

KEN BARWICK

The Anderson shelter

I remember the day war was declared, I was in the garden digging a big hole for the Anderson shelter when we heard the announcement on the radio. We stopped the digging went and listened to the announcement and then went straight back to the digging, we decided to get it finished before the first bombs went off. Then the sirens went off so we dug a bit faster.

The bombing of the rec

At the bottom of our back garden stood large poplar trees and just beyond them was the recreation ground, I remember the night it was bombed. I was lying in my bed in the back bedroom, that night we had been up and down to the shelter twice already, but nothing had happen so when the sirens went off again my mam said "just turn back over and get back to sleep." Well, there were this bang and then another and then the next thing I knew all the windows in the back of our house came blasting in. Three bombs had been dropped, one fell on Law Street, one on Mill Street and Orwell Street and the last one landed in the rec.

As soon as the raid was over my uncle came round to check that everyone was alright and then we all went round to my auntie's house, to see if she was ok. Well, she lived on Orwell Street and her house had taken quite a blast, the house opposite, number 20 had been totally demolished. Her favourite dressing table mirror was pitted with glass and when she got the claim back from the insurance she decided to get it repaired. Dixon and Benson was the furniture restorer in the town so she sent it to them, which was a bit of a shame because somebody burned it down with my aunty's mirror still inside. The dressing table stood mirror-less after that.

Rations

We never had a problem with food during the war, my dad had a garden where we used to grow our own vegetables and we kept rabbits. My uncle used to keep pigs on his allotment and when he slaughtered them we always got a joint. We kept the rabbits in cages and fattened them up and every so often when we wanted a joint, we would kill one of the rabbits and roast it, just like a chicken. The home grown rabbits tasted wonderful, but after the war I tried a wild one and it was no where near as tasty. I also used to make mittens out of the skins, I would pin the skin up on a board and treat the back with saltpetre and that would preserve the skin, then I'd make them into little mitts.

Evacuation

I didn't really get the chance to miss my family when I was evacuated. My dad worked shifts on the railway and 2 out of 3 Sundays, when his shifts allowed my mam and him would a tandem up to see me. I used to have my Sunday dinner at Helmsley and then I would set off as soon as o had finished and walk towards Middlesbrough to meet my mam and dad on the way. 28 miles there. 56 both ways. That was some bike ride.