

Reference 1 - 16.16% Coverage

Now, what were your memories of the bombing in Birmingham, when you were growing up, was it bad?

Yes, yes, very bad. But we lived on the outskirts so we were not so bad. But when you went to work ...in the beginning, you never knew what was going to be. You wouldn't get there, 'cause you'd go all round... because there'd be...umm, you know, unexploded bombs. A lot of it was bombed, because all Birmingham was bombed - all the centre was all blown up, you see. We had to start again after the War.

And you came home in the dark – well, I was only just fourteen and, um, I mean, it was pitch black! And the buses had all shields on their lights so that, you know, there was only a little tiny bit. It was a bit.... You didn't sort of feel threatened, which was a bit strange really, but I suppose we didn't think about it!

And, what about things like the blackout? You're talking about, you know, everything was very dark. What was the blackout all about?

Oh well, if you had a glimmer of light you were in trouble, because the bombers might see us. Ur, so you had... we had all blackout curtains - you had to... no cracks anywhere. I mean, if you had to open the door, well then you'd have to put all the lights out.

And then my father, as I say, he used to have to go off if the sirens went off - they went off to the AFS station, you see? And he said, he came one day, and he said, 'oh it was awful' he said, 'we went in the city and there was, I think it was a six storey car showroom.' And he said, 'all these beautiful cars were hurling through the..' you know, 'from the top floors'. He said, 'What a waste!' Always remember!

And he used to smell. His clothing used to smell of smoke, and all that, you know? Because he'd work – he'd have to go all night and then he'd come back and then he'd have to go to work. In the daytime.

So that was a voluntary thing he was doing?

00:05:00

Yes, oh yes, yes! I think they started just before the War - AFS.

Maurice: Auxiliary Fire Service.

Auxiliary Fire Service, yes.

And did he have to go to, I mean... Obviously Birmingham itself was badly bombed, but did he have to go to Coventry, for example, when Coventry was....?

No, no, because they were too busy in Birmingham. They had to look after Birmingham - they couldn't send them there. But we could see... if it was very bad in Birmin... in Coventry, we could see the red glow in the sky. Because that was all very badly bombed, you see? A lot of factories, I suppose. We had factories but our city centre was blown up - all of it.

But you were too old to be evacuated, were you?

Um, yes. 'Cause I'd just about... I left... we finished in July and I didn't ever go back to school, because that was it. You know? They didn't finish. 'Cause, I was going to leave anyway, in October. you see? So that was it. I didn't go back. But my sisters wouldn't be evacuated. They said if we have to die, then we will all die together. So we had an Anderson Shelter in the garden and my Dad said, 'Now I was in the trenches. So we'll have to have it four feet six deep.'

So he dug this blinking thing – I mean, we used to go down there every night, you see? We just went to bed because we couldn't be bothered getting up in the middle of the night. And anyway, eventually the ruddy thing filled up with water. So we used to have a pump on it to pump the water out! And we still went down there! (laughs) It was just fun, it just filled up with water! And there was a film later - Alf Garnet did a film – and that happened to him. And of course, he went in the shelter and he fell in all the water – and it was just like ours, it's really funny! (laughs)

I mean, how big was this shelter? Not very big?

Oh no! I mean, what would they be? About six foot - I suppose about six foot deep, would it be? And about four or five - it wasn't much more than that, was it? And then, this sort of door, like.... There must have been a door or a curtain or something on it, mustn't we? Because yours was different....

Maurice: It had earth on the top.

Yes, corrugated iron, wasn't it? And you filled it up with earth, didn't you.

And you had bunks in there, did you?

Yes, yes. Four bunks, so there was me... me mother was on the bottom one and me two sisters were only small, you see - one was about... what would she be? About nine, I should think. And the other one was about seven. And, they were only small so they slept one each end on the bottom. And then I had a top one and my father had a top one. When he was there - I mean... you know...full time, he wasn't there 'cause he was out in..... And sometimes, if it was too bad, we stayed indoors, we slept downstairs and my mother was so scared, one night, she was just shaking. She was, you know, she was frightened to death – here ruddy bed was rattling 'cause she was so scared, about what was going to happen to us kids, I suppose.

But, you never.... no bombs ever came near you?

Yes, we had an incendiary bomb on the house. Yes. But they managed to... we had eaves, you know? A house with eaves, and it went between the two eaves. And they did manage to get it down and drop into some sand and put it out. And then, just across, they had a unexploded bomb and they made the people go out of the house and they blew it up. And mother said, 'Ooh!' she said, 'They've blown the chickens up!' But it wasn't, it was a feather bed! (laughs) Really funny! Oh dear!

[<Files\HFRT002 Maurice Garwood>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.07% Coverage

You could get away, and if a jump... a ticket collector did get on, you used to show the ticket and.... 'Well done soldier' and give it you back. We used to get off at Euston and then take the Underground to - oh, blooming hell - Kings Cross, to get to the East Coast. And that's where we saw... we had to climb over Londoners, sleeping. And that was after the Blitz - well, after the Blitz had lowered down - it was in '42. They were still sleeping there. And they used to still sleep down there up until the end of the War. The Londoners did.

Well, by that time, I suppose, the doodlebugs were coming over, aren't they?

That's right, yeah, well, I mean, then the real (?) You had more people going underground.

[<Files\HFRT003 William Patterson>](#) - § 4 references coded [25.06% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 7.62% Coverage

What was your abiding memory of that time, as you were growing up? Any particular strong memories that come to mind?

