

JEAN KERR

Evacuation

I was only 12 when the War broke out and didn't want to be evacuated straight away. I was the oldest of 8 and stayed to help my mam. When I did decide the time was right, I choose to go with a friend called Whinney Davis, who lived just over the road, but straightaway we were split up and I was placed with a different girl from my class who I didn't know. We were taken on the bus and when we arrived we were given sandwiches and then we all sat around on the floor waiting to be picked. We were almost the last ones to be picked. I think that we were in the last four. The lady who took the two of us in only had one bed, so she gave it up for us and slept in a chair. She was a nice old lady and we felt bad about putting her out of her bed. She tried her best but she really didn't know how to look after two young girls.

There was no kitchen in the house, so to speak of, and the toilet was just a midden behind the orchard. Well, I was terrified to go at night, so we made a pack to always go together. I only stayed there for 3 weeks because there was an outbreak of Scarlet fever and because I had a sore throat I was sent home.

War declared

I remember coming home from church and everybody was talking about it, we didn't have a wireless but everyone who did had them turned up loud so we could all stand outside and listen to the announcement. And we all thought great, we won't have to go to school and for a little while we didn't.

The shelter

We had a brick shelter built in our street and it was allocated to four families, but one of them never did use it. I remember my mam had a bag besides the front door and in it were all the gas masks, the insurance papers, a bottle of water, some candles and a few matches. The instructions were, who ever was the first to leave the house had to take the bag. There was a family up from us, and they were proper dosey people. I remember this particular night when all the families were coming out of the shelter we were waiting for our dad, who was, by the way, in charge of the candle. My mam asked him what was taking him so long and he told her he couldn't put the candle out because there was a baby still in the shelter. Well, my mam had seen the babies family go out first so she knocked them up shouting "what about the bairn then? Are you taking him in or what?" In their hurry to get out they had forgotten to take the baby with them and had just merrily gone off to bed, it was a good job it was my dad on candle duty that night.

Rations

My mother was a great manager and she could make many a meal out of nothing, and we were a big family. But I've seen us get up on a morning and we'd have no money. We would see what we had to sell, you could get tuppence for collecting up the jam jars. It was mostly on a Friday when we went short because my dad didn't get paid until after 2.00pm. We always had fish and chips on a Friday and our mam somehow always found the money.