

## Suburb residents' WW2 memories

Most people with gardens grew as many vegetables as they could manage and some kept chickens if they had space. Rationing was very well organised, so we knew exactly how much food we would receive. (My mother didn't have to scramble for food slots.) I believe fish was available off-ration, but I remember having to rush to join a queue for kippers. Big excitement!

EUNICE KOSSOFF

My wartime bedtime prayers included: 'God bless my soldier uncles, God bless my sailor uncles, God bless my airman uncles - and bring them all safely home'.

JOAN LIPKIN-EDWARDS

My two Grandmothers and an Aunt, with me during wartime. Anderson shelter in background to the left behind 1st grandmother...



This memory was passed on to me by the previous owner of my house - No1 Erskine Hill - David McCallum (actor best known for his 60's role in the Man From Uncle). He visited my house many years ago as part of a Sunday Observer series on where famous people used to live. He remembered the doodlebug that fell in Golders Green and as a result caused damage in the Suburb. No 1 Erskine Hill was damaged and he pointed out where the second floor had sustained damage just adjacent to a window. He remembered the scary noise and said they had to leave the house for a short time.

SUSAN DOUEK

When I was a small child in the late 40's we used to go to what I recall as a prefab building in the Market Place, where Heathfielde

now stands, to be given flat shaped bottles of orange juice. Such a novelty and so delicious!

TALYA SINGER



Churchill on Ministry of Health balcony.

On 8 May 1945, I was a 19-year-old redundant RAF navigator trainee. I had a senior civil servant cousin, who invited me to the Ministry of Health in Whitehall, where Churchill was due to speak to the crowds from a balcony.

After a long wait, Churchill arrived with his retinue and passed me within a couple of metres. Everybody clapped like mad. He wore a dark suit and bow tie and carried an unlit cigar. He looked short and rotund and had a lumbering, yet determined gait, matching his expression. He stepped on to the balcony and I could just see his back. Then he spoke: "God bless you all. This is your victory..." The rest of his short speech was drowned by microphone echo and general noise from the crowds.

This was a day I will never forget and I am proud to share it with you.

DAVID LITTAUR

My school, King Alfred in North End Road, had its premises requisitioned for war to be used by the army. The school moved to a farm in Royston, Herts, for the whole of the duration, as we called it. I vividly remember Mr Churchill's speech, conveyed to us all by a battery operated setup created by the older boys. Happy days, sort of!

PAUL DAVIS

I was a teenager in Finchley in 1940 and remember my family huddling round the coal fire and hearing the continuous ack-ack fire and the occasional boom of a bomb. We all pretended we were not afraid, but actually we were terrified.

I had to sleep on a mattress wedged between a wall and a sofa so that the ceiling was unlikely to fall down on me. My parents slept under the kitchen table protected by a metal shelter.

I still have a piece of shrapnel about two inches long with a very jagged edge.

MICKY WATKINS

VE Day brought great celebration to the streets of London and across the UK for the government, civilians and home guard. But for many troops the war would not end for months and it was even longer until they reached Blighty again. While the war was over in Europe, it continued in the Far East until September when the troops then had to ensure the conditions of surrender had been met (including my father Ron Gillard).

Thousands who eventually returned were wounded, scarred and unable to talk about their experiences. 20 million soldiers died during the course of the war all over the world and many millions of civilians including over 7 million in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany.

SUSIE GREGSON



I was born in 1941, almost at the same time as my mother's younger brother died in Mauthausen concentration camp. I grew up in Croydon. We had a dome-shaped brick shelter in the garden, where I have a memory of sitting on a bunk with a blanket and a helmet. We had an Anderson (or was it Morrison?) shelter in the dining room. The garden shelter became my father's wine cellar covered by a rockery after the war and had a special damp smell when you went down the steps.

MARJORIE HARRIS

My primary education took place at Child's Way School. As you entered the school grounds at the top of Child's Way, there was rather a large air raid shelter, grassed over, on which running races were held. I remember, soon after 8 May 1945, standing on Cambridge Heath Road, at the entrance to Bethnal Green Underground station watching as celebratory processions passed by. Frenetic flag waving and dancing was the order of the day.

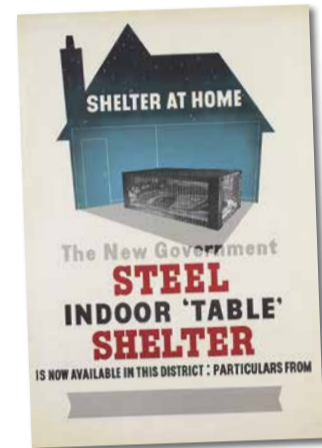
DAVID W CROSSLEY (DR.)



