

Tell Me
Project -
Choice 2

By

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For my 'Tell Me Project', I interviewed my nana who was just 1 at the time WWII started. The following pages are written from her perspective and what she remembers about the war and growing up in Skegness.

My first recollections as maybe a 2 year old are very few. I remember being pushed in my big pram along by the Hoardings (advertisement blocks of high wood) and there was a huge picture of a big black bug on a white background, and this was called a DoodleBug, a bomb which they dropped. It was a warning to listen for the siren, which was very loud and very scary, the same as the one you hear now for a fire.

We lived in a big four story house with a basement which had a very big window looking out at eye-level onto the front garden. A big wall was built to cover the window to shelter the room from bomb blast.



The house where my nana grew up and where she is describing is the big one on the left and the white building is my grandpa's garage where the bomb was dropped.

Also from the basement was a back door leading into the back garden. It had a long passage without windows, and when the air-raid siren was heard we all went down to this passage, which was lined with mattresses to lie on. The safest place we had. According to my mother I once opened the back door whilst bombing was going on and calmly said 'Naughty man, bang bang!'

Our house was opposite the railway station and next to our house, was my fathers very big garage. One night a bomb was dropped through the roof of the garage, but didn't explode - luckily for us. The army arrived and told my mother to take me in my pram and my 3 older brothers to stay with my aunt, about a mile on the other side of town. There were no street lights, it was pitch black, and must have been dreadful for her. My father was ordered to stay by the huge hole the bomb was in until the bomb Disposal Unit arrived! They dealt with it and there is still a huge thick wooden covering over the hole.

My father was in what they called a 'Reserved Occupation', petrol station and obviously mending and repairing vehicles. But he had to join the 'Home Guard', which patrolled the streets at night, helping with fires and rescuing people from bombed homes etc.



This picture is of some of the men in the Skegness Home Guard. My nana's father, my great grandfather, is in the middle row 4 from the left.

Butlins Holiday camp was a training establishment for the Navy, placed next to the sea. I think it was called HMS, I'm not really sure, but the Germans thought it was a battleship and were always on the lookout for it to bomb.

Houses all had black-out curtains at the windows, and had to be drawn before any lights were put on at night. If there was a chunk of light showing anywhere, the wardens would come and tell you to deal with it!

Everyone also had to have a gas mask and carry it with them at all times. Mine was a very small child's one and I loved it, it was in the shape of a Mickey Mouse, and I can remember his lovely long floppy nose, it was blue and red and yellow.

Because Lincolnshire is so flat, there were a lot of airfields built, and that is why there were so many air raids locally. All road signs were removed, so that if the enemy managed to land, they could not easily know where they were.

Gardens were dug up and potatoes and vegetables grown, because of big food shortages. There was also a 2 week holiday in October where we didn't go to school since the boys had to dig up potatoes to feed the town. Also you were allowed to keep a few chickens for their eggs. Which my mother did, and I loved them. For old people, a big cage-like thing was put over the bed, to hopefully stop debris if a bomb was dropped and they could not move. My grandmother had one at my aunt's house.

Food was very scarce, my mother managed so well to prepare lovely nutritious meals for us all. Ration books were issued, for everything, all food, sweets, chocolate and you could only use so many a week. Also there were coupons for all clothing, curtain materials. Dress material, underwear, everything. Sheets, towels and this went on well after the war ended, several years.

I remember on the way to school, I must have been about 12, and we still have to have coupons for sweets. Also I was thrilled to have my first ice-cream, about 5 years old I think. You couldn't get chocolate or chocolate biscuits. And as a treat you could sometimes buy Ryvita with one side thinly coated with dark chocolate. People couldn't use their cars as much since petrol was rationed too, and I can remember having fun sorting all the petrol coupons which my father's garage took from customers.

Your grandfather, my husband Murray, was trained in the Air Force, and at a very young age, went to Canada and the U.S.A for this. From there, he transported 1 large bomb at a time on his own to airfields in the U.K. Later, he transported troops in a glider, which has no engine, and landed in Germany- this was called the Rhine Brossif. He laid up in ditches until a small plane came to pick him up and take him to the U.K. He was very young - probably about 19.



This picture was taken near the end of WWII and it is of my granddad, my nana's husband, flying a glider at about the age of 19.

When the war was over, I was about 5 years old, and we had a big town gathering, and I had to dance. My mother made my dress, as she made all my clothes, it was made of yellow and blue very prickly, harsh net and was very uncomfortable, and I had to wear a stupid little thing on my head! We were all safe, over at last.

However, beaches were still covered in long stretches of barbed wire, and mines along the whole stretch, this took a long time to make safe for us to play there.