Err, various little incidents possibly. The, er... we had a very heavy bombing raid, which went right across the back of our property. The nearest bomb was about a hundred yards away and it turned out to be a delayed action bomb, thank God. Obviously we understood afterwards that it was an attempt to wipe out Northolt airport, which was literally in a straight line from where they were aiming - about five mile away. So they did a lot of damage there unnecessarily. I remember that. I remember the first fire bombs that fell in the area - one man being very badly injured because a stupid woman threw a bucket of water at it while he was trying to put some sand on it.

What effect did that have then?

Because they explode. The bombs - the firebombs - are like a long cylinder of thermite which has got an automatic ignition device in it and they burn with a very, very intense heat - a very intense light - very intense heat. And one of the things you should is just smother them with sand. If it was in a house - where it was possible - they would punch a hole in the tiles, grab the bomb by its fins and lob it out. If it was outside, it couldn't do any harm then they could put the fire out inside quite easily. But if, because of the intense heat generated, if you threw water in quantity over it, the whole thing would ignite in one go and it would explode, and throw burning embers into people, which was not very funny.

The ideal thing was that you used a very, very fine spray stirrup pump and it had a fine head on it and you just sprayed the very fine water over it which kept the surrounding area damp but allowed the bomb to burn. In other words it would burn itself out and that was it. It didn't last long but you had to use your head and do it properly.

Reference 2 - 10.67% Coverage

But tell me about the bomb shelters?

Well the shelters.... we had to wait a hell of a time to get one but we had, what they called, an Anderson Shelter. There were two main kinds – Morrison, which was like a steel table - and an Anderson shelter where you put up outside. Well my father dug a big pit in the garden, which filled with water because it was unfortunately a high level water table there. And it filled with water as fast as we dug it.

He managed to get hold of some of that waterproof cement that set very rapidly and he built a box inside. He dug it about four feet down and he built a box inside – we had to bail all the water out fast and before it got filled back up again, as I say, he did all of that. And that held back most of the water. One or two places it managed to force a way through, so what he did then, he got some very thick tar and he tarred all the stones – all the concrete - and did a thick lining of that. And that seemed to do the trick. Then we built the Anderson shelter inside that.

And you were supplied with all the bits that the Anderson Shelter...?

Yes, yes it was just curved – half - semi-curved sections which formed almost a tunnel with flexed sides. And a solid end at one end and a doorway at the other. And he - we - we built it between us. And then we loaded it over with soil that we dug out of the hole and that was all put back over the top as extra protection... and built a garden on it. (laughing)

We did quite well there. But after – ooh, I suppose twelve months – oh, going down to this shelter every night, ‘cause he’d built bunk beds in there for him and my mother and I had a little side bed to kip down on. And after twelve months he said, ‘To hell with this, it’s too bloody cold - I’m going back in me own bed!’ And that’s what we did. And we stayed in our own beds for the rest of the War.

What? Not even when the Blitz...you know, because there must have been... you’ve heard about the Blitz...

Oh yes, you heard the Blitz. I mean to say, what he did, he reinforced the hall with planks and a couple of steel girders he’d managed to find somewhere. And if the Blitz got very bad, we would make our way down into the hall. And you would just..... there was a mattress put down on the floor and you slept there.

Otherwise, no, we just slept. Unless, you’d hear the bombers going over and providing you didn’t hear that screaming whistle of a bomb coming down - that was a nerve wracking sound - it screamed at you and it seemed to go on for ever. But providing you didn’t hear that, then you knew, you were pretty safe.

They
were heading for elsewhere.

00:10:03

Reference 3 - 4.46% Coverage

I got landed with a job as an ARP Messenger.

You’d better explain because people might not know what ARP stands for.

Oh, Air Raid Precaution. They were a organisation whose job it was to disseminate information to the public and to go round making sure that blinds

00:15:00

were drawn – there was no lights to be shown. And you were going down the road ‘put that light out!’

And, as I say, people who’d just popped into a room quickly, you know? And of course, that’s disastrous - it used to tell ‘Gerry’ just where we were. And, as I say...

You were a messenger?

Well, I got attached to the local ARP group and any incident that they thought worth mentioning, was I had to run down - take a message down to the local headquarters on my bike. And um, it wasn’t a thrilling job but somebody had to do it and, being the son of the local copper, they said ‘oh he’ll do.’ (laughs)

But presumably, I mean, at least it gave you a role, didn’t it? I mean the whole....

Yes, yes. It gave you... Once they gave you any authority or anything like that, but at least you felt you were doing a bit.

Reference 4 - 2.29% Coverage

And, what? You’d kind of would do so many evenings a week on this, then would you?

Oh, seven.

Really?

It was all the time. If I was there, you did it.

Yeah. So after school, do homework....

Oh yes, after school, very often you would play a while till the dark come ‘round, because it was nearly always dark when this started. And, um... you may only just a couple of hours - you might go down and it’s said ‘oh it’s nothing tonight.’ And that’s it, you just go home. And it was, as I say, you did it when it was required and you played when it wasn’t.

[<Files\HFRT004 Edith Wood>](#) - § 6 references coded [30.63% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.01% Coverage

We had, um... we lived in a semi basement and they - like the window was half on the pavement, if you know what I mean...?

Yes, I do.

And they boarded up that roof.

Yes...

The, um, ceiling with the steel plates and things to make it, sort of, bomb-proof they said. And um, that was where we sheltered -down there.

Reference 2 - 1.48% Coverage

Right. Can you tell me something about the bombing in the War then?

