, connect and wrap some of the cells into a combination which would fit our torch or flash lamp and have sufficient power to light our way.

John Russell

In the days before the war started I remember feeling very worried when the announcer on the wireless said that German troops were advancing towards Walsall. I didn't know exactly where Walsall was but I knew it wasn't very far away so presumably the enemy would soon be with us. What frightened me most was no one else seemed at all concerned so, at last, I asked why and found that I had misheard Walsall for Warsaw and the Germans were not so close after all.

I remember the headmaster at Colmore Road School talking about evacuation and I stated categorically that no way was I going to be evacuated. I reckoned, however, without my mother who had made other plans. War was declared on Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon found me and the boy next door in Gloucester with his aunt and uncle. I was eight and he was six and Auntie Mabel and Uncle Tom, a middle aged couple with no children of their own, certainly did their bit for the war by taking us. When the expected bombing did not happen we came back - Gordon at Christmas and me at Easter.

We had an Anderson shelter in the garden fitted out with bunk beds and it became a matter of routine to pick up the suitcase containing ration books, insurance policies etc and spend the night in there. My mother used to knit skirts for me using a round pin which was easier to use than two pins. I assume we had some way of making tea but I cannot remember how. Light was by a small Tilley lamp. I certainly remember coming out of the shelter to watch the bombers going over and leaving us alone. We only knew where they were going next day - Coventry.

My grandfather was living with his son Tom in Hillfield Road Sparkhill. My aunt Floss and cousin Alan had gone to live in Hallow near Worcester. When we heard that the B.S.A had been bombed (by word of mouth as there were never any reports in the paper or on the wireless) my mother decided to go to see if Grandad and Uncle Tom were O.K. I can remember walking down Hillfield Road and one of us said that obviously they had had no bombs as there were no gaps and no windows broken. We knocked on the front door but when there was no answer went round the back. They were town houses so we had to retrace our steps and then go down the entry. I shall never forget the sight that met us and we found out why no one had answered the door. The bomb had dropped in the middle of the back gardens leaving a crater that could have hidden a double decker bus. None of the houses had any backs to them. I will never forget it because it was so unexpected after the lack of damage at the front. We immediately went to Golden Hillock Road to visit another aunt who would probably have news of Grandad and Uncle Tom. We found her with her three young children getting ready to go out. They were going to catch a tram to the outskirts of the city and sleep anywhere they could find (this was November) They had been in the public shelter next to the B.S.A and had nearly been burned to death as they were not allowed out as the factory was being bombed. She told us that Grandad and Uncle Tom had been buried in the shelter but were all right. Grandad had gone to another daughter in

Hall Green and Uncle Tom had gone to Worcester to be with his wife and son. They, in fact, never returned to Birmingham and I have very pleasant memories of going to stay there and helping with the hop picking.

My mother and her sister, who lived with us, were fire watching the night that St Dunstan's Roman Catholic church was bombed on Thursday April 10th 1941. I was with our neighbours playing Housey Housey (now called Bingo) when the bombs dropped and we dived under the table. My mother and aunt were fortunate as they were close to the church when they heard the bombs coming. One dropped on the railway in Westfield Road, one next to the church and one in Grange Road. If the bomb next to the church had exploded they would both have been killed. The next day, Good Friday, there were people in and out of the church all day and early on Saturday morning but when the bomb did go off the church was empty as Father Kelly had locked it so no one was hurt. Why the priest locked the church on the day before Easter and at a time when churches were never locked is a matter of conjecture but certainly lives were saved.

I did my bit for security on the day when my mother and I were on the Outer Circle bus going along Vicarage Road and we passed the barrage balloon site. The balloon happened to be on the ground and I was just about to poke my mother and say 'Look' when I remembered the poster of Hitler and Mussolini sitting behind people on a bus and listening in so I didn't say anything and felt very virtuous. It didn't occur to me until later that anyone not seeing that huge balloon would have had to be blind.

I have one memory of going to the Kingsway cinema during the war when my aunt took me to see Mrs Miniver. We didn't see the end, however, because I was crying so loudly that she had to take me out. I don't know whether she went back to see the end but I didn't until it was shown on television.

We registered with the Co-op in Heathfield Road and the Maypole on the High Street. The Co-op to me was a huge building and I was fascinated by the overhead system of sending the money to the little office and receiving the change back. You needed, of course, not only money but the ration books and the Co op number, still remembered today, for the precious divvy. We also had coal from the Co op and made it go further by filling two tin cans with slack and putting them at the back of the fire so needing less coal. As we all took sugar in our tea we saved a little by putting a couple of saccharines and a spoonful of sugar in the tea pot so all had the same amount.

I think, like most people, I hated the gas mask most. When going to Junior school in the skipping season it wasn't possible to skip along with a gas mask box on your back so it meant stopping which was very irritating. I hated most, however, having to wear them for practice or when they were tested. It was not only the smell but it was a reminder of terrifying visits to the dentist at the school clinic to have a tooth out when gas was used.

We had a bonfire in the street on V.E. night and some one brought out a piano so we danced - most unusual behaviour for our usually staid road.

Margaret Shepherd

I was aged 8½ in September 1939 and lived at Alcester Lanes End. I stayed at home during the war while many other children were evacuated to safer areas.

I think I can remember the famous broadcast telling us we were at war with Germany. I can certainly remember that various neighbours were crying outside their homes. No doubt they knew the dangers that would threaten the lives of their menfolk although probably not the dangers that would extend in this war to themselves, their homes and their children.

We were issued with gas masks which were fitted at the local A.R.P. post and given an identity number and identity card. My number was QBTT 251/4. We were required to 'register' with a grocer and butcher who would then supply our basic rations. Other items were available on a points system. My family was registered at the Co op grocer at Alcester Lanes End. There were also George Mason and Wrenson grocers in the small shopping area. The Co-op had an overhead system whereby the bill and cash travelled on a wire to the office and the change and receipt were returned. Sugar was packed in blue paper bags. Meat was rationed by price, at one time is 2d per person (about 6p) plus 2d corned beef. Offal was not rationed and sold at the discretion of the butcher. Cooked meat of any kind was sought after and I spent many hours in queues. There was very little variety in cakes and one could queue for hours for deliveries which did not arrive. The butter ration for one person was 2oz per week. Our family butter ration was mixed with an equal amount of margarine and some milk to make it go further. I hated this mix so much that I had my 2oz kept separate and had to make it last for the whole week. The Co op also delivered our daily milk and bread and coal ration. These came by horse and cart and it was therefore safe for us to play cricket and other games in the road.

We lived in a Bournville Trust house where many of our neighbours were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and would not be prepared to fight or kill. Some joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit and worked in or near the war zones but others were imprisoned for refusing to join the forces. They registered as Conscientious Objectors and when released suffered great hardship for their beliefs. They were allowed to earn a very small wage compared with other workers and were unpopular with many people who felt they were cowards or even traitors.

