

BOROUGH OF EDMONTON.

Air Raid Precautions

Enrolment of Volunteers.

URGENT AND IMPORTANT.

The Local Authority in response to Urgent Communications from the Secretary of State for the Home Department, based on the highest advice in the National Interest, are now organising the following Air Raid Precautions Services:—

AIR RAID WARDENS.

Eligible: Responsible and active men over 30,

FIREWORKS

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHGATE A.F.S



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Threepence

Enfield Victory Celebrations

5th JUNE, 1946



OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

AND BRIEF HISTORY OF ENFIELD
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR
1939-1945

Price 6d.

ENFIELD AT WAR

(Edmonton, Enfield & Southgate)

1939 — 1945

During the night of 30th September, twelve H.E. and three oil bombs fell in Enfield. A quantity of incendiary bombs also fell in northern Enfield but they landed in open country and did little damage. The H.E., most of which fell in Ponders End, demolished shops and severely damaged the Congregational Church in the High Road, but the worst incident was when a H.E. bomb fell on the Two Brewers public house on the corner of South Street and the High Road. The bomb fell just before closing time and several of the customers were killed outright, with others being trapped in the wrecked building. Heavy Rescue teams worked all night to free injured and recover the dead.

15 Oct. 2150 New River overflowing and flooding Village
Road and Park Avenue.

2239 New River Culvert, 24" main broken, flooding.

2330 Flooding spread to Hertford Road. (197)

At about 9 p.m. on the night of 15th October the pipeline carrying the diverted water of the New River from Southbury Road was shattered by a bomb causing severe flooding which eventually spread to Hertford Road. By 9.45 p.m. the water had been turned off at the north end of the New River. 46,000,000 gallons of water a day passed through the pipes and it was essential that supply was maintained. At 5 a.m. on the following day, 2,000 soldiers began arriving in Enfield and they commenced to dig out the nearby filled-in section of the New River so that the original course could be brought back into use. While this was going on, the N.F.S. pumped water past the quarter mile of channel on which the troops were working. Within twentyfour hours 10,000,000 gallons of water were flowing and two days later this had increased to 15,000,000 gallons. The pipes were subsequently repaired by the Metropolitan Water Board and contractors and normal supply was restored on 6th November. Many people were convinced that this incident was an act of sabotage and not the result of a German bomb. The sabotage story could not be denied because of the strict security prevailing at the time (the presence of the fire brigade was explained as a training exercise) but, although the full account appeared in the local papers at the end of the war (198) the story of sabotage was being repeated long afterwards. (199)



Fig 14 Queen Annes Place, Bush Hill Park, Enfield, 1940

Enfield had its worst night of the blitz on 15/16th November 1940 (203) There were 34 separate incidents in this one district alone when in addition to high explosive and incendiary bombs, there were seven parachute mines. The first of these mines fell just before 10 p.m. at the junction of Willow and Peartree Roads. Immediately afterwards, another fell in London Road. The others fell within the next two hours; one in a disused gravel pit at the rear of Park Crescent, two on the Ridgeway, one in Linkside, Slades Hill and the other in the Town Park. At



Fig 17 Willow Road, Enfield, 16th November 1940.

the Willow Road incident, where a number of houses were demolished and others damaged, the mine fell close to the wardens post on the corner of Peartree Road. Mr. F. Somers, a full-time warden, was standing near the entrance to the post and was killed instantly. Part-time warden Mr. S. Greenway was fatally injured and died in Chase Farm Hospital. Two other part-time wardens, Mr. F. Silvester and Mr. F. Dancey were badly injured. Dr. Karsten, a German Jewish refugee who had brought his family to England and set up practice here, was presumed dead along with his wife and relative, all of whom lived opposite the post, for, apart from some unidentifiable fragments of human flesh subsequently recovered from the roof of one of the houses, they were never seen again. Some of the doctor's correspondence was later found as far away as Whitewebbs. (204) The mine which fell in the centre of London Road, just beyond the Catholic Church of Our Lady and St. George, damaged the church beyond repair. It also wrecked the convent on the opposite side of the road but the nuns escaped with only minor injuries. Several houses in London Road were badly damaged and some had to be demolished. Shop windows in the Town were shattered by the blast and there were casualties caused by flying glass. There was consternation amongst the wardens and rescue workers when they came across several 'bodies' strewn across the pavements and in the roadway near the Market Place. Great relief was expressed when it was found they were shop dummies which had been blown out of the windows of Burtons by the force of the explosion. (205) Damage was caused by the mine which exploded in the old gravel pit. It also killed Mr. W. Hazel a part-time warden, who was on patrol in Uvedale Road, and seriously injured Mr. D. Clarke, another warden. Several



Fig 18 London Road, Enfield, 16th November 1940.