Yes. Well now that used to start around about 6 o'clock, the Warning went. 6 o'clock in the evening, just as you were coming home from work, the Warning would go. And it would go all night long, the bombing, till 6 the next morning. And it was pretty bad, not to begin with it wasn't bad in the beginning but it gradually got worse. And course it fell nearer to where you were - different places.

Reference 3 - 3.65% Coverage

So you lived in this basement type house?

Mmmm.

Did you - when it was bombing during the evenings - did you go out?

No, we were down in the basement.

And that's where you stayed? You didn't have an Anderson Shelter or...?

No, No. People in our street did. People in our street did, but you see, they didn't have a basement - we did. So they shored our basement up. But there was a lady down the road, who had a little girl, over there. And I was looking after that baby and she used to come down to our place and shelter with us 'cause her family were in the forces.

So you did have blackouts? You must have had blackouts?

Oh yes. Oh yes. Blackout curtains, of course. Yes. You had no lights anywhere.

00:05:03

And did you have ARP people marching around?

Yes, and as I was sixteen and I wasn't in the forces - they wouldn't take me in the forces because I was on military work. I did work for the troops - uniforms. I was working in a military place. So they didn't take me in the forces but I had to join the First Aid classes and I had to join the AR - not ARP - the stirrup pump... what did they call it? Firewatching.

Reference 4 - 8.95% Coverage

Yep, I can tell you a couple of funny stories.

Oh good.

Urr, we have..... I don't know - well you probably will - do you remember the old pickle jars - square jars, glass jars with slate lids to them?

I can remember the square jars but I can't remember the slate lids.

Well, they were round - slate lids. They were very heavy, the slate lids. Well, where we lived in Kennington - 'cause we got bombed out three times - he followed us, I think. And Mother had this sort of scullery, then the kitchen.

And facing the door – garden door was there, and it went through like that - there was a dresser there, a Welsh dresser with cups on.

And here was a ledge with these two jars and one was salt and one was soda. Right? Well the salt... this night, the bomb fell two streets away from us that way and it was a landmine. Well when the landmine fell it used to go 'pffttt' like that and it used to take everything - flatten it. Well that's what happened and the blast came in, took the door, and all it left was the little bit on it's hinges. And took these jars and it smashed them up the end of the garden against the two trees, so the two trees had white down them. But the slate lids were still on the ledge!

Really!?

And all the cups had gone off the dresser but all the hooks were hanging on... all the hangers were hanging on the hooks! It was most peculiar, I've never seen anything like it. All the hooks were there – the handles - but all the cups had gone! They'd all gone down the bottom... well I suppose they'd gone down the garden - I didn't look. But I expect that's where they went. But all that was left of the door was just the hinge bit, yes. And another time, it was later on when they had the doodlebugs.

Oh yes.

And they first used to shoot the wings off them. And if they shot the wings off, they used to come straight down. Well I was on fire watch duty this night and my cousin was home on leave from the Airforce. He was in Hereford and he said to me, 'I'll stand at the door with you, if you like.' So I said, 'Yes all right.' So there I am, standing at the door with me gas mask and me helmet and me bucket and me stirrup pump! And this... we heard this doodlebug coming and they fired and we saw them fire at it and it went pssst straight down. And there was this almighty bang.

Well, my cousin said, 'God, that was near. Where are you Eve?' And he couldn't find me and it had shot me straight up the passage - we had a long passage and I was sitting at the backroom door like this! (laughing) It had shot me straight up the passage and I was sitting on me backside at the door!

Goodness me.

He wondered where I'd gone! But I don't remember going. It's funny isn't it.

Yeah. It was the shock I should think.

It was the blast I expect. But I don't remember.

Reference 5 - 13.63% Coverage

We've just been talking about bombing and you said 'it didn't affect me very much'. And now you tell me that you were bombed out three times!

Oh yeah, we were. We were.

So when you talk about being bombed out does that mean that you had to move houses?

Yes. Because the first one in Streatham, it fell two doors away. That way. It was an ordinary bomb but it fell two doors. But we were lucky because next to us, the house laid back a bit, like that one does, and the blast, sort of, didn't catch us that much but it went underground. Now I had the baby in my arms, down in the cellar – down in the basement.

This is the one you were looking after.

00:20:00

Yes, the one I was looking after, and she was two. And I'd got her in my arms, wrapped in a blanket, and suddenly the floor was coming up under me. Well I thought it was a bomb and I couldn't move. And they were saying to me, 'Move, move!' Well I couldn't move. And they pulled me off of this heap that came up through the floor. But it wasn't a bomb - it was the foundation of the house that came up - all the bricks came up through the lino. But the next morning my brother said to me 'You've gone grey' and I had a big white streak down my hair. And after that, my hair went completely grey.

Quicky? Gosh.

It was nerves I suppose. The shock.

You see, at the beginning of the interview you said....

Yeah, but it didn't affect you. You never thought about it.

Right.

You never worried about it - that's what I meant. You didn't say 'Oh God there's another Warning tonight!' You just... Me, as soon as the Warning went, I used to go and grab a sandwich. My mother used to say, 'She's mad.'

Comfort eating, probably.

I suppose so. But as soon as the Warning went I had to have a sandwich. But you see, so many things happened that you didn't... you didn't get worried about it.

Did you find lots of people were worried about it?

Well, no I don't think so. We used to go on our normal way.

Just had to accept it.