## WW2 bombings in the Suburb

The threat of a second world war had been in the air for some time with the rise of Hitler in Nazi Germany, whose ambition was to conquer Europe and then finally occupy England. The deciding factor came on 1st September 1939 when German troops, without declaring war, launched an invasion of Poland. The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, sent an ultimatum to Hitler to withdraw his troops or consider Germany to be at war with Britain. No reply was received, and on 3rd September 1939 war was declared.

There was a major fear that many civilians' lives would be lost due to German bombing of British cities. So the 'Steel Indoor Table Shelter' was commissioned



by the government in 1941, known as the Morrison shelter after the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, Herbert Morrison. It was designed so that the space it took up was not wasted since it could serve as both a table and shelter. The sides were detachable and could be removed for table use. The floor was sprung to make a more comfortable base for a mattress. It was to be placed only on the lowest floor of a house where it provided excellent cover against falling debris. Over one million were in use by 1945.

But the most widely used home shelter was the Anderson officially called 'the sectional steel shelter'. Two million were issued to households. They were the perfect shelter for the Suburb as they needed a back garden but it was cramped, chilly and tended to flood after rain but it was remarkably bomb proof.

Suburb resident, Susie Gregson, still has an Anderson shelter in her back garden. She writes: "The shelter is half buried in the ground and made out of steel reinforced concrete. It measures 6 foot square by 6 foot 6 inches high. There used to be a heavy steel door to close off the main room but it has long since rusted away. There are two circular air vents in the main room. It might have slept five or six people in very cramped conditions on bunk beds. Air raid shelters were used a great deal during the Blitz between July 1940 and August 41. And again in 1944 at the time of the V1 'doodlebug' rockets, which inflicted considerable damage on the Suburb. Whenever the sirens sounded families would make their way with bedding, candles and food to keep safe. The Hampstead News and Golders Green Gazette of December 26 1940 had all kinds of useful suggestions 'Comfort in your air raid shelter - some simple hints for Health and Ease'. If you did not have a hot water bottle you were urged to take a hot brick, wrapped in a blanket or woollen garments to keep you



Gladys Hunter's bombed home on Brookland Rise.

warm. Layers of newspaper between blankets also helped keep you warm. Hot drinks before bed were encouraged and people were taught how to make hay bottles to keep the drink warm. There was no toilet in the air raid shelter. You were reminded to air your bedding every day. Cleanliness of your person and your belongings was most important and helped more than anything to prevent disease."

Air raids on British cities began in September 1940. Gladys Hunter who lived in Brookland Rise wrote letters to a friend in Devon describing the impact of these raids:

26 September 1940

"The poor old Suburb suffered so badly last night. I can't realise yet myself the appalling damage. The raid lasted from 8.30 pm to 5.30 am.

Two land mines were dropped on the Suburb, one on Willifield Green and another in Coleridge Walk. About 300 flats and houses are very badly damaged - too badly for anyone to live in them. Two houses in Coleridge Walk were wiped out and altogether and the rest are almost all in ruins. The Emmony family of six were killed, with six more including a young couple and

a baby.... In Temple Fortune every shop front from Sainsburys (opposite Willifield Way) down to Lindons (corner of Bridge Lane) is smashed. Cheerio! We're still smiling but it's a bit forced today!"

Tragically, Gladys and all her family were killed on the 1st October 1940 when her house received a direct hit (see above).

During the war 30 people were killed in the Suburb as a result of bombing; 70 buildings were destroyed and 1,700 damaged. The extent of the damage can be seen in the map drawn by Michael Holton which is now in the HGS Heritage Virtual Museum (see below).

On the 8th May 1945 Germany surrendered. In London, crowds massed in Trafalgar Square and all the way up the Mall to Buckingham Palace where King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by their daughters and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, appeared on the balcony of the palace before the cheering crowds. And here in the Suburb, a Thanksgiving Mass was held at St Jude's. The church was filled from end to end.

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN



**LEVERTON & SONS LTD**  
Independent Family Funeral Directors since 1789



**We are your local funeral director**  
in Hampstead Garden Suburb

624 Finchley Road, NW11 7RR

020 8455 4992

www.levertons.co.uk

finchleyroad@levertons.co.uk

6 BRANCHES ACROSS NORTH LONDON

Camden Town | Golders Green | Gospel Oak | Hampstead  
Kentish Town | Muswell Hill



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

Accredited  
Until 2022



## Hall and Randall Plumbers

Plumbing and Heating Services • Property Maintenance



Central Heating, Plumbing Repairs & Advisory Service

**Look no further... your local plumbers**

Emergency repairs, blocked pipes, drainage,  
guttering, roofing, central heating and boilers.  
12 months guarantee, 40 years experience

132 Manor Way, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1QX

Web: www.hallandrallplumbers.com

Email: office@hallandrall.com

Tel: 020 8953 2094 • Fax: 020 8905 1602

Evenings: Garry 020 8207 3286 • Greg 020 8953 9828