We went to school - Colmore Road - for half a day. The school railings had been taken away to assist the 'war effort.' We ALWAYS had to carry our gas masks and from time to time had air raid drill when we filed into the brick shelters which had been built in the playground. We sat on slat benches and practised wearing our gas masks. We had small tins of Horlicks tablets in case we were caught in a raid unable to get home.

In the evenings we waited for the air raid siren to sound and then trooped to the end of the back garden carrying our documents and valuables and into the Anderson shelter which was furnished with bunks, duck boards, candles and emergency food supplies. I slept there unless there was a lot of noise from the raid or the ack ack guns. Sometimes I was left there until morning having missed the All Clear. Although there was a concrete floor and some lining the shelter was always damp and after rain had water under the duckboards.

My first memory of action, like many other locals, is the early day time raid on Kings Heath. I heard the planes flying low followed by a lot of noise. This was the raid on Alfred Street and there was some machine gunning in the area. It brought the war to us and was very frightening for many. When the raids were at their height we children would collect shrapnel and/or bomb fragments in the morning. I had a collection which included a burned out incendiary bomb which had fallen in our garden. Had it lodged on the roof it could have caused a fire and the demolition of the house. Our nearest bombs were a stick of three in line falling at Woodthorpe Road, Appian Close and Livingstone Road corner. I do not think they caused any loss of life but the damage to roofs and windows was extensive and I do remember the noise and vibrations which blew open our own wooden door on the shelter and the sound of breaking glass. Adults were required to do shifts of fire watching after work and many were injured doing their duty. We all practised with stirrup pumps and buckets of water and learned where buckets of sand were situated.

In September 1941 I went to Camp Hill school. We travelled by tram unless the lines had been damaged. The school, with a railway line on its boundary, was damaged several times and the roof leaked constantly. Many of the classrooms were damaged and not usable and most of the pupils were evacuated to Lichfield. I left in 1947 and there were even then buckets to catch the rain which still poured in. Our games field had been bombed and then turned into allotments. School dinners were delivered from the British Restaurant on Moseley Road (I have only recently been able to eat swede again and still don't eat beetroot.)

At home our four chickens thrived, given names and ate up all the household scraps. I managed to be out every time one was killed but can't remember whether I enjoyed the chicken lunch. The greenhouse in the garden was dismantled because of the danger of broken glass and gardening was extended to an allotment in Brandwood End Cemetery where we grew mostly vegetables but also some flowers and we gathered blackberries to make precious jam. On good days I roamed the fields with friends between Woodthorpe Road and Broad Lane - now the Sunderton Road area. The wild flowers were beautiful particularly the cowslips. We walked Bells Lane and Druids Lane and were in the countryside. I had a bicycle when I was twelve. It was new, shiny, utility and black. It was heavy but strong and I rode it until I was twenty-five. The consumer goods for sale were mostly utility and this limited the amount of materials, colour, thickness of wood etc. They were the opposite of luxury but basically sound and strong. Some of the furniture is still around (in my home anyway where nothing gets thrown out.)

One of the slogans of the time was 'Make Do and Mend' and most people learned to turn sheets side to middle when they got worn. Skirts could be unpicked and made up again in reverse and two dresses could be made into one when they were past their best. Jumpers were unpicked and re-knitted and shirts had new collars from the tails.

School cookery lessons were unbelievable. We made blancmange with cocoa and flour, which I remember abandoning, unset, in the fire buckets in Lewis's. I still have my school cookery book with a recipe for Cod Liver Oil cake. Eggless sponge was solid and much of the teaching, theory. Maybe that accounts for my school certificate pass.

We listened daily to the wireless for news of the war. I believe this was at six o'clock and was

preceded by half an hour of Henry Hall and his orchestra to which you could sing along to the tunes of the day.

I had nothing really exciting happen to me. It was a childhood very similar to many others of the time. We knew people who were killed in the air raids and knew men reported dead or missing in the forces and others reported prisoners in Germany or Japan. We enjoyed ourselves as most children and played with whatever toys were available and for the most part we could wander safely in Kings Heath park, Billesley Common, the private park or the fields at or past the Maypole. We learned to accept all the changes without too many problems; conductresses on trams; women in uniform; black out restrictions; rationed sweets; broken sleep; outgrown clothes. As all of these were the same for all of us we easily accepted them. No doubt our mothers had many more problems.

Noreen Stacey

We didn't move up to live in Birmingham, having previously resided in London, until about 1940/41 when I was nine years of age. We lived in Yardley Wood Road almost opposite Cold Bath farm at the junction of Yardley Wood Road and Windermere Road. Cold Bath farm was owned by Mr and Mrs Woodward and they used to supply us with milk. The man who supplied the milk was in their employ and used to deliver it by horse and cart, the cart being a two wheeled contraption, large wheels single axle with the milkman standing on the back flap which was all running board which was dropped down and held by chains. His weight balanced the churns of milk which were at the front of the cart. My mother would go out to the cart or the milkman would sometimes deliver it to us. If we had got a jug the milk used to be ladled out by a measure which appeared to be made of galvanised steel and there were two of these per pint so it was a pint measure. If the milkman's back was turned it was quite likely that the horse pulling the cart would amble off across the road and knock over a swill bin which was placed on the grass verge opposite and start eating the contents. Big swill bins were placed at various places along the road and into the bin one could put kitchen scraps like potatoes which then could be processed for pig swill. The road carried quite an appreciable amount of traffic by 1940's standards and it was a bus route. This horse half up on the grass verge with its cart behind caused quite a bit of consternation for drivers of cars and buses alike. Near where the bin was placed was a bus stop with the top disc removed. This was often done during the war. Less important bus stops were removed from service so that the service could be speeded up and in theory save fuel.

Opposite where we lived was Moseley golf course but during the war there were no golfers. Golf was an impossibility because corn was grown on the whole of the course as far as I could see. Just adjacent to one corner of the golf course was a cricket pitch which I believe is now part of Moseley Ashfield Cricket Club. This was behind Cold Bath farm and in one corner was a barrage balloon site. It seemed a pretty lonely posting for the personnel who were ordered to maintain the balloon. I can't remember how many R.A.F were there or whether they remained there permanently but there was a stack of cylinders containing presumably hydrogen placed on the site which were used to inflate the balloons. All balloons over Birmingham would be up or all down at the same time.

Windermere Road was more like a lane. It was popular after dark with courting couples, of course, and in it were a couple of small houses. One could hardly be called a cottage as it was so small. It looked as if it only had one room downstairs with a central front door and two small bedrooms upstairs. I don't think they were supplied with electricity. Certainly the smaller of the two after the end of the war when the black out restrictions had been lifted, if I cycled home that way trying out my dynamo set on my bicycle from Scouts I could see oil lamps alight in the window of this cottage and at the other larger cottage.