I mean the friends 'round the corner, they got bombed out and their house went completely. So they came round to us, and we had them with us. There was about sixteen of us in the end, in the.... (laughing).

In the basement?

Yeah! But you see...

But when you talk about being in the basement...

No, tell a lie, that wasn't in the basement where they were. Where were we? We were in Streatham when that happened. You see, we were in Kennington and we got bombed out. Then we had to go from Kennington - we went to Streatham. And he bombed us out again from Streatham. And he bombed us out twice from there. But each time we went back in the same house but he still bombed us! He did it front and back.

But when you talk about living in the basement, as you did, at the very beginning? Did you used to sleep, eat and?

We didn't used to eat during the day down there. No, but of course, as soon as the Warning went, you did. And we slept down there, yes. And I think that's where I got my arthritis.

Was it cold and wet then?

Well no, it wasn't cold and wet but it wasn't very pleasant. But I'll tell you what was cold and wet, we got bombed out once, we had to sleep on the underground because we had nowhere to go. And I slept on the underground at Tooting Broadway. That wasn't very pleasant.

I'm sure it wasn't. But lots of people did though.

Oh yes. People had been sleeping there - they had bunks down there. But we didn't, we had to lay on the ground. I'm sure that's where all this arthritis came from. But... and then we got bombed out again and they took us to... that was in Streatham, when we got... no that was in Kennington. Oh, yeah, I must tell you that. We got bombed out again in Streatham - in Kennington - and they took us to the NAAFI shelter. Now the NAAFI used to take a lot of people. But because our house was so badly damaged they couldn't keep us there, 'cause they had too many people there. There took us down Clapham South underground. Now Clapham South underground had another shelter below the underground - it's quite deep down. And down there we had dormitories. And we used to have beds either side and beds down the middle. And we stayed there for a couple of months, I suppose, 'til we found somewhere else to live.

Reference 6 - 1.91% Coverage

But when those doodlebugs came...

Oh, they were dreadful.

Weren't they.

Yeah. They came over and you could hear them coming. And if you heard them - they used to make a brrrrrr.

It was all this vibration inside.

Yes, yes. And you heard them coming and suddenly they would cut out. They would stop. And then you had to count ten.

Then there was silence.

Yeah. You counted ten after the silence. And if it hadn't hit you then, well you knew you were alright. Yes. So you used to sit there and say, 'one, two, three, four, five, six....' Up to ten and then you'd hear the bang. Umm.

[<Files\HFRT007 June Woodward>](#) - § 2 references coded [26.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.78% Coverage

Were your houses ever blacked out, did you have to have black-outs?

Oh yes, yes I can remember having black curtains, or even perhaps on frames of wood we put up at the windows.

Reference 2 - 25.08% Coverage

You said that on your information sheet, that you remember the bomb in New Bradwell?

Yes.

Can you describe what happened and how it happened really?

Well it was a Sunday evening, I do remember, and I think we were just in the house and there was just awful noise and bang. I think we all went under... we had a reinforced table like those um.

Anderson?

00:05:00

Yes. No they were metal tables weren't they and I think we went... we sat under that with the tin that my father and mother kept all the documents in. And when everything went quiet I think we came out. Somebody went to the front door and looked out, because it was only just at the top of our road where the bomb fell, yes.

Was that very unusual in New Bradwell, I mean there weren't many bombs in New Bradwell were there?

Oh no, there was that, and that was quite early on in the War wasn't it 1940, yes.

I'm really not sure of that?

Yes, yes I think it was 1940 yes, so I mean it was quite a shock to realise that something was happening,

(War was coming. *Spoken by Mr Woodward*) Yes, war was coming yes.

And what, was anybody injured in that bombing?

There was in those houses, yes, I think there was two or three people were killed and injured yes.

Was it just one bomb that was dropped then?

I think it was one bomb that hit the houses but some other bombs went in to the allotments, just to the left of the houses.

(Mr Woodward says flares) Flares, yes.

Why do you think that bomb was dropped, do you think they were on their way to Coventry or somewhere?

Well, people always said that it wasn't intended for Bradwell because there was nothing there that they would need to bomb Bradwell for, it was just somebody either going to a raid and made a mistake or something. Just chance.

Or maybe, was there a lot going on in Wolverton Works at the time?

I believe they were doing aeroplanes, makin...

So there could have been?

Yes.

That they were aiming for Wolverton Works?

Well I suppose it could have been, yes.

So the bomb that was dropped, I know roughly where you're talking about and it's a green area at the moment isn't it?

Yes

I mean, were there houses there at that time?

Oh yes, those roads, streets were railway workers houses; that was what they were built for and then opposite was the big house where Doctor Love lived, and the bomb fell ...

(Mr Woodward: and took three houses out.)

So there were houses as well demolished with that bomb?

Yes, oh yes.

[<Files\HFRT008 Derek Denchfield>](#) - § 1 reference coded [10.26% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 10.26% Coverage

Did you have black-outs in war?

We had curtains and I think we may, we probably... well I know we did we put up one or two wooden frames with a sort... a sort of curtain or blanket over it and pushed them into the window spaces.

Did you have a shelter at all?

We didn't at all no.

Not even in the garden?

No, no.

Do you remember any bombing at all?

00:05:57

The only ... there was a bomb dropped at Skew Bridge. When I was working in the little factory at Simpson Road, it was 1940, I can remember a German plane coming over very low, and it sort of followed Aylesbury Street, the street you've just come up. I think it was obviously just trying to get away, dropped one or two only very small bombs over at Skew Bridge. That was about the only bombs that were dropped in Bletchley apart from the one Eileen said. There were several dropped in the surrounding countryside but not a lot of damage was done.

