

MAVIS BARWICK

Evacuation

Right at the beginning of the war I was evacuated to Cayton Bay, I only stayed there for a couple of weeks because a mine on the beach just near where we were staying exploded and blow the door of my chalet, it was thought best we returned to Middlesbrough.

In July 1940 I was again evacuated, this time to Sprockston, which is just outside of Helmsley, we had to walk to and from school every day, which was about a 3 mile round trip, all this on just jam sandwiches. One of the jobs I had to do whilst I stayed there was to collect the shopping from the grocery shop near the bridge at Hemsley, it was quite a journey and one week I forgot to pick up the sugar so I was sent straight back to get it.

In the August the annual Sunday School Anniversary party was held, I was told because I had only been there a month and hadn't paid in that I couldn't go, well, I was really upset about that, but a week before the event, somebody seceded to let me and I was so delighted, I had a lovely day.

Back home

I was 12 when I came back from evacuation, there wasn't a lot happening in Middlesbrough at the time, so it was thought a good idea for me to return. It was 1940 and there had hardly been any bombing. I returned in the October and can't have been there for more than 5 minutes when the bombs started. We seemed to be in the shelter every night. I lived on Bell Street, which was just off Ayresome Grange Road near Archibald School. Our shelter was in the middles of the street and we shared it with the family next door but one, the Essens, there were nine of us all together and when the air raid sirens sounded we all had to make our way to the shelter as quickly as possible. I had to sit on a little rocking chair with my little brother strapped to me whilst I tried to nurse him. Sometimes you could be going in and out of the shelter all night. If this was the case, you were allowed to go to school a bit later than usual the next morning.

I remember one night, I was sick to death of getting up and down, the sirens had gone off twice already and we had to get in and out of bed, by the third time I'd had enough and I thought, fiddle this, I'm staying in bed! So I put my head right under the bed clothes and hoped that nobody missed me. I could here the guns going off and the anti aircraft fire sounding over at Newport, but I thought I'm staying put. After about ten minutes my father ran in, and oh how he was livid, they had done a head count in the shelter and realised I was missing, he dragged me out of that bed.

Watching the bombs

My dad was in the home guard during the war and two nights out of the week he had to be on duty. If there was an air raid going on and we had to go to the shelter, me and Kathleen Essen would wait until Our mams were chatting and go over to the doors to watch all of the bombs landing We'd stand there watching until our mams' saw us and made us come back inside. We never had any fear.

I remember one night when there was a raid on, looking out towards Newport, I could see all the anti aircraft fire, we called it the Ack Ack, and I could see the great big grey helium filled barrage balloons that floated above Newport to stop the German fighter pilots coming in low, but this night one of the anti aircraft guns misfired and accidentally shot down one of the balloons, well the whole thing just went up, it lit up the whole of the sky, which was funny because we weren't even allowed to shine a torch upwards and if there was a chink of light coming through your curtains you were in trouble and here was this balloon lighting up all of Newport for the whole world to see. It was so

funny, but, do you know what? We weren't frightened and I wouldn't have missed it all for the world.

Rations

Now, I liked the food during the War, there was nothing I liked better than an omelette made with dried egg, I loved it! And at school we used to get given cocoa powder that had been sent to us from the Canadians to make in to a drink, but mine never made it all the way home, As soon as they handed it to me I would eat it dry, I'd stick my finger in it and lick it off, Dip and Lick!

V E day

I can remember we danced in Carlow Street. I went with Kathleen Essen, who lived at 36 Bell Street, I lived at number 40, and my mam allowed me to stay out until 10.00pm, well, it was unheard of. I was not quite fifteen and Kathleen was just a year older. Somebody put a record player out in the middle of the street, and there was all sorts of people passing out food and drinks, the flags were all out, and I remember dancing to Bing Crosby "don't fence me in" with the Andrews Sisters. There was bunting and union jacks were painted on the side of the air raid shelter, all the old songs. It was marvellous!

Girls Friendly Society

I was in the Girls Friendly Society with my good friend Kathleen Essen, it was very much like a youth club and was held in St Cuthberts church on a Monday and Thursday. We would go for a bag of chips on the way.

It was very much like the girl guides but religious based, we learned basic skill such as cooking and sewing, we would gather in small groups to play games and tell stories. If there was an air raid warning, then you were instructed to go to the nearest shelter which was on Whitehouse Street. It kept us busy two nights a week.