
Doris Chamberlain

I remember it being a Sunday, Dad heard it on his wireless. We were at War!!!! Then the sirens went off, followed by an all clear siren.

I gave up my work at the laundry to work at K.L.G. (K.L.G. Sparking Plugs LTD).

I worked in the factory for the 6 years of the war and stayed a bit longer after the war was over. In the mornings I would take the bus to work. We would have to take our tin helmets and gas masks.

Everyday the sirens would go off and we would have to follow the procedures of turning off our machines and not to panic, as we had to move quickly to the shelters.

Some days it was only once or twice, other days it seemed we just turned our machines on and we would have to turn them off again and return to the shelter. We never let this get us down, but found things to laugh at and supported each other.

On finishing work everyday, the disabled people, including myself, were helped onto buses first, before the others came out. One night, on the way home I got off at the wrong stop. There was a warden who saw me, there were overhead lights sweeping the ground. I will always remember that warden. He said "come on matey" and he led me through some flats that had already been bombed, to a shelter. You had to have a password to get in, my password was baked plum.

One Friday night, we were down in the bomb shelter except for my father who was still upstairs in our flat. We could hear the bomb coming! And coming, getting closer. When it hit I had laid over a child to protect it, my mother laid with my baby brother John. Our father came over the make sure we were ok. One lady was killed by the impact of the blast, probably also because she didn't lay down. The impact also caused my brother to be flown onto a tree. We went to a local school where they had food provided. As we were walking in they all laughed at us. We must have looked a sight, they were calling us the black and white minstrels, from all the dust and debris.

One of my friends asked me to go to a different air-raid shelter, Lucy was her name, I told her that I had to stay with my parents....that night she was killed when her shelter was bombed.

Christmas was always a cease-fire. It was a treat to be able to sleep in your own bed. As soon as the Christmas break was over the bombing started straight away.

One morning we were in the shelter when we heard a really strange noise. We were too scared to look outside. After a bit we could hear Dad laughing and we went outside to see a barrage balloon. It had hit a building and the sides were flapping like elephant's ears – it was nice to see something funny.

There were planes that flew overhead that had no pilots, they called these doodle bugs. We hated to have to hear the motors cut out and hope they didn't fall anywhere near you. So many were killed from these doodle bugs.

We used to go to the pictures, called the Savoy. I remember going to see "Gone With the Wind", there weren't many people there. Not long after I had seen that picture it was bombed too.

Mum evacuated to Bexs Hill with the baby, to stay with our Auntie. Two of my sisters were evacuated to Redcliff. Everyone accepted life and carried on as best we could.

We could hear German planes droning on and on often, the tension leaving you with a headache. I'm still not keen on planes. When the searchlights went over we used to say they were kisses from our brothers.

As life moved on I had two pen pals. One was a soldier, the other a sailor. I looked forward to exchanging letters with them both.

I had one brother, Alf and another Billy, who were both in the war. Once Billy had a German chasing him, as he ran into a trench he told us he could hear his mother calling him and telling him to kill the German. My brother stabbed him with his bayonet.

After the war was finished, sadly he lost his mind, and now my brother Alf has passed away. On a Sunday morning my brother and sister came running in with the papers, all excited. Our brother Billy's photo was on the front page with his arm held high in the victory sign...he was the first soldier over the line as the war was declared OVER. Sadly I can't remember the name of the paper to get a copy of it.

I remember Churchill always having his hand up with the victory sign. During the war we listened to Vera Lynn a lot. She also used to sing to the troops and we enjoyed her music.

When the war was announced OVER, on the wireless, the lights were allowed to be turned on and everyone was partying in the streets, all hugging and so very happy.

My Family Members

Dad – worked in a cemetery

Mum – evacuated for parts of the war with brother

Myself – worked in factory

Alf – soldier fighting in Burma

Billy – soldier fighting in Germany

Lilley – worked in factory

Joyce – evacuated to Redcliff

Elsie – evacuated to Redcliff

John – evacuated with Mum