



IVY a Blitz Survivor

IVY, born July 1922, Blitz survivor now in Lincolnshire

When the war started in 1939 they said: "It will only last till Christmas." But my father said: "Don't you believe it. It will be five years at least." He was hurt in the First World War. We lived in Shoreditch. I was born within the sound of Bow Bells; my family owned a fish shop. Chamberlain came on and said: "We're now at war with



Germany". We all went into the garden to the back gate, why, I'll never know. We were standing there. Two of my brothers were married, the older ones. My youngest brother, Leonard, had been called up in the Army before 1939. We weren't really prepared for war. Albert, second eldest, worked for the Daily Mirror so he was out every night. My eldest brother, Walter, volunteered for the Fire Service. We stood in the garden and suddenly the

siren went. We thought: "Oh my God, where do we go now?" We had the Anderson shelter in the back garden. But you're flummoxed. What do you do? Where do you go? We just stood and waited to see what happened.

I used to walk home midday for dinner because I lived near work. I was a bookkeeper in a dairy and I worked six days a week, Mondays to Saturdays. The milkmen would go off at three in the morning on the first round, then at five on the second, then again to collect the money on Saturday, that's three rounds Saturdays. We had to book in all these rounds in the ledger. Air-raids held us up. Sometimes I had to work till nine o'clock. There were nearly 200 customers and different kinds of milk, and groceries. I had to add up four ledgers. They had to be balanced up while the milkmen were still there. They tried to get home quickly after feeding the horses; there was a farrier too. I was only seventeen but I had to know the business. A woman taught me how to add up columns of pounds, shillings and pence - just like that.

One Saturday I went home to dinner and the blue sky was completely black with planes. It's so vivid, the sky covered with planes. I saw one plane - I'm sure he must have been Polish - trying to break them up all by himself. He got out of it, it was amazing. We'd heard a lot about Polish airmen. My mother said: "They're having a go somewhere". Then she said Walter hadn't been home yet. Later we found out they'd done the Docks, so the Fire Service was down there putting out the flames. Later, Walter said there were lots of young boys about fifteen years old running about taking messages.

But then we carried on as normal, went to work every day, came home, nothing happened. My sister came round every day. My mother couldn't go very far. Then, about July 1940 - we used to have really good summers then - we went to bed and suddenly there was such a crash, my mother came in and said: "It must be a bomb. You'd better get up and get ready to go in the Anderson." It was a one-off, a bomb. It dropped on a cinema in Edmonton.

Three of us used to go dancing, my friends and I, up at Dalston. We went off about seven on the bus. Soon after we arrived the siren went near Dalston so we got on the bus to come home. They would stop at shelters to let you off but you'd have to find your own way home. The bus station was at the end of Phillip Lane, about ten minutes walk home. One of the girls, Eileen, said: "I'm scared. I'm getting off." The other girl stayed with me and we went on to the bus station. Then I left her to go up her road and I went home. It was a bad night that night. I never saw either of them again. Eileen's mother came round and asked my mother: "Eileen was out with Ivy last night. Where did she go?"

Mother said: "Ivy came home. Eileen got off at Abbey Park cemetery, the shelter there." "Oh my God", she said, "it had a direct hit." Eileen was drowned in all the water and gas. I never heard anything about the other girl. You never had a chance to find out about anyone else because you were too busy looking out for yourself.

They used to get the Irish navvies to the bombsites. They were marvellous.

The siren was on with everything dropping round us but I carried on back to work. Then this stray came back and started machine-gunning us in Phillip Lane. This lady was screaming. I got hold of her and got her down into a doorway. You just do it. Being a butcher's shop, all that glass, we wouldn't have stood a chance if it had been hit. I was very young. You don't realise. When it was the All-clear, I said: "Come on, I've got to get back to work. Which way are you going?"

That's when they started, day and night. I used to come home at night after the All-clear, usually about five. We spent nights in the Anderson. Once the siren went and I stopped to wash up the tea-things left on the table - don't know why - before I went in the Anderson. You do funny things. My father went to the Conservative Club every night. When he came back he'd come down the Anderson too. Mother put food in there. We came back to the house in the morning, and that's how it was every day.

At the top of our road was the big gun – the reason my tinitus is so bad. I think the landmines and doodlebugs were worse than the bombs. You didn't hear them. You'd come out of the shelters and see one hanging there. The worst Blitz week was in September, really good and proper. The week from September 7th to the 15th we would stand and watch the fighting. The big gun firing, the searchlight, the barrage balloon, all there in Tottenham.

