

# BERYL HAYMAN

I was three years old when the war started. I lived in Hornsey, north London, with my parents, older brother and twin sister. I do not remember much about it in the early days until when I started school and had to walk all the way **carrying a Gas mask**. Then it became a reality. With our friends we would compare notes – asking “did any bombs drop near you last night ?”

In our garden we had an **Anderson Shelter**, made of corrugated iron. Inside were four bunks – quite basic. Because they were mostly underground, the floor would often be flooded. My father (when not on duty with the A.R.P.), brother and I would sleep in this, when the sirens went. As my sister had asthma, she had to sleep inside the house with my mother. The dinning room contained a **Morrison shelter**, which was a steel/iron frame with caging around the four sides. It was the size of a double bed so consequently my parents slept on the top with their mattress! and needing a small ladder to get to their bed !

When we were **warned on the wireless** during the day there might be an air raid, my brother, sister and I would sleep in the **kitchen cupboard**, which was under the stairs. We were able to get to the shelters very quickly then. The garden shelter had a light fuelled by a strange white battery – a glass container containing acid & wires, as I remember. It was called **an accumulator**.

My father, being in **the ARP**, would not always be at home at night if he was on duty. He would cycle to work in the evening and come home just before we left for school the following morning. The **mornings after a raid**, we would walk to school (St Marys Infant school, Priory Road, Hornsey) as usual, picking up **pieces of shrapnel** on the way. These were pieces of strangely contorted metal from the bombs etc. which we all collected.

One night there was a **surprise air raid**. A bomb was dropped on the north Middlesex cricket ground, opposite our house. Earth and debris came flying through the front room windows and onto the rear roof. All the wardrobes fell away from the walls because of the blast. With Mum we had quickly managed to get into the **indoor shelter**. A bookcase had fallen on our shelter. A block of flats was also hit about 6 doors away and two people were killed.

We were now **bombed out of our house** and were moved to Cranley Gardens in Muswell Hill.

We then went to live with a family in **Accrington, Lancashire** for a year. This was arranged by a friend of my mother. We stayed with a couple named Smith, and their two daughters, Sylvia & Barbara. We became great friends and **walked to school every day** – we walked home for lunch as well !

My brother sat his **11+ on D-Day** (and passed). He was billeted by a friend of our host family so we saw him regularly. We went to the Baptist Church twice

on Sundays and were amazed to see a total immersion baptism in a small pool under the floor in their church.

I can remember also lying in bed early morning listening to the mill workers clogs as they 'clopped' past our bungalow to the big red cotton mill at the end of the road. **In the evenings** we did sewing, card games, etc and when Uncle was on leave a film show (black & white 'Mickey Mouse' and 'Donald Duck').

We were in Accrington just a year before returning to our original rented home in Hornsey, now made habitable. After the war, we continued our friendship with the whole family.

Beryl, a member of Wheathampstead WI, also remembers her and her sister sat for hours **unpicking a parachute** so that her mother could make much needed items of clothing from it. She still has one of the nightdresses her mother made from the parachute silk.

[extracts from Beryl's written memories – January 2025]

This photo, taken in January 2025, is of Beryl (second from the left) with some of the other Wheathampstead WI members who were young girls during the 2nd World War.



Left to right - Di Adams, Beryl Hayman, Margaret Barker & Maggie Clapp.