Windermere Road had a sharp right angled bend in it and on that bend the B.S.A motorcycle test riders would stop and make notes on motor cycles which were painted khaki and obviously destined for military use before taking them back to the factory in Small Heath. On occasions one would hear the rat - a - tat - tat of machine guns which were being tested also in the direction of Small Heath.

We didn't have many air raids as the worst of the bombing was over by the time we arrived in Birmingham. I was attending College Road School and I can't remember very many occasions when our lessons were disturbed and we had to move off into the air raid shelters which had been built in the playground. They were brick structures with flat concrete tops as far as I recall. We didn't have an Anderson shelter at our house in the garden but had a Morrison shelter in the living room. This was also supplied by the authorities and it was a steel structure which must have weighed half a ton and it was built like a large table. It was iron girder construction and the base was reinforced as well as the top so its legs stood on a steel base made up of right angled material and on the top was screwed a very large substantial sheet of steel. It came as a kit with nuts and bolts and a spanner. The base was sprung with laths so when an air raid was on one could sit under this thing without getting a numb behind. It also had wire mesh sides which could be slipped on after one got underneath this shelter but my mother used to feel claustrophobic with these mesh sides and decided she would sooner have them off. It was used as a dining room table and it must have been all of 4ft 6 wide by 10ft long but fortunately we had rather a large room so it doubled as a dining room quite nicely. At Christmas when we had friends or relatives to stay we could all sit round this table quite easily. As I say it weighed half a ton as far as I can tell. Once it was assembled it was virtually impossible to move it.

At school we were never allowed to forget National Savings. There would be a competition run in the juniors each week to see which class could buy the most National Savings Certificates which I believe were 15/- (75p) You were issued with little books and into these books one used to stick 6d stamps which were special. After one had acquired the correct amount of money one was issued with a certificate. The class which had bought the most certificates was issued with a banner at Assembly and this was hung up at the front of the class with a hook adjacent to the blackboard which was part of the wall, not the blackboard which was on an easel but the wall blackboard and was displayed proudly for the whole week.

There were various special weeks for collecting National Savings nationally - Soldier Week; Merchant Navy week; Wings for Victory Week, where there would be various military parades with bands playing and people watching the soldiers march down the centre of Stratford Road, for instance, through Sparkhill. The people on parade would be full time soldiers stationed locally or voluntary groups like the Home Guard. There were maybe cadet forces also taking

part in these parades. It all helped morale and focussed attention.

Food was, of course, rationed and one of my memories was going on errands for my mother and queuing up for what seemed like an interminable period for a young 9 or 10 year old for things like oranges. Bananas were non-existent. They were not imported at all during the war.

Public transport, of course, was used much more than it is today and in Birmingham this meant buses or trams. Some buses didn't carry the blue and yellow livery but were painted grey. The roofs of all double deckers and single deckers were camouflaged. At night some of the buses were not parked in Yardley Wood garage but were parked down Yardley Wood Road towards Haunch Lane adjacent to every lamp standard. There would be cables coming out of the lamp standards and under the bonnet of the buses and one assumed that the batteries were being charged overnight. The Hockley bus depot had been hit by bombs and one or two buses lost. There were no new buses, of course, and utility buses came along much later in the war when some of the buses had really become rather worn out. The old A.E.C Regents were still in use apart from the Daimlers with the Gardiner engines which were more modern. The old A.E.C Regents, petrol buses with an auto-vac, hadn't got so much power. I remember on one occasion one of these old Regents couldn't get up Hill Street with a full load. The driver did his best and started and stalled after a few feet. Of course the passengers got a bit impatient and as it was nearing the centre of B'ham and most people had almost reached their destination they started getting off which solved the problem in no time at all as far as the driver was concerned.

The railway line from Moseley to Kings Heath was very heavily used although the passenger service had been taken off very early in the war, about 1941, and never restored. The line was a goods line linking the North East with the South West. Moseley village was quite a good spot for train spotting because quite often they were banked from Saltley up to Kings Heath so when the train went past not only could you get the number of the engine pulling but also the engine at the back pushing. There were occasions when there was so much traffic on the line and they wanted to move trains up the incline as fast as possible you would get two trains with a banker behind the second train so you would get engine trucks engine trucks engine all coming through on one set of signals. There would be a little siding adjacent to the signal box at Kings Heath which is very near the road bridge and two or three of these banking engines would be parked there, coupled together, and then would go down to Saltley to do another turn.

On the Stratford Road the Midland Red route between Stratford and Birmingham used to use old London buses. These were the type with outside stairs. The Midland Red and London transport red were almost identical in colour. Whether they had Midland Red on the sides or not I don't know - they probably didn't. It would have given the enemy a clue as to where they had landed if they had dropped by parachute. All road signs and other signs which indicated where you were, were either painted over or removed altogether which meant if you did have to venture to another part of the country you used to have to ask your way a lot.

At the end of the war when the Home Guard disbanded they used the field adjacent to Windermere Road and the Pickwick Courts to stand down. Part of Swanshurst Park contained ack ack guns. They were sent into the hillside and fired out towards Hall Green. My father said that they were naval guns and they didn't look as if they had much of an elevation. One could

imagine they were used to stop enemy aircraft running in from a southerly direction to bomb the Rover works or that area of Acocks Green and Solihull. In Solihull down Streetsbrook Road there were canisters put on the grass verge which could be used to create a smoke screen but I don't think they were ever used. When these guns in Swanshurst Park went off we were living half a mile away but they really shook the house. Some windows had leaded lights and I often think if they weren't made of leaded light you could imagine some of the panes cracking. I don't remember seeing any enemy action in the sky all the time I lived in Birmingham.

At the end of the war there was a Victory bus and a Victory tram with coloured lights and decorations which circulated the routes. I remember seeing the Victory bus which would circle round the Outer Circle route when people who were at work could see it.

Douglas Taylor

In 1939 I was ten years old and lived in May Lane. I can remember we all listened to the news bulletin announcing that we were at war and afterwards my sister and I went for a walk up May Lane with our dolls' prams and on coming home remarked to Mom and Dad that we hadn't had an air raid yet which we thought strange!

I went to Highters Heath school which was taken over as a first aid post so for a short time we didn't go to school but it was soon fixed that we shared Yardley Wood school buildings and you went either morning or afternoon. I'm not sure which we did but it was half time schooling anyway. This must have been for about a year and then I went on to Kings Norton Grammar school.

