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'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'

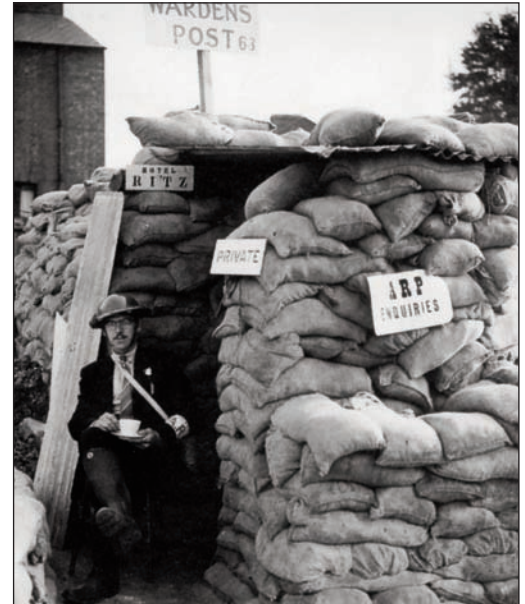
Winston Churchill August 1940