Did you ever see searchlights in the sky?

Plenty of searchlights. I can tell you at that time we were living just outside the village of Stoke, up on the hill as you go through the three locks, if you know where ... the three locks on the Leighton Buzzard Road. You could look from our bungalow across to the Dunstable Downs and you could see the Lion on Dunstable Downs near Whipsnade but you could see the glow in the sky all the time from the bombing in London. We used to spend hours when we were kids just looking at it and watching the searchlights wavering backwards and forwards. Well it just lit up the sky.

Did you hear gunfire?

Not very often, no. For a time there was a searchlight battery along the Stoke Road, between Stoke and Bletchley by the canal there, there was a searchlight battery, but there was no anti-aircraft guns there, no.

What about barrage balloons, did you ever see any of those?

There was no barrage balloons round here, it was too peaceful I think.

[<Files\\HFRT009 Eileen Denchfield>](#) - § 3 references coded [6.51% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.89% Coverage

There was only one bomb fell in Bletchley! (laughs) Church Green Road at the Clerk to the Council's house, Mr Sherwood.

They chose the right place then.

They went for him didn't they?

Was he ok?

Oh no, he wasn't injured, his pride was hurt. (laughs) But that was all.

Reference 2 - 1.10% Coverage

you talked about sirens going when you were at school?

Oh yes. Yes we had to go and sit in the corridor.

Reference 3 - 2.53% Coverage

You told me also you had a Morrison shelter in your house?

00:07:41

I've still got the lumps on my head now from where I bashed it (*on the shelter*).

They were quite big ugly things weren't they?

Yes.

Did you use it as a table?

Yes.

[<Files\HFRT010 Betty Wise>](#) - § 2 references coded [5.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.71% Coverage

So, no bombing at all?

Well, if there was, I never heard about it. Well, they never hit it anyway. I don't think they dropped anywhere near it because we would've heard about that. Just after it (the war) started there was Lord Haw Haw and he said they had bombed the bridge over the road to Haversham; if you go down the Station Hill and go straight on and go to Haversham, you cross over the Ouse down there, and he said they had bombed that. But it was bad weather had done it.

Lord Haw Haw?

Yes, it was mentioned on the radio – Lord Haw Haw – that they had bombed the bridge at Wolverton, and that's what it was, but it wasn't a bomb, it was the weather.

What, the weather had swept the bridge away?

Yes, broken it and made it very inconvenient because some of the men used to come to work from that way. It was very bad, I expect the bridge was old. We had a temporary bridge over it for some time after the war was finished.

Well, that's amazing Lord Haw Haw claiming they'd bombed the bridge.

(laughs) You wouldn't think they'd know, but they did ... so there must have been spies around.

Reference 2 - 2.02% Coverage

Did many people have air raid shelters?

We had an Anderson one. That came, I don't know when it was, way on in the war. It was in our front room. I don't know whether anyone had it in the garden, I know ours was in the front room.

Did you ever have to go in it?

No, we were lucky here. The horrors of war didn't affect us, not really, not the dreadful bombing and things like that. I know my father-in-law, well, he wasn't my father-in-law in those days, he lived in Moon Street up by Bushfield School,

and when London was bombed, they could see the sky was red over there, all that long way away.

[<Files\HFRT012 May Webster>](#) - § 1 reference coded [21.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 21.88% Coverage

Did you have a shelter, an air raid shelter?

Oh yes, down in the garden, (*speaks to cousin*) you probably helped to dig it didn't you?

You made your own shelter?

Didn't make it, they issued us with these lumps of tin...

(cousin) Anderson Shelters

(Mrs W) You had to dig the... in your garden to get it down and then cover it over with the soil again.

And did you used to go in there?

Oh yes, we had bunks in it, my mum... of course the boys had gone in the forces. There was really... my youngest brother was there and me, my Mum and Dad and then of course my husband was away, the same as when we got married. I think we got the bunks just before war was declared didn't we? I think we did.

So you turned all the lights off in your house?

And went, my Mother always had her bag with her policies in! (laughs) All the old women used to do that, all the insurance policies and everything was in it, they had a bag and as soon as the air raid shelter went they all grabbed their bags and (*went*) down in the shelter. But we got... in the end... that we used to sort of sleep down there.

So was it cold in there?

Well we had heaters, an old paraffin heater, it's surprising how you made do. We weren't comfortable by any means, but we felt safe and Luton didn't get it very bad at all.

(*Friend*) Some of the places, they had big shelters you could go to, didn't they? Because there was one when I went down to see my aunt in Newport and we were right by the docks and you never heard such a racket in all your life when they started!...

(*Mrs W*) In Luton we didn't have it bad like that...

(*Cousin*) We were in more danger from anti aircraft fall out than what we were from the bombs!

00:10:20

The bombs fell on the Vauxhall, well they fell on Commer cars one day. But they fell on Vauxhall and it was on a Sunday morning and my dad had a short

leg and he was coming out of the Vauxhall and he saw this car and he jumped in it and it turned out to be a police car! They said, 'This is a police car!' he says, 'I don't care a bugger what it is, I'm getting out of this!' And the bombs were falling on the Vauxhall!

(Friend) We were waiting for my Dad and getting worried.

What did they make at that factory?