We had an Anderson shelter in the garden - I can remember Dad digging out the hole and then having erected it piling all the soil back on top. I well remember the panic the first night we heard the air raid sirens and the scrambling down to the shelter in the dark trying not to forget to bring day time clothes with you in case the house was bombed and you were left with only night clothes. After a while we got it quite organised - it was just the first time we were so panicky. Dad had fixed us up with bunks so we were fairly cosy but being on clay soil we found that water started to lie in the shelter and Dad had to fix up duck boards to keep us out of it. We used the shelter quite a lot at first until a heavy snowfall - I'm not sure when that was but Mother decided she had had enough of the shelter and we risked having beds in our front room downstairs and just hoped for the best. The most frightening was one evening when Dad had only just come home for dinner we all dived suddenly into the pantry under the stairs which was considered the safest place in the house - that was the bomb that fell in Wheelers Lane. When we went on Saturday morning to shop in Kings Heath we saw where the houses were damaged terribly in Wheelers Lane and it came as a horrible shock.

Our school in Kings Norton could be evacuated to Loughborough and some people went but we decided we would rather stay together so I was not an evacuee. The thing I most disliked was the thought of wearing a gas mask - we had to practise getting it out quickly and putting it on and for years afterwards I couldn't bear the smell of rubber.

Dad had been in the first world war and was slightly gassed and was left with a dreadful cough so I suppose he probably wouldn't have been called up for the army - or he may have been too old -he wasn't called up anyway but he was in the National Fire Service and, at first, although we only lived in May Lane he was stationed at one of the big houses in Alcester Road and was supposed to go into lodgings somewhere near the station. This caused great indignation and I don't remember him going into lodgings so it must have been sorted out. I don't remember how often he had to be on duty but I do remember that he also had to do fire watching at work which was Hughs' biscuit factory in Adderly Park Road so there must have been a rota. Hughs' was finally burned down and I suppose that the bombs set it on fire and I can remember Dad coming home during the morning and saying they had been hit - the fire wasn't finally put out for three days as the sugar burnt very fiercely apparently. After a time arrangements were made with a biscuit factory in Leicester to share their premises and so Dad had to go and live there. He lodged with two nice ladies called the Miss Greens and they invited Mother and Audrey, my sister, and I over for a holiday and the time we went must have been shortly after the terrible Coventry raid because we saw the awful damage as we passed by on the bus.

My granny lived in Catshill and we always went down in the summer holidays for at least two weeks to stay with her. It gave me a lasting love of the country and I so enjoyed it down there. However, Mother was always worried that Granny should be bombed because she felt that she was right in the path of the bombers of the Austin which she felt sure would be a target and she persuaded Granny to return home with us after one of our summer holidays. Imagine the horror when we got off the 18A bus in Haunch Lane to discover a crater in the road which had happened in our absence. Granny insisted on going back home needless to say - that was the first sight she had had of bombing.

We were most excited the first time we saw a barrage balloon in the sky. It seemed to be over Hall Green way but, of course, we had one actually in Haunch Lane near the Tudor cinema. I think the noise of the guns firing from the top of Billesley Common and Swanshurst Park were the greatest noises we heard. We only had one piece of shrapnel come through our coal house roof so we got away very lightly.

I think wheat was grown on the higher part of Billesley Common as part of the war effort and Dad grew as many things in the garden as possible for us to eat. We also had a cockerel which we kept in our summer house at the very top of the garden and fattened him up for Christmas.

Working at the biscuit factory Dad was allowed to buy broken biscuits at their tuck shop and these we were able to share with friends. He could also get chocolate covered marshmallows - again they had to be damaged but nevertheless were most welcome but even so it has left me with a dislike for any biscuits that are broken.

It must have been very difficult for our parents trying to feed us properly on rations. I cannot remember ever feeling we were not having enough to eat but we had to make cakes using dried egg and dried milk. Mother would buy large jars of stuff called Radio Malt to try to give us a little extra. I thought it was absolutely lovely - just like toffee. I certainly remember having chilblains and I don't know whether they could have been caused by not quite enough good food. I expect our parents found life very hard but as children I don't remember ever feeling terribly

worried or frightened and we just accepted life as it was. I certainly realised we were lucky not to be nearer the B.S.A or some other target. My other granny lived in Selly Oak and I was visiting her and heard two of my uncles talking about the B.S.A being bombed and how lucky we were not to have been there on the night when the bombs hit - lots of people died and some of it had to be sealed over as it was impossible to get the bodies out.

Probably Mum's first hard job of the war was buying and making all the black out curtains for the windows. It must have been a terrible big task and after the war we had lots of black material about which had been used for blacking out the windows. We all had torches for if we were going out at night for I suppose the streets must have been dark but our little torches were most reliable and much more so than many a one I have bought since.

At the back of our house was Cocks Moor golf course and during the war sheep grazed on it. Until then the woods were well known bluebell woods and people would pass our garden with large bunches of them and often you would find bunches dropped in Warstock Lane but the sheep stopped all that and ate the bulbs and it has only been in the last few years that they have started to make a slight comeback. Another casualty of the war was the rookery. There would be hundreds in the sky above the trees on the golf course - even my granny as a country woman was amazed at the sight. They would circle then settle in the trees but not stay until they had risen and circled for three times and then they would settle for the night. After the war there was no sign of them so maybe the guns frightened them away but we all felt sad about it.

Those of at Kings Norton who had a bus journey home were given an address of a parent who lived near to the school to whose house we were to go in the event of something stopping us going home after school such as an air raid. Mother and I had to go to the lady's house, she lived in Maryvale Road, to meet her and get to know how to find her if needed but luckily we never did need to do this. The buses were very crowded coming home from school and it was difficult to get on the first to come and you knew there would be about twenty minutes to wait for the next. Sometimes a friend and I would walk although it was quite a long way but we preferred it to waiting. I remember occasionally having to get off the bus and walk up Parson's Hill because the bus was running on a gas cylinder and he hadn't the power fully laden to make it to the top.

Mother didn't have to do war work but she certainly attended some courses and the one which impressed me most was that they had to go into a room with gas in it and had to learn what to do in that emergency. I remember all the tops of the letter boxes being painted a kind of mustard colour which was supposed to change colour should there be gas about but luckily again we had no gas attacks.

We did, for a few months, have a family come to live with us who had been bombed out of their home but eventually they managed to find somewhere else.

Anderson shelters, I am sure, saved many lives and ours is still in the garden at May Lane. Dad dug it out and re erected it at the top of the garden for a shed and it is still being used as such and is probably our greatest reminder of the war.

Brenda Unwin

I was married the day before war broke out and we moved to our new house in Chanston Road off Broad Lane. The mattress had been delivered but not the bed or the rest of the furniture suite so for some time we had to sleep on the mattress on the floor. My husband was a wood worker and he was sent to the Austin to help build planes as some parts were of wood. He was eventually called up and was killed at Arnhem.