It got heavier and heavier. It was getting closer and closer. Suddenly a stick of six got us, took half our house, and two houses next to ours. Two people walked out without a scratch from under the stairs. You couldn't get out because the earth blocked the shelter. But this was the funny thing about everything. My sister got out of that Anderson, I'll never know how. We had a twenty foot fence with a gate. She came in again and said in her smart voice: "Is everyone alright? I've been out and it's an invasion so I've locked the back gate." You don't realise the things you do and the things you say. When we got out we thought we were clean. Actually we were covered in soot, all black. I lost most of my clothes. We lost nearly everything.

Next night, September 15th, we were going in the Anderson again. Father went to his club. When he came back he said: "I'm not stopping here any more. I'm going down

the Underground. You don't hear anything down there." I said: "Well I'm going to stop at home with Mum." Mother said she'd put some port down the Anderson so she'd get drunk if we stayed down there. This was really funny. We laughed. Father didn't allow us to drink. He was very strict. He said: "We're not going in there."

My sisters, Julia, Louise, and sister-in-laws, Elizabeth and Margaret, went to Turnpike Lane Underground Station with their bundles of clothes and blankets. My friend, Lionel, said he'd help us go because Mother couldn't walk far. We got round to Downhills Park shelter but they wouldn't let us in. The siren had gone. They said they were full up. I said Mum couldn't walk. Lionel went off and they let us in. That was the last I remember.

Downhills Park had six bombs on it, one down the air shaft. My brother told me I was buried four days and four nights. I don't remember anything about it. When I came round it was all white and I thought I was in Heaven. I've always been scared stiff of hospitals. I went off again. Later, they kept asking: "What's your name? Where do you live?" I said: "I don't know. I don't know." All I kept saying was: "My mother, my mother."

MIDDLESEX
Tottenham M.B.

SMITHYES, GERTRUDE ELIZABETH, age 33. Daughter of Mr. E. E. Smithyes, of 15 Philip Lane. 19 October 1940, at Prince of Wales General Hospital.

SMYTH, SIDNEY RONALD, age 18. Son of F. G. Smyth. 19 April 1941, at Ashford Road.

SOLOMON, MYRA, age 26; of 14 Carysfort Road, Stoke Newington, London. Daughter of Leah Solomon, and of the late Samuel Solomon. Injured 10 September 1940, at 14 Carysfort Road; died 12 September 1940, at North-Eastern Hospital.

(For SOLOMON, LEAH, see STONE NEWINGTON list.)

SPIRE, ROBERT JAMES, age 32. Husband of Nora Kathleen Spire, of 9 Higham Road. Injured 19 September 1940, at Lordship Lane; died 20 September 1940, at North-Eastern Hospital.

SPRAY, CALEB, age 14; of 83 Warwick Gardens. Son of Caleb Spray, of 74 Chelmsford Road, Walthamstow, Essex; husband of May Spray. 18 October 1940, at 83 Warwick Gardens.

SPRAY, MAY, age 35; of 83 Warwick Gardens. Wife of Caleb Spray. 18 October 1940, at 83 Warwick Gardens.

SQUIRES, LOUISA MARY ANN, age 78; of 11 Moreton Road. Widow of James Squires. 20 January 1945, at 11 Moreton Road.

STYLES, JOYCE ELSIE, age 24. Wife of George T. Styles, of 22 Westbeach Road, Wood Green. 25 July 1944, at Prince of Wales General Hospital.

SULLIVAN, EDITH ELLEN, age 70. Widow of John Sullivan. 19 April 1941, at 30 Ashford Road.

SWIES, ALFRED, age 34; Air Raid Warden; of 127 Craven Park Road. 12 October 1940, at 127 Craven Park Road.

TAYLOR, ERNEST HENRY, age 70; of 51 Stamford Road. Husband of Amy Amelia Taylor. Injured 27 October 1940, at 51 Stamford Road; died same day at Prince of Wales General Hospital.

THEW, MAUD MARY, age 60; of 29 Brampton Road. Wife of Frederick John Thew. 12 October 1940, at 29 Brampton Road.

THWAITES, ERNEST WILLIAM, age 24; of 64 Cornwall Road. Son of Arthur Leonard Thwaites, and of the late Christina Thwaites. 24 August 1944, at 64 Cornwall Road.