Well I don't know, well the Vauxhall bombs and stuff I suppose I don't know. They actually brought my Dad all the way up to Limbury which is what? Five miles. They let him stop in the car and brought him home. You got amusement too when you thought about the things, wasn't amusing at the time.

[<Files\HFRT013 Joan Draper>](#) - § 3 references coded [10.28% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 6.87% Coverage

You lived in Battersea, so in Battersea you must have been hit very hard by the bombing. Tell me about what you had to do as a child?

00:07:00

Well, we had the Anderson shelter in and always at the bottom of that was a pool of water, because they dug underground. And I remember my father made a bit of a floor in it so we could go in and there were four bunks and a shelf. Because by Battersea we had the power station, and that's what they were after, because of the power all over London.

When the bombing got really bad... because we went through the Blitz... when the Blitz started many, many times we got straight in, straight through the house, straight down the shelter and that was it and I remember... it was only made clear to me this week, but I remember coming out of school at Battersea, with my friend hand in hand. My mother was there, she had my two brothers, the baby and my younger brother, she come to meet us from school and coming overhead were the bombers, and this was still daylight, and the bombers were coming over. Outside the school was a man that had a barrow selling fruit and he picked me up and threw me under the barrow. He picked my friend up and threw her under the barrow. My mother looked to see where we were and went to the street shelter while these bombers went straight across but the thing that struck me, I was still talking exactly the same conversation that I had been when we were coming out of school, with this little girl. It was just one of those things, we were coming out of school, the bombers were going over but seeing a programme on the Blitz this week I understand now, that was when they were getting ready to bomb London and they came over in daylight for the first time. After that, after they'd passed over that was it, straight home and down.

Reference 2 - 2.16% Coverage

So with that bombing, did you lose anybody?

No we didn't, because they passed right over, to be honest, because as you just said it was St Paul's and that area. But we were down there and the bombing came. We had had bombs, and thinking about it, life went on as normal because we were up and ready for school and that and I can sometimes remember my mother saying to neighbours, 'So and so got it last night.' But it

was a thing like hearing parents talk but we would then go on to school. But after the Blitz, that bad night of bombing, was when the evacuation came.

Reference 3 - 1.25% Coverage

Did you have any experience with doodlebugs?

Only in the very first part of it when they were first coming over because I know that you'd stop and you'd wait for them to pass over and you knew that you were safe but once the V2's came that was another thing. They'd just cut off and drop! They were, that was a horrendous time.

[<Files\HFRT014 Diane Lillian Bowsher>](#) - § 4 references coded [26.79% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.67% Coverage

Remembering blackout, did you have blackout?

Oh yes, yes.

It must have been very dark in the streets. Did you have any light you could carry around with you?

00:11:29

Yes because we used to earn some money at that when the cars were going down we'd have a little tiny torch and show them where the kerb was you see. So yes we probably did have a very small torch.

The house was blacked out was it?

All the windows were blacked out yes. That's what father used to walk round and...

How did they black them out, can you remember? Was it just curtains going across or was it something going into the windows?

No I can't remember that I should imagine it was very dark curtains, no I can't really remember that.

What would happen if the lights were on and the curtains weren't drawn, would anything happen?

No they'd get screamed at by the wardens walking up and down, just a flicker of light they would bang on the door and say you've got a light showing up stairs.

What about the windows themselves?

Yes we had them criss-crossed with tape all our windows

Reference 2 - 9.97% Coverage

And that was to stop the bombs, if the bombs did drop?

00:12:35

We did have broken windows yes because we had a bomb drop at the bottom, joining our garden was somebody's garden and there was their house and they took a direct hit which obviously brought down some of our ceilings and smashed all the back windows

And where were you when that bomb dropped?

We was in the Morrison shelter first.

That was in the house?

That was in the house but later we had an Anderson shelter in the back garden.

Do you remember much about those?

The unfortunate part about these people invariably the staircase could be standing even though the bomb had dropped it. So they cleared all the rubble about opened the door to understairs or see these people under the stairs that they had their gas meter in there, it broke the mains and they were both gassed

How awful

If they hadn't had the meter they probably be still alive

That family was wiped out was it?

Yes

What was your feeling do you remember that, were you very friendly with them?

No not really

It must have made an impression upon you?

Well it would do wouldn't it, you know. Every time you'd say, 'Have you turned the gas off, have you turned the gas off.' 'You promised you'd turned the gas off, you got over it because other things were happening. Another bomb dropped around the corner and they were friends of mine, I think she lost two children in that so that would affect you greatly. But then we went to so many different places during the war I was in and out of the actual war years as we call it because we went to Thaxted in Essex then to the train carriages. Then I went to boarding school there and got scabies then sent home. I had to go to Great Ormand Street in Sulphur baths I went back to school from there the school that I had left earlier. Where did I go after that, I can't think.

Reference 3 - 7.82% Coverage

Now when you had the air raid siren what did you have to do?

Grab your gas mask and run, some had street shelters, the schools had shelters obviously or we even knew at one time we went into somebody's house, she called us in she see us running down the road.

Do you remember much about those Anderson Shelters?

Yes, they were horrible!

They smell didn't they?

Yes and depending where you had them we were lucky but a lot of people had them and they were flooded. But we were lucky it was more or less facing the back door and mother used to sit there and make up all sorts of stories you know, we actually went in there most nights.

Because the alarm was sounding?

Yes or to sleep so that they didn't disturb us

Do you remember seeing the lights in the sky?

Oh, yes

What are they called?

