

Some memories of the war (1939-1945) from a woman who was a teenager then.

War broke out on 3rd September 1939. This was a hot sunny Sunday in Liverpool where I lived.

#### Evacuation.

That week the Evacuation of children began. Children were sent away from the big cities to the countryside for safety.

Lime Street Station was filled with children of all sizes and ages with gas masks in cardboard boxes over their shoulders; labels pinned to their lapels gave their name and identification number. Everyone had to carry an identity card.

I was taken by train into the country - the journey was long. The whole school was taken on arrival to a church hall, and we waited to be collected by 'someone'. We did not know who it would be. Those children who were not taken by someone were taken by bus to a house or cottage for the duration of the war.

Not all children stayed that long. The cottage I was sent to had no gas, no electricity, no running water or indoor toilet. The toilet was in a hut at the very bottom of a long garden. There was no bathroom - we had our baths in a tin bath in front of the kitchen fire. My mother was not happy about me being away from home and she came to collect me after one week. She said that if we were going to die then it would be better to die together. It so happened that we all lived safely through the war.

#### Sounds of War - An Air Raid

The sounds of war were very different from the sounds of a country at peace. When there was an air raid the sirens wailed loudly and eerily. We would look at the clocks quickly before running to our Anderson shelter in the garden. If it was 10 or 12 o'clock pm we knew there would be a long night of bombing to come. If it was 2 or 3 a.m. then maybe it would only last a matter of hours.

Sometimes there were two or three air raids in the same night and some in the day-time too.

As we ran we would see the searchlights scanning the sky for the enemy aircraft.

The sound of enemy aircraft was different from our own planes. They used to switch their engines off to avoid being detected. We would then hear a drmm...drmm...drmm...drmm... This was an ominous sound.

You could also hear the scream of the bombs as they fell through the air. First there would be a 'descending' whine, then an explosion which was sometimes louder than thunder and at other times a dull 'crump' in the distance.

We would listen hard for the comforting sound of our own anti-aircraft guns and rockets fighting back at the enemy. Sometimes, however, these were silent - especially during the May Blitz in Liverpool, when the bombing was long and incessant for ten nights from 1st - 10th May.

The most wonderful sound of all was that of the 'all clear'. The siren would sound again but this time it did not wail but gave out a long, clear, steady note to announce that the 'raiders' had passed. Maybe, though, we would return to bed, only to hear the air raid siren again and so rush back to the shelter.

### Sights in Liverpool

Incendiary (fire) bombs were a real danger. Huge metal tanks full of water were positioned on almost every street corner. These were called E.W.S. tanks - Emergency Water Supply tanks. More E.W.S. were carried in huge pipes.(about 35cm in diameter) which were on the edges of the pavement and had to be stepped over.

People in uniforms could be seen too. Air Raid Wardens wore overalls and tin hats; soldiers, sailors and airmen were often in Liverpool en route between North America and Europe. Liverpool was the Western approaches port and the town was always busy. There were Americans, Canadians, Poles and Norwegians. The French sailors wore little 'pom-poms' on their hats.

### The Black Out

For fear of air raids it was necessary to ensure absolute darkness at night. This would make places less easy to find. At first no torches could be carried. When it was eventually allowed they had to have black tape over them so that only a little light would show. Torches always had to be carried pointing downwards. Car lights also had to be covered.

(A few cars had huge 'balloons' full of gas on top of them to save petrol).

At the windows you could see black-out curtains or windows with nets of tape pasted over them to prevent glass shattering.

People never moved about without their gas masks - these had to be carried everywhere.

In the sky were huge barrage balloons.

We didn't see a banana for over six years.