

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

AIR RAIDS - SHELTERS

Remembering air raids in Horsham and East Grinstead

From *Memories from a town that disappeared, Horsham during World War II* (Horsham Museum, 1989)

By Mrs S. Glaysher, Horsham

During the Battle of Britain, and in the later years of the war when the Doodlebugs were coming over at frequent intervals, we had nightly air raid warnings, and slept downstairs in an indoor shelter. This was like a heavy steel table, with mesh sides that fastened on, the theory being that if a bomb fell on the house we would remain safe from falling rubble. The worst night I can remember was when bombs fell on houses in Orchard Road, but I can also remember running home from school during daylight raids, with the RAF engaged in 'dog-fights' with enemy planes overhead. We were supposed to take shelter but always preferred to reach home and be with our parents.

At school lessons were often interrupted by the sound of the siren and at Denne Road Junior Girls' School we would walk in an orderly manner across the playground to the shelters, where our teachers would keep our minds off the air raids by testing our spelling or mental arithmetic. In 1944 I became a pupil at Horsham High School, and visits to the air raid shelters became fewer, but I remember Mr. Stanley Sutton, the music master, taking community singing in the shelter on more than one occasion.

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From *Chequer Mead, History of a Local School 1859-1990*, by Eileen Shepherd and Marilyn Seabrook (Lockholt & Co, Printer, C.1992)

By Miss S Brons

Air raid practice was fun for the children, for we could not work down the air raid shelters, which for the infants were underground alongside the boundary with De La Warr road. I seem to remember that we had a dim light down there, and we sat in the gloom singing and telling stories until the all clear was sounded. We emerged, checked that we had a full complement of children, and resumed work.....

When the V1 bombs came, it was more dangerous to go to one of the shelters, than to stay in the school. The guns had been moved in nearer to the school, and falling shrapnel would have put the children at risk. When the siren went, the children just dived under their desks, and they stayed there until it was over. I cannot remember any child crying or showing fear at these times. Perhaps they accepted it as part of the school routine.

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[Longer extracts from *Chequer Mead, History of a Local School 1859-1990* and *Memories from a town that disappeared, Horsham during World War II* can be found in in course section [On the Home Front - Daily Life](#)]