

Joyce Taylor

#### Shrapnel

It was a Sunday the day War broke out and I remember I had just got up, I always had a sleep in on a Sunday. I remember my dad saying "Well that's the end of England, The Bloody Germans will all be over here!"

I remember not long after that there was an air raid warning. I was up at Stewart Park, where I wasn't supposed to be, when I heard the sirens going off. I cut over the golf links and ran down the back alleys towards Grove Hill where I lived, I could hear someone calling my name, it was my mam. When we met up she said she had heard this almighty bang behind her as she was coming through the alleys so we went to investigate. Well, we found the biggest piece of shrapnel you have ever seen and it must have just missed her. I remember thinking that if any thing had happened to my mam I would never have forgiven myself!

#### Dig for victory

All over Middlesbrough bits of green land had been turned over for the growing of vegetables. I remember one time coming home from the shops and my mam saying "oh, I've forgotten to get the cabbage, ah well, never mind we'll just pick one on the way."

#### Army grey coat

I'll never forget my army grey coat, I was as skinney as a rake in those days and I was trying the coats on and even the smallest size looked like a dressing gown on me. When I came home on leave I bumped into an old friend and she didn't recognise me, she said "my god what are you wearing?" That was it. My mam when out the next day, bought a reel on cotton and cut 10 inches off it.

#### Joining up

I was nearly 17 when the War started and I must admit that the war years were the happiest of my life. I know it was sorrow and misery for some people, but really, I lived because you didn't know if you would be here today and gone tomorrow. I was working at Prices which was a tailoring factory at the time, it was a reserve job, when all this khaki started to arrive. One of the girls said, "Well, it looks like we are here for the duration" and that was it. I downed tools and went to the office, "lick em and stick em" I said to the boss. "You what?" he replied, "my cards, I've had enough" and that was that! I was itching to join up.

#### Getting married

We waiting 3 months until we could both get leave at the same time before we could get married, you were given a few coupons towards it, but that didn't get you much so I got married in my uniform at St Oswald's church and we had a lovely time. Everybody chipped in, we had an ox tongue and a ham. A friend of mine iced the two tier wedding cake. You couldn't get much to drink, but we managed six bottles of champagne cider and a bottle of sherry. We did very well really because we had glasses and half the weddings you went to, you could be drinking out of chipped mugs.

#### The Pubs

The pubs were open from 5 until 10 and some of them served beer between 5 and 6 but the Broadway, our local, usually served it between 9 and 10. There was many a time when you went in and asked for a drink, the barman would say "Well, if you can find a glass you can have a drink. I remember one time when my husband and I, and my sister and her husband went to the wrestling and then for a drink. We ordered 3 pints but there was only one glass for us to drink it out of, you didn't let a little thing like that stop you're enjoyment.