I, too, was called up and had a choice of nursing, factory work or one of the services. As I had a home I selected factory work. Myself and another girl arrived at a place at the factory centre in Kings Norton but the foreman was not very impressed with women workers. When I asked where I should hang my coat he said, "What do you think this is - the bloody Ritz?" He put us at a bench with pieces of metal and a file and told us to start filing. Neither of us knew which bit to file so when he came back and found we'd done nothing he was even less impressed "I thought Grammar school girls were supposed to be bloody intelligent but you haven't the sense you were born with." I stayed two days.

Then I went as a nurse/carer at Monyhull Hospital. The residents were divided into houses but two houses had been closed and the occupants distributed to others so that the empty buildings could be used in the event of a gas attack. Fortunately they were never needed. I wore a uniform of a blue skirt, white blouse and a clean apron every day - they were washed in the hospital laundry. Many girls were there because they had had illegitimate babies but others needed constant care. They slept in long dormitories and the heating was a coal fire. There was a small kitchen but the main meals were cooked in the big kitchens and brought round to the houses.

When my husband was killed I was, as a war widow, allowed to choose my occupation and I went to work at Kings Heath library.

There was a pool at the top of the road, now filled in, and I remember on one occasion that meat carcasses were dumped there and the blood ran down the gutter. Where they came from I don't know.

On another occasion I was working in the garden when a plane came over so low that I could not only see the swastika and the plane's number but also the pilot with his helmet. I knew it was a German before I saw it because of the distinctive noise the engine made. He machine gunned the area and then flew on and could have been the same plane that bombed Albert Road. I often wondered what he was doing on his own and was he really shooting at a woman working in her garden?

One of the worst parts of the bombing was that my husband used to cycle to the Austin and if the sirens went after he had gone I had no way of knowing whether he was O.K as, of course, we were not on the phone.

There was a barrage balloon on the piece of waste ground on the corner of Broad Lane and Alcester Road.

Olive Vincent

We lived in the Worthings and went to Pineapple school. We were evacuated with the school to Astwood Bank, which we thought was miles and miles away. We went from Lifford Lane station clutching our gas masks and a bag containing some clothes. When nothing happened in the way of bombing we came back home just in time for it!

Although we had a shelter in the garden we preferred to go to the Horseshoe shelter under the tunnel when the sirens sounded. The authorities had blocked off each end but put a small door in so that people could still use it as a short cut. Three tier bunks had been put in and Elsan type lavatories and we took our own sheets and blankets. We had hot chocolate provided by Cadbury's and the men brought their beer.

The night the bomb dropped we were all in bed and our sister Evelyn decided to go to the lavatory which was at the Allens Croft Road end. There was a queue so she came back. This was fortunate as the bomb rolled down the embankment and exploded at the lavatory end. I remember the screaming and looking up and seeing the stars through the shattered roof. I also remember the thick dust which made all of us choke. Everyone rushed to get out and my mother made us wait as we could have been killed in the stampede. All those who lived in Allenscroft Road had to walk up to the top of Fordhouse and down again to get home. The bodies were laid out under blankets.

An uncle and aunt lived in Alfred Street and my aunt went to the little shop but had forgooten her purse and returned home for it. Unfortunately, the street was bombed and she was killed. Her name was Kathleen Powell.

I remember one time we heard the siren and got up out of bed to go to the shelter only to find it was the all clear and we had slept through the raid!

There was a barracks in Brandwood Road and during the raids you could hear the ack ack gun. When we went to dances later in the war we had to dance round it.

Jean White and Joan Whitlock

Casualties in Kings Heath, Billesley and Moseley 1940 – 1941

August 1940

Alice Smart	67	5, Park Road	26 th
William Smart	69	5, Park Road	26 th
Muriel Smart	36	5, Park Road	26 th
Gertrude Walker	36	123, Russell Road	27 th
Henry Waldron	65	27, Wheelers Lane	29 th

September 1940

Leonard Andrews	38	5, Park Road (died)	9 th
Selina Calder	68	88, Effingham Road	16 th
Harold Barrow	28	31, Alfred Street	27 th
Ada Batchelor	38	3, Alfred Street	27 th
George Batchelor	47	3, Alfred Street	27 th
Barbara Batchelor	6	3, Alfred Street	27 th
Beatrice Parker	50	2, Alfred Street	27 th
Philip Parker	53	2, Alfred Street	27 th
Kathleen Powell	42	23, Alfred Street	27 th
Martha Parkes	68	29, Alfred Street	27 th
Charles Bullock	65	74, Wheelers Lane	27 th
Mary Bullock	65	74, Wheelers Lane	27 th
Olive Bullock	34	74, Wheelers Lane	27 th

October 1940

Peter Osborne	4	264, Moor Green Lane	24 th
Winifred Osborne	35	264, Moor Green Lane	24 th
Lily Bell	44	262, Moor Green Lane	24 th
Reginald Skinner	49	185, Trittiford Rd (at Greys)	24 th
Vidah Bayley	31	46, Mayfield Road (at Carlton cinema)	25 th
William Bayley	32	46, Mayfield Road (at Carlton cinema)	25 th
John Lewis	63	1, Dad's Lane (at Kent St baths)	26 th
Cyril Malvern	33	143, Woodthorpe Road (in town)	26 th
Arthur Wainwright	30	11, Chesterwood Road(at Elmfield Crescent)	26 th
Brian Wainwright	11 months	As above (died Selly Oak)	27 th
George Sheffield	25	41, Elmfield Crescent	26 th
Ida Sheffield	26	41, Elmfield Crescent	26 th
Esme Alderton	28	22, Woodville Road	28 th
Lizzie Alderton	60	22, Woodville Road	28 th
Frederick Inns	83	6, Ashfield Road	28 th
Mabel Pugh	34	6, Ashfield Road	28 th

November 1940

Dorcas Banner	39	51, Edgbaston Road	9th
Hilda Banner	35	51, Edgbaston Road	9th
William Banner	69	51, Edgbaston Road	9th
Dorcas Banner	72	51, Edgbaston Road	9th
Marjorie Edge	19	20, Balaclava Road	19th
William Minor	58	37, York Road (at B.S.A)	19th
Harry Hall	26	25, Appian Close (at B.S.A)	19th
Alfred Kirk	44	7, Pineapple Road (at B.S.A)	19th
Joan Ball	22	58, Yardley Wood Rd (at B.S.A)	19th
Ida Fletcher	59	88, Wake Green Road	19th
John Fletcher	59	88, Wake Green Road	19th
Joan Fletcher	29	88, Wake Green Road	19th
Constance Mapp	19	88, Wake Green Road	19th
Kathleen Kelway	11	137, Woodthorpe Road	22nd
Annie Shutt	58	104, Westfield Road	22nd
John Shutt	59	104, Westfield Road	22nd
Brian Tulk	9	106, Westfield Road	22nd
Fred Tulk	50	106, Westfield Road	22nd
Lorna Shepherd	12	110, Yardley Wood Road	22nd
Thomas Shepherd	46	110, Yardley Wood Road	22nd
Dorothy Shepherd	49	110, Yardley Wood Road	22nd
Elsie Ball	52	47, Willows Road	22nd
George Thomas	37	65, Woodville Road	23rd
William Turner	57	Monyhull Cottages	28th
Frank Wood	39	86, Maypole Lane (at Monyhull)	28th
Charles Davies	33	40, Shirley Road (at Monyhull)	28 th

