

## Some Childhood Memories

Immediate thoughts are of Liverpool in the thirties and early forties which, of course, included the war and the blitz. Before the war was Infant School (no memories remain) and then Dovedale Road Junior School – not far from Penny Lane – a later pupil there was John Lennon who helped to make the area better known. In those days I don't think that there were any school meals and packed lunches were not in my mother's vocabulary which meant that I had to run home, about a mile, eat lunch and run back to school. Most children did this and I can't remember any fat children! Holidays were spent on the Isle of Man where it seemed to rain a lot.

A few days before the war broke out it was decided to issue Anderson Shelters to householders with gardens. These were corrugated iron structures that bolted together. First you had to dig a suitable rectangular hole about three feet deep - I can remember the soft red sandstone that we came to after a couple of feet. You then assembled the metal sheets and covered the structure with the stone and soil taken out. During the German air raids on Liverpool we all spent the night in our shelters.

When the war started schoolchildren were evacuated from the cities. I went with my rest of my boys' school to Shrewsbury where we shared the premises of Shrewsbury Grammar School. My older sister was taken to Hereford. Living with a strange family was an unsettling and largely unhappy experience and I was very glad when they took us back to Liverpool after about 9 months. This was timed fairly well for the start of the Blitz. I can't remember feeling scared even running back from Scout meetings in the evening with anti-aircraft guns firing overhead. It was fun to pick up hot pieces of shrapnel from the road and it didn't seem to occur to us that this was a touch dangerous. (It gives me some understanding of the reasons why young men join the Army and want to go to war zones.) We were also most impressed with the size of the hole caused by a bomb that had fallen on the sports field. It blew out all the windows at the back of the school so we had a few days off while they were repaired. A bomb dropped just in front of an Aunt and Uncle's house a couple of streets away from us. The house itself was relatively unscathed apart from broken windows but what we found fascinating was that large paving slabs from the street had been thrown over the house into the back garden without touching the roof. They made a bit of a mess of their greenhouse!

My father was in the Navy and away at sea, we did not know where, for long periods. One early morning in 1940 or '41 he turned up without warning and wearing a strange version of uniform and announced 'We were torpedoed'. After spending two days in the North Atlantic in open boats the surviving crew were picked and taken to Iceland, from where, after a long delay they returned to Scotland. Dad had rescued a package of goodies – silk stockings, perfume and the like that he had bought in Canada. Unfortunately this was stolen whilst he waited for a train in Glasgow.