houses were demolished by the mine which fell in Linkside and damage to property was also caused by the other mines. Mr. R. Hill, a part-time warden, was on duty in Enfield that night, "I had just got home after a very busy day — I was a cashier at the time with the then Enfield U.D.C. — I was having my tea when the siren went. It was about 6 p.m. I reported to my wardens post, did one patrol, when a load of incendiaries dropped which we dealt with adequately, then later some parachute mines dropped including the one at Apple Grove/Pear Tree Road when several people were killed. Even at the distance we were the flashes were blinding and explosions terrific. Anti-aircraft gunfire was going almost incessantly all night. It quietened down and eventually ceased about 5 a.m. The all clear sounded and almost immediately we heard a lone plane scurrying for home. Then we heard a bomb drop close by. It was in Hawthorn Grove. I was first on the scene and found the house badly damaged. The front door was partially blown open and I was able to force it open sufficiently to get inside the house. I called out to see if there was anybody in the house at the time and I heard a woman's voice. My colleague ran back to the post for the incident to be reported to the Control Room which was in the basement of the Methodist Church in Church Street. I crawled in as near as I could to the woman who sounded elderly but she was very brave and calm. She told me that when the all clear sounded she put the kettle on to make herself a cup of tea. She heard a bomb falling and dived under the kitchen table. The back of the house had collapsed and was virtually resting on the kitchen table thus saving her life. A few minutes later a member of the Auxillary Fire Service, who were stationed at Lavender Road School, arrived and he was able to turn off the water which I could hear pouring down and also the gas, while I continued to talk to the woman who was pinned down and could not move. Then the Heavy Rescue Squad arrived and within the hour, with their specialised equipment, they were able to raise the debris to extricate the woman and she was taken to hospital by ambulance. But that was not all. We knew that other bombs had been dropped by this lone marauder, although they had not exploded. So a search began. We found one sticking out of a doorstep in Kynaston Road, another on the Baker Street allotments. Altogether I think



Fig 29 Food queue, Enfield Town.

mite as a meal for her baby. This appeared to be acceptable to the infant and was given on several other occasions. Less successful was her use of turnip tops as a second vegetable. "My husband had an allotment and grew turnips. At the time they were selling turnip tops for greens and quite nice too. However, my husband brought some home which were rather large and I was dubious about them. I cooked them and three of us had them and we were terribly ill for two days. I learned afterwards that they were full of arsenic when large." Mrs. B. Coleman remembers that "sometimes nice things happened as well, like mum producing 'real' egg and chips. We used to eat this very slowly and savour every mouthful. Mum even managed to make some kind of fudge, perhaps as a birthday treat, with soya flour as one of the ingredients. A neighbour once made us children an 'ice cream cornet'. It was really a cone with a blob of cold custard in it and three small currants on top. We licked this for hours."

The places of men conscripted into the armed forces or directed into essential industries were being filled by women; Land Girls were working at Forty Hall in August 1939, (214) and by 1941 many local postal deliveries were being made by women. (215). By the end of 1942, women were also being conscripted and directed into war work. Members of the Womens Voluntary Services were doing sterling work; (216) mention has already been made of the assistance given at bombing incidents. They also contributed to the general war effort in a great many other ways; they helped to run British Restaurants, information centres (part of the Northmet showroom in Palmers Green became a local information centre manned by members of the W.V.S.) (217), savings groups, by acting as messengers, helping the homeless, collecting books and dartboards for distribution to serving men, collecting salvage, and so on. A record of which they must be proud. (218)

Britain had now become an armed fortress. Everywhere could be seen the architecture of war. Pill-boxes, anti-tank obstacles and sandbagged emplacements stood at important road junctions. Police stations, town halls and other buildings were protected by sandbags. The windows of shops, houses and buses were covered with strips of tape to prevent them being splin-



Fig 21 Woman postal workers, Southbury Road Depot, Enfield, 1940.



Fig 22 Siren, wardens post and shelter at Forty Hill, Enfield.

The scars of war took a long time to heal, indeed many are still with us today; new houses in a terrace contrast with the old to show where gaps caused by bombing have been filled. A few brick wardens posts have survived; there is one next to St. Stephens Church, Enfield, another in the corner of the playing fields next to the police station at Winchmore Hill. A surface air raid shelter stands in the ground of Raglan School, Edmonton, and nearby is yet another wardens post. There are even one or two Anderson shelters in situ, and many more which have been re-erected as garden sheds, fuel stores, etc. In the fields north of Slades Hill, Enfield, stand the remains of an anti-aircraft battery. An underground air raid shelter can be seen in the playground of the George Spicer School, Enfield, and another next to the Lower Grammar School building in Silver Street, Enfield. Yet another stands in the grounds of Arnos School, Wilbury Way, Southgate, and three more are in the grounds of Millfield House Arts Centre, Edmonton. (344) The bricked up doorway of the staff air raid shelter can be seen beneath the stairs leading to the down platform on Palmers Green station. In Bury Street, Edmonton, the black and yellow static water tank sign is still visible on the wall near Salisbury House — similar signs can be seen on the bridges over the New River in Southgate. The memorial seat on the site of the wardens post in Willow Road, Enfield, reminds us of the tragedy that occurred there on the night of 15th/16th November 1940, and in the cemetery in Cedar Road, Enfield, is the communal grave of people killed in an air raid.



Fig 34 Bomb crater, Flash Lane, Enfield.

In a field beside Flash Road, Enfield, in peaceful wooded surroundings, can be seen a crater where a German bomb fell in 1940. Of all the survivals of the war, this is perhaps the most chilling reminder of the death and destruction that fell from the skies more than a generation ago when Enfield went to war.