TUCK, GEORGE, age 3. Son of George Tuck, of 65 Belmont Road. Injured 20 September 1940, at Downhills Park Shelter; died same day at Prince of Wales General Hospital.

TURNER, EMMA LOUISA, age 55. Daughter of William and Hester Lodge, of Ware Street, Hoxton; wife of Walter Turner, of 88 Gloucester Road. Injured 20 September 1940, at Downhill Park Shelter; died same day at Prince of Wales General Hospital.

VINCINAUX, NOEL JOSEPH, age 45. Husband of J. Vincinaux, of 27 Casbury Road. 11 October 1940, at 83 Warwick Gardens.

WALLIS, DORIS EDITH, age 30; of 114 Fairfax Road. Daughter of Thomas Marshall Prime and of Edith Sarah Prime; wife of L.A.C. Francis Walter Wallis, R.A.F. 10 December 1944, at 114 Fairfax Road.

WANT, HORACE SIDNEY, age 42. Husband of Sarah Want, of 152 Northwood Road. Injured 12 October 1940, at The Crooked Biller; died same day at Prince of Wales General Hospital.

WATTS, ALBERT, age 57; of 99 Asplins Road. Son of Frederick Charles Watts, of 91 Evershoe Road, Finsbury Park; husband of Lilian Louise Watts. 27 December 1940, at 99 Asplins Road.

WHITBREAD, ESTHER EMILY, age 19; of 85 Warwick Gardens, Haringay. Daughter of Albert and Beatrice Maud Whitbread. 18 October 1940, at 85 Warwick Gardens.

WHITEHEAD, MARY ANN, age 70. Widow of William Whitehead. 20 January 1945, at 13 Moreton Road.

WILLIAMS, AGNES, age 73; of 132 Fairfax Road. Wife of Horace Williams. 10 December 1944, at 112 Fairfax Road.

WILLIAMS, HORACE, age 74; of 112 Fairfax Road. Husband of Agnes Williams. 10 December 1944, at 112 Fairfax Road.

WILLIAMS, SARAH ANN, age 82. Widow of William James Williams. 20 January 1945, at 13 Osman Road.

WILLMOTT, ARTHUR, age 81; of 37 Russell Road. Husband of Emma Willmott. 12 October 1940, at 37 Russell Road.

WRIGHT, MARY GERTRUDE, age 47. Wife of A. E. Wright. 31 January 1941, at 12 Peabody Estate, Lordship Lane.

YOUNG, ETHEL KATE, age 61; of 12 Somerford Grove. Wife of Walter Ernest Young. 9 October 1940, at 12 Somerford Grove.

YOUNG, THOMAS WALTER, age 19; of 12 Somerford Grove. Son of Walter Ernest Young, and of Ethel Kate Young. 9 October 1940, at 12 Somerford Grove.

YOUNG, WILLIAM ROBERT, age 18. Son of William G. and Nellie Young, of 15 Fladbury Road. 7 September 1940, at Seven Sisters Road.

My brother came home from the Daily Mirror and passed the shelter we were in. He thought: Poor so-and-so's, not knowing we were in there. He couldn't find us at home and went searching for us. There were some terrible sights. Whole streets gone.

In 1952 I found out there were so many killed in Downhills Park shelter they were going to fill it in as a memorial. The reason I was saved was because my hand was sticking out from the earth. My brother went out searching for us, asking where we were. He was told which hospitals to go to. He found my father in St Anne's Hospital. That's where I was but he didn't find me. They thought I was only a child because of my hair. My hair was jet black and was up in the Gainsborough style; it made me look a lot younger than I was. My hair was my treasure. It was all ringlets.

My mother used to finish it off for me before I went to work. Everybody used to admire it. I've still got the tortoiseshell slide, it was a big wide slide.

He found my mother in the mortuary at the Prince of Wales Hospital. My father died soon after. He was never strong; half his stomach was missing from the First War.

It's all a bit vague but I remember being asked: "Can you walk?" I said: "Where's my clothes?" The blast had pulled everything off me except my bra and the top of my dress. The doctor said: "What a lucky girl you are. You should have lost your legs in the blast." I should have been dead really.

They said: "Let's see if you can walk." I was in their gown and their slippers, sitting on the side of the bed. But I wasn't concerned about that. All I wanted to know was: Where was I, where was I going? The doctor said: "Can you find any of your family? Just walk round the hospital." She told me what wards to look at. Most of the people from the shelter had gone there, if they came out. But I didn't take any heed of that. I walked right out of the hospital two miles to my house. I remember realising that was my house. I walked in, round the back gate as usual, and into the dining room. One of my brothers was sitting there with my sister looking at me as if I was a ghost.