December 1940

William York	73	22, Westfield Road	3 rd
Annie Evans	39	12, Vimy Road	3 rd
Harry Evans	42	12, Vimy Road	3 rd
Pat Evans	11	12, Vimy Road	3 rd
William Hudson	34	12, Vimy Road	3 rd
May Rea	44	12, Vimy Road	3 rd
Norman Rea	53	12, Vimy Road	3 rd
Anne Jenson	10	165, Swanshurst Lane	11 th
Phillip Jenson	12	165, Swanshurst Lane	11 th
Clarice Jenson	47	165, Swanshurst Lane	11 th
Norah Turvey	50	165, Swanshurst Lane	11 th

Lily Knight	58	167, Swanshurst Lane	11 th
Clara Lloyd	69	167, Swanshurst Lane	11 th
Lewis Lloyd	70	167, Swanshurst Lane (died 21 st January 1941)	
Rene Lloyd	34	167, Swanshurst Lane	11 th
Suzanne Marburgh	5	167, Swanshurst Lane (Czech refugee from Prague)	11 th
Mabel Upton	58	118, Swanshurst Lane (died at 167)	11 th
Harry Smith	55	23, Capcroft Road	11 th
Hilary Smith	5	23, Capcroft Road	11 th
Florence Elliott	63	68, Oxford Road	11 th
Angela Piccioni	6	68, Oxford Road	11 th
Doris Piccioni	36	68, Oxford Road (mother of Angela)	11 th
Gina Piccioni	6	68, Oxford Road	11 th
Phyllis Piccioni	46	68, Oxford Road (mother of Gina)	11 th
Phyllis Waldron	18	68, Oxford Road	11 th
William Watson	19	68, Oxford Road	11 th

April 1941

Ellen Bowyer	72	136, Grange Road	9 th
John Bowyer	78	136, Grange Road	9 th
Rosetta Seaton	75	136, Grange Road	9 th
Harriet Stuckey	63	130, Grange Road	9 th
Adrian Nel	30	113, Westfield Road (at Elliott's)	9 th

All of the following killed in the Horseshoe Tunnel:

Bertram Battista	37	13, Dawberry Road	9 th
Kathleen Hollyoak	18	13, Dawberry Road	9 th
John Bridgewater	48	56, Allenscroft Road	9 th
William Endean	56	52, Allenscroft Road	9 th
Thomas Giles	43	11, Fawley Grove	9 th
Reginald Hands	17	54, Waldron's Moor	9 th
Alice Orme	15	11, Dawberry Road	9 th
Thomas Orme	18	11, Dawberry Road	9 th
Albert Purshouse	39	32, Dawberry Road	9 th
Felix Sallis	48	81, Allenscroft Road	9 th
Joseph Shepherd	23	54, Allenscroft Road	9 th

Eric Casey	34	109, Marsham Road (at Nechell's Power Station)	10 th
David White	27	73, Barn Lane (at Selly Oak hospital)	10 th
Norman Whitworth	26	347, Fordhouse Lane (at Lewis' casualty station)	10 th

July 1942

John Allum	54	33, Ashfield Road (at Humphage Road)	28 th
Ernest Williams	52	103, Pineapple Road	28 th
Beryl Chare	42	23, Wold Walk (N.F.S telephonist at Leonard Road)	28 th
Edith Appleton	51	20, Amesbury Road	28 th
John Harris	69	20, Amesbury Road	28 th
Marianne Harris	66	20, Amesbury Road	28 th



A new use for an old Anderson shelter!



Anderson Shelter. "If you know a better'ole, go to it"