Search lights, searchlights. Oh yes we see that. One thing that happened, I was having a bath on a Sunday afternoon I was probably only about eight or nine I wasn't very old and my parents were in the garden, I don't know where the two girls were they might have been away by then. I heard my father scream out to my mother, 'For God's sake Pat, duck!' And I was out of the bath at the time so opened the window to see what was happening and this plane went across our roof like that and I saw the German pilot in it he was taking arial photographs. They shot him down in some fields towards Stanmore. That terrified me that did to see this plane coming straight for you.

Reference 4 - 3.33% Coverage

Do you remember Doodlebugs?

Yes

What was your feeling when you heard those?

00:23:04

Well I don't think we had Doodlebugs stop near us but on one occasion Harrow school wasn't Harrow on the Hill wasn't too far away from us. Evidently this Doodlebug came across and was making it's way to Harrow where the school and all that is and a Spitfire went up tipped his wings and gradually pushed him away from Harrow into the fields and we heard that explosion in our house.

They were frightening things

Frightening, but they managed to save the school of which we were invited to tea by the boys all with their Boaters on!

[<Files\HFRT015 Janet Chamberlain>](#) - § 1 reference coded [13.37% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 13.37% Coverage

So you were born in 1940 hearing from your mum was it more difficult or special dangers if you like in having a baby at that time?

I think I spent my first year in an Anderson shelter because we lived in Luton at that point with my grandmother who lived in one of the little old terraced houses in Luton and they were always trying to bomb the Vauxhall I think. So apparently I spent a good deal of my time in this Anderson shelter as a baby.

I also remember that if the air raid siren went off, which, even though I was only five at the end of the war if I hear that it still has its affect on me. And you either go under the table or go under the stairs and I had a fear for quite a long time of being under low bridges and in places like multi-storey car parks. I was always afraid that they were going to fall on me, it's very irrational and then I suddenly thought no so long ago that probably this fear came from that experience as a child and it went.

Once you'd worked out why you were feeling like that. But as the war went on didn't people get very blaze about it all and didn't bother to go tables?

I suppose, I can't really remember that. I remember it was about 1945 I think, mother was brushing my hair. Whether I, I might have been slightly younger than that. It was about nine o'clock in the morning and there was suddenly a great wumph and that was the sound of a V2 rocket falling on Biscuit Road in Luton and it demolished a load of houses and I think people killed.

That was the nearest if you like that you came to having a bomb was it?

That I remember, yes, yes

[<Files\HFRT016 GladysBanks>](#) - § 3 references coded [13.67% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.49% Coverage

Now when I first joined the government er, when the war first broke out we did have a little talk how to protect yourself and so that if we heard bombs this that and the other to get down, never walk near buildings because of the glass. Fortunately I wasn't almost right by the glass when I was up at Selfridges and I wasn't right by the kerb. But a bomb dropped and that was one time there was glass all over including me but so many times in London I was covered in shrapnel, glass. And being my building was right by the side of the Thames I cant tell you how many bombs I saw go in the Thames.

Reference 2 - 3.86% Coverage

Right em what about things like the blackout? That must have been really

39.43

Ah, I can remember one night about the blackout, em, well it was always dark when I used to go home, unless I was staying in the building and one night when I went home I couldn't get home. It was so bad, the transport and one thing and another, so right from Whitehall to up to Parliament Hill Fields, which is part of Hampstead Heath. I walked, took me three and a half-hours, because my mother was expecting me on the Friday night. And I remember saying on the Monday, I did stay a couple of days and the strange thing was that particular time when I struggled to get home and walk and I went of my... I was going by the kerb, because there was no lights, it was a proper blackout and I went of my route, I wanted to get round to Maunder Crescent and I was finishing up at Kings Cross so I had to bear back again, to get on to my eh route and it's not easy. I walked into the road to get by the kerb and I got back home on the Friday night three and a half-hours, had my scrambled egg made with powdered egg. And that night there was a landmine that dropped, well I knew what it was but my father was furious because I would not say anything to him, absolutely furious. He used to ask me questions, I wouldn't tell him anything, and eh, even after the war he never forgave me about that. And I was glad that I made that effort because my mother's building, em, all the glass blew in, glass everywhere and one thing and another and I was there to help, em, clear it up.

Oh that weekend I went about, when all the glass came in em, that was a land-mine, there were a lot of bombs that were dropped, a lot of bombs. And I had a best friend at school and we kept in touch and this was only a little avenue, I used to live at 3 Glenhurst Avenue, Highgate Road, NW5. And two or three doors along, there were these posh blocks of flats, real posh blocks of flats. And my art teacher lived in there, but my best friend lived in there and that night before the bombs had dropped, my father and I was standing outside, it was pitch dark apart from the stars and what not of the other. And a direct hit bomb, not the land-mine that really did the damage to my parent's house, I'll tell you who was one of my neighbours at the time, then and before the war em, oh lor he is running for the leader of the Conservative Party, isn't it terrible? My father was always talking to him, it slipped my memory.

..That's ok.

Well anyhow em, the block of flats had a direct hit, like that. My father rushed out, it was only two or three yards away from our front door and eh, different people around that you know, were surviving, not in that particular block of flats, he offered them cigarettes, my father was a chain-smoker. And everyone in that flat, including my best friend was killed. And I can see it now, and of course, she went into the shelter like everybody else when the warning went off. And one man was saved and he sat in his big armchair, big leather armchair with wings to it up on the top and he came right the way down, and he was the only one that was saved. So it was strange, although I walked three and a half-hours to get home I was useful that weekend, ah, though. But what was upsetting was all these young airmen, mostly from 19 to the age of 21 that were killed, we lost a hell of a lot, though.