When my brother, Albert, took the gown back with the slippers they were going potty, wondering where I'd gone. I don't remember anything after that until they buried my mother about a week afterwards. I remember thinking: "Why can't I remember everything?" There's a memorial to all of them at Tottenham cemetery. They sent me a card to go to it in 1957.

I lost everything, really. But to show you what it was like then: I took my sister's music-case down the shelter; it was full of money, insurance policies, everything belonging to the family. My sister asked about it. I had to borrow £2 to buy a coat because I had nothing. That's all the money I ever got: two pounds. They told me to go down to the local council offices to ask about the music-case. We had to describe what it was like. Out came the case. Not a thing was missing – not a thing. In 1957 I found out it was a neighbour's brother who got me out, and the case. They had to go down a hole and tie us to stretchers to get us out.

They said there was a young boy near the stairway in Downhills Park. They thought he'd been killed. But he hadn't been. They found him two weeks later. He'd run home! He was in the house on his own. His parents were in the shelter. I don't know what happened to them.

Afterwards my sister said: "Let's go down Turnpike Lane." We went down there every night for weeks. It was really funny down there sometimes. Someone brought a piano down so we could have a bit of a do. Our friend, Lionel, used to come in on the Tube from the meat market. He was an accountant there. He'd say: "Ivy, where are you? I've got an ox-tail." He'd hold it up and the Underground Inspector would say: "Give it to me and we'll cook it for soup." Everyone had soup from it. There was this Belgian refugee. She came over with her father and mother. Her father went into the Royal Navy. She knitted me a black cardigan to go to my mother's funeral. She did it in two nights. I'd like to see her again.

The trains ran till about midnight and started again about six. So you had to get up early. It was pitch black. Sometimes they came round spraying.

We were told about a cottage near St Neots where we could recuperate; I still couldn't remember much. My sister, Julia, went to York because her husband had a sleeping out pass from the Air Force, my other brother was in Scotland with the Air Force. There were six women at the cottage. There was a dog at the cottage, a chow. It got out one day. I was on my bike and said: "Come on, Peter." I put him on the chain but he suddenly went for me. He hung on to me all the way down the lane. I had twelve bites on my back. They had to be cauterised. I was on my stomach for six weeks.

I went back to my sister's place at York. Then there was the thousand-bomber raid and it was nothing but bomb!, bomb! bomb! If I hear a plane now, I think: "That's a German".

By D-Day I'd been called up as a civilian, like a friend who had been called up. She was with five other girls in a house in Scotland. Spitfires used to come down and an RAF sergeant would take the girls out to repair them. My friend was a welder. It was all secret. We didn't get paid like they did in the Forces, doing the same work. I was only paid about thirty bob a week, attached to the Air Force at Graveley. My boss had to go round sorting out problems for airmen. I had to keep going back to London. Every time I went back there was a raid. In 1944 we were going down the Great North Road, now the A1, and it was full of Army lorries. You couldn't get a finger between them.

The day war finished I went into the office for my work for the day. I heard them saying: "We have now penetrated France.... from six o'clock this morning" and so on. It was over and all I could think was: "My poor mother got killed. My poor father died of it." And I just sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. I never cry, not since then.

My husband, Bill, was at Dunkirk. I wasn't married to him then. He was my brother's friend. He came home and was sitting there, in the pitch dark. I walked in and said: "What are you doing there?" My mother said: "You mustn't talk to him like that, he's just come home from Dunkirk." He'd just gone over there in a lorry and they told him to turn round and sling the lorry over a cliff. Later he found a door somewhere and always took it with him to stand on because of the mud. They had mules because of the steep hills. He had three and called them Hotcake, Cheesecake and Wedding-cake. He used to help the vets. He found a dog, Jip, and he went everywhere too. Jip saved them once by letting them know a German was coming and they got him first.

But my husband was never recognised. When they had a reunion over there, I applied for it, but they said he was never there. I wasn't allowed to go. Because it wasn't in writing, they wouldn't accept it. They said he wasn't abroad till 1945. After he died about fifteen years ago I went through his papers and there were letters saying he was in Sicily in '42 and fighting all the way down Italy; he was in that Cassino do as well. He said how good the Ghurkas were. Bill was mentioned in Despatches twice, so he wasn't there for nothing.