

Yvonne Stuckey (nee Simons)

When I was a little girl the war started, I was at the seaside in a place called Clacton with my brother, cousin, mother and nan.

We helped the soldiers put sand into big sacks and they were used to protect building from bombs. The soldier also put barbed wire on the beaches so that the Germans could not land.

On the Saturday we went home and we were then evacuated to another seaside place called Brighton. My mother came as well as my brother was too little to go away on his own. We were taken to a school where people came to chose who would stay with them. The first house we went to was nasty and dirty and my mother would not stay. We were then transferred to a big house opposite a lovely park, we shared the house with another mother and two boys.

We went to school, one week in the morning and one week in the afternoon, so that all the children in Brighton could do the same. We played games and walked on the South Downs for the other half of the day. We stayed for about a year but returned home as my father was on his own in Croydon. We had to take our gas masks and iron rations to school. The iron rations were hard biscuits and a drink in case the school was bombed and we were trapped in the shelter, it also contained a piece of chocolate but we were told off if we ate it!!

Ration books were issued, green for a child, it contained sweet coupons which you gave the shop in exchange for sweets (as well as money). The sweets were supposed to last a week – if you eat them quickly you had to wait until the next week to get more!

The only fruit that we had was grown in England but when the war ended bananas and oranges came into the shops and I queued for a long time with my ration book to get some.

We slept at night in bunk beds in a shelter in the garden, it was called an Anderson, next door were other children and we made a telephone with string and cocoa tins and talked to each other (no mobile phones). Our parents would come and say it's time to go to sleep.

One day my dad took me to London to see the fire damage that had been caused by bombs that had fallen in the East End and it was still alight. We were born in Hackney and my grandma's house and shop had been hit by a bomb, she was safe in the shelter but had lost her things.

The Buzz Bombs had started to arrive and Croydon had most of them. They flew on their own and were noisy, when the noise stopped you counted to ten and took cover. We lost some of our houses and a neighbour's son took my brother and me to his niece who lived in the country. We stayed near Aylesbury for nearly a year and went to the local school in the village which was a long walk. During the summer holiday the farmer gave us a real gypsy caravan to play in and we helped on the farm.

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I was not sad in the war, none of my family were killed or injured, we played a lot in the street as there were very few cars. Skipping and marbles were very popular, we also collected shrapnel (bits of metal from the bombs in different shapes that you swapped).