You would have been aware of quite how many because you were..

I had, I had the records, I had the records and Churchill as I say, had it at the end of the week, on a Friday. But my father was mad with me because I wouldn't tell him anything. I wouldn't, I told him nothing. But after the war he found out ah, opposite our neighbours, were the Webbers, now the Webbers this was just before the war they used to take us away for the weekend because they had a country house, as well, which was saying something in those days. In the thirties for somebody to have a chauffeur driven car, the car was the only car in the avenue, and the chauffeur, full time chauffeur, properly dressed, in the cap and the rest of it, ah, Webber. Webber had two sons, Alan and Horace and Alan was the same age as me and I never thought anything of it in those days, this was, I was a teenager, all my teenage years em. Alan was the same age as me and we got taken to this country cottage and my mother's housekeeper used to look after my brother and sister. Well my father found out, course I knew, I wouldn't tell him nothing, absolutely nothing and I didn't to anybody, he was furious with me and when he found out that the Webbers, because they were buddies, they were absolute buddies. Had his own business at Acton and they went over to munitions during the war and came under the Ministry of aircraft production and my father found out, he never forgave me, my father didn't, never forgave me and I never told him.

[<Files\HFRT017 Mary Webb>](#) - § 1 reference coded [11.04% Coverage]

How fascinating...What other things in terms of things like air-raid precautions and all that and blackouts and that sort of thing, any memories about that sort of thing?

6.17

Well we had to have blackouts, we made those out of curtains, old curtains, didn't we? And Old Wolverton House they had an Anderson Shelter, so that once the siren went and we went down there and then we used to, well when my brother came home from the Navy he would just get

under the table and go to sleep wouldn't he? While the rest of us sat there wondering what was going to happen, you know.

As the war went on I mean because there was only the bomb at Bradwell wasn't there, did you get a bit blasé about everything?

No I don't think so, no, I don't think we ever go blasé, didn't like the blackout really because you know that made it awkward, getting about but. I mean no lights but you still managed quite easily yeah.

What about gas masks?

7:35

Um yeah we had those and our mothers, they were in a little box and mother knitted covers for us! So when I was at the Tech it was sort of navy and light blue and so she knitted a navy and light blue cover for the gas mask and we used to take those everywhere with us, but I mean we never really wore them for any occasion. We never had to and kept mine for years and years and they I went to get it out to show someone as I got it out it fell to pieces, it all disintegrated.

[<Files\HFRT018 Lena Jakeman>](#) - § 1 reference coded [6.75% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 6.75% Coverage

What were your personal abiding memories be of the war? Anything that sticks in your mind?

Not really no. I mean I remember the bomb that dropped at Bradwell. We were all sitting round the table, I mean it's a family joke this but we were all sitting round the table and the bomb dropped and I was sitting by the window and I shot under the table. Because I, I wasn't anywhere near it but I went down and everybody else sat round the table eating. I went under the table when it dropped. I can remember that because it's a family joke that is because I shot under the table and everybody else carried on with the meal, you know.

Did it actually break the windows?

No it was the noise of it, it wasn't really near enough to break the windows. We were quite a way from it from where it dropped in Bounty Street, New Bradwell, we were quite a way from it there.

You obviously heard the explosion did you then go and have a look?

No, no we never went out there.

Did you ever go out and visit the site?

2.44

Oh yes afterwards, oh yes we went down to Bradwell and had a look and saw that the three-story house was flattened, you know. Oh yes we went and had a look see what damage it was because that was the nearest we ever saw bomb damage as far as we were concerned.

[<Files\HFRT019 Audrey Lambert>](#) - § 1 reference coded [5.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 5.07% Coverage

Usually the ARP people were very, very aware of this. Umm..when you think about blackouts, did you have many air-raid warnings? Can you remember that?

No, I don't think we had air-raid warnings very often. I think the only bombs that were distributed were when they saw a light, like a farmer had a hurricane lamp or something and then coming back from where they'd been bombing, like Coventry, they would jettison their last bombs somewhere in our area. So there was a couple who were killed when it hit a house in Beachampton and some of the others just ended up in fields round and about and Dad did build have an air-raid shelter built, a concrete one, and urr...

For inside the house....

No, no this was up the garden...

Right...it was an Anderson shelter then.

5.56

I suppose so....I don't know...it was a proper brick-built one...quite different from anything else I'd seen. Next door had one like you say and shared it with a neighbour.

[<Files\SHLT045 Shelia Lindsay>](#) - § 1 reference coded [3.54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.54% Coverage

did you actually see any activity of war at all? In Marlborough for example or in Canterbury were there air raids that you had to shelter from?

No.

Or did you see planes at all?

No at all, not in either of those the only the things you saw were the Americans with their lorries and things being moved about all over the place and, but you never saw any bombing it was only when I came back again in 1944 when I did see bombing and I saw Doodle Bugs. Do you know what I mean by Doodle Bugs?

They went and just dropped?

Yeah, it's like a pencil, a rocket in the sky with flames coming out of the back and it would come along and vibrate. The noise was incredible and it used to come along and then suddenly the engine would stop and because the noise was so violent when it stopped it was quiet and then you knew very well that it was going to come down and explode. Yes it was, they were awful things they really were. I mean because I lived very near to London, Kent isn't that far I mean the bombing in London was quite incredible and the bombing in Chatham near the dock yard was quite considerable too.