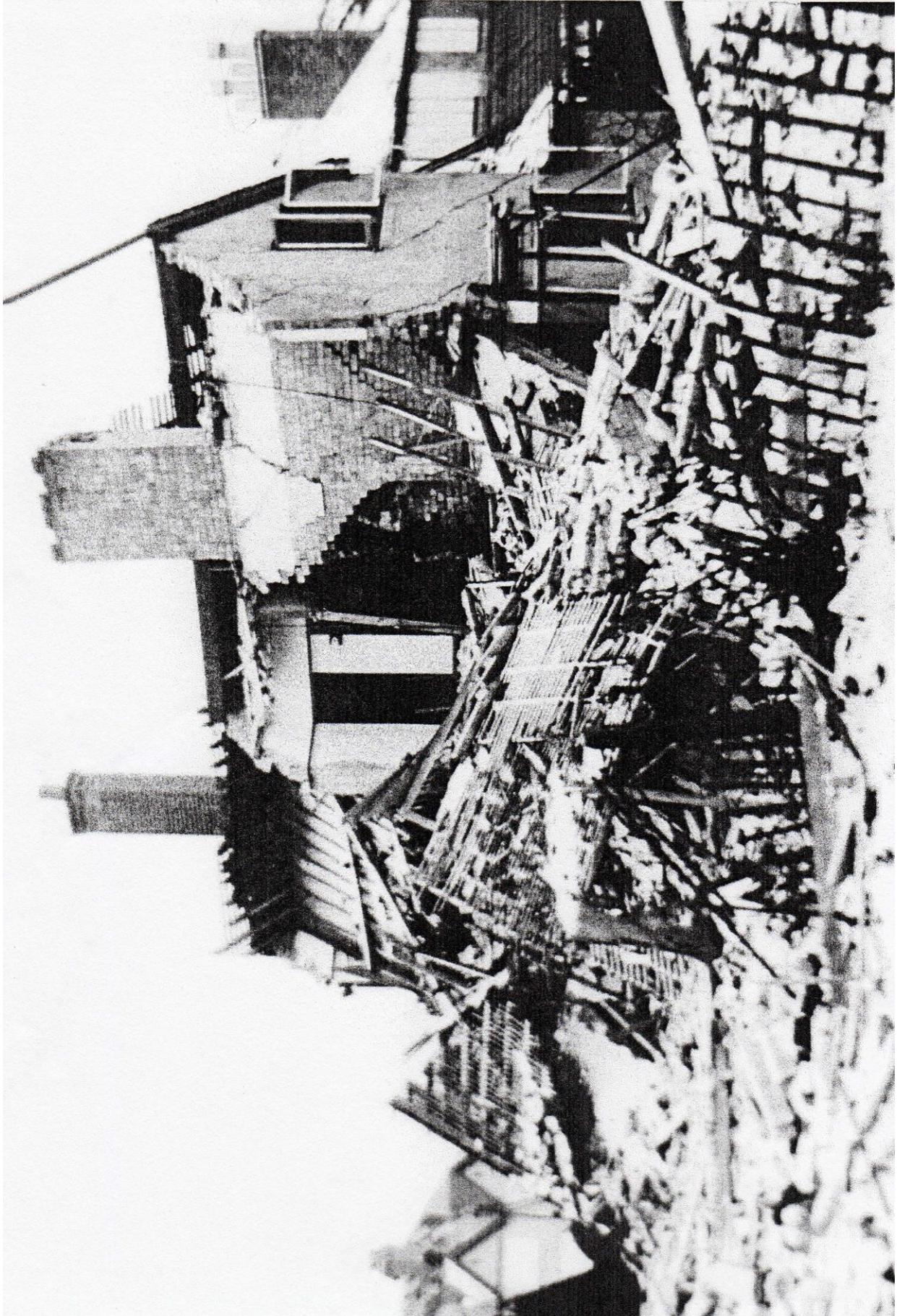


"Horseshoe" Tunnel 1998

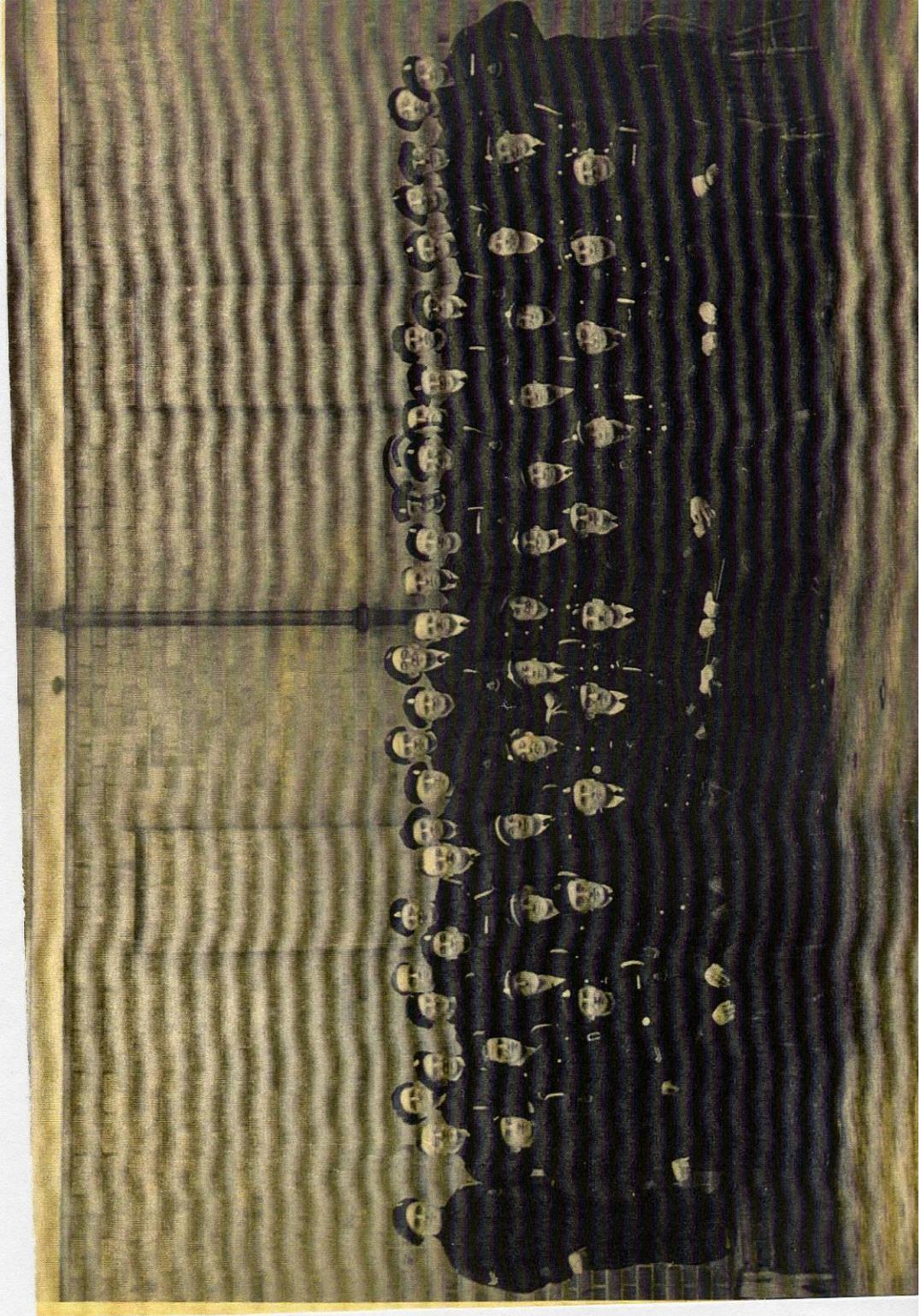


Ashfield Road

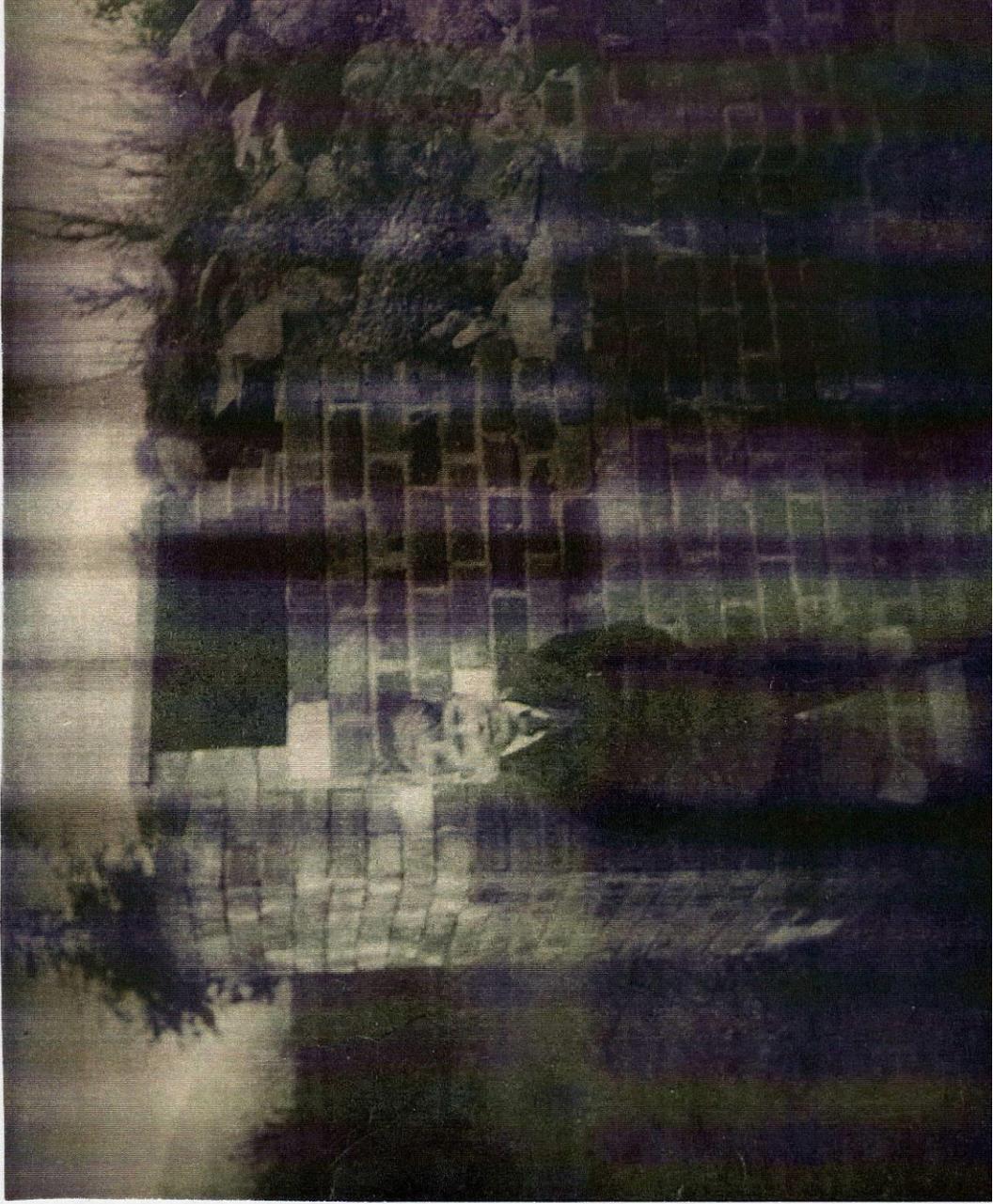
Rear of 165, Swanshurst Lane. 3rd January 1941.



Air Raid Wardens, Silver Street.



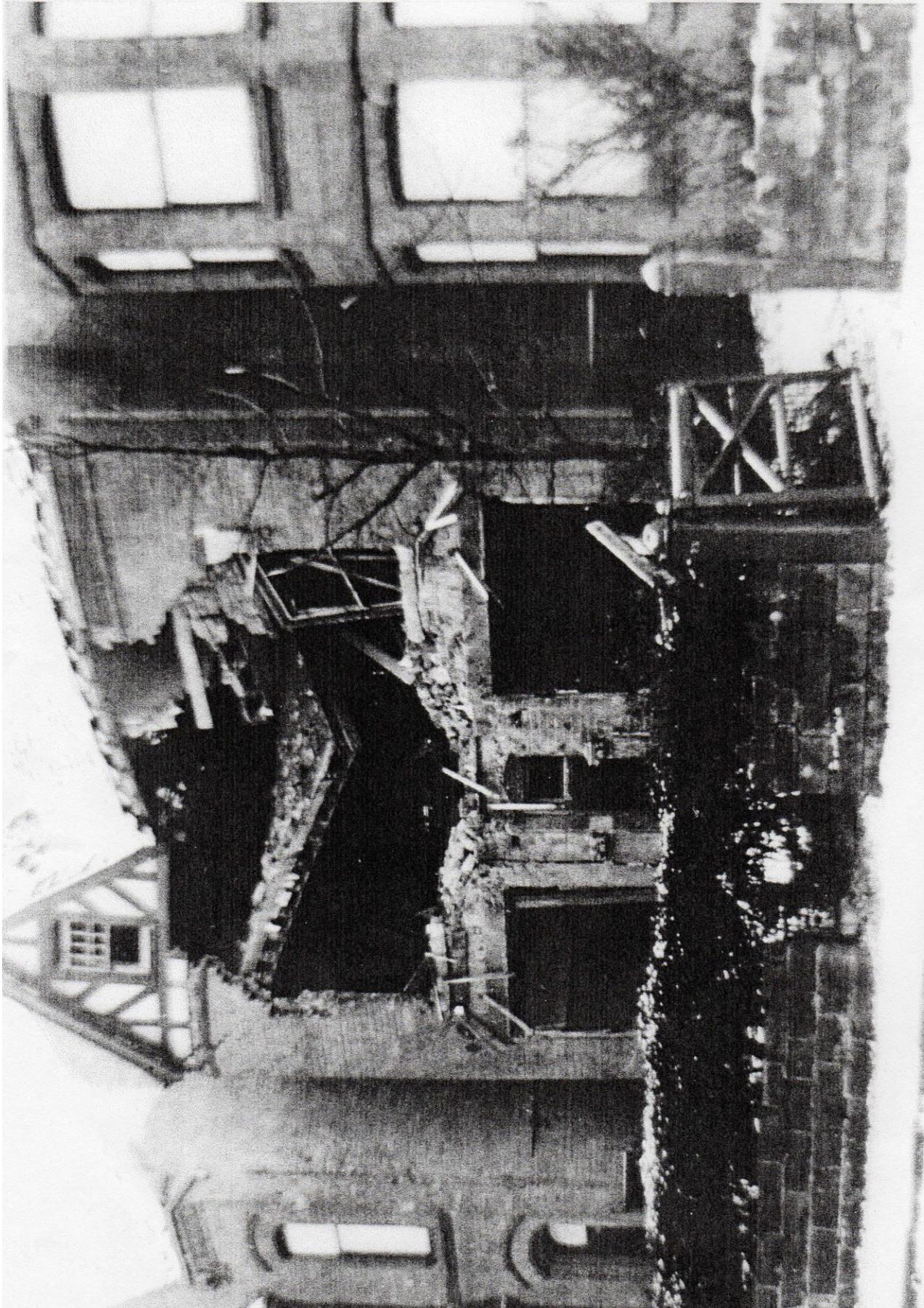
John, outside the shelter, Wheeler's Lane.



House, Chesterwood Road, after bombing.



71, School Road, Moseley. 16th January 1941.



Number 4, Alfred Street.



Number 29, Alfred Street.



V.E. Day bonfire, with Adolf as 'Guy'. Wheeler's Lane.



Bomb damage, Wheeler's Lane.



Furniture outside bombed houses, Wheeler's Lane.

Map Showing Where Bombs Dropped in the King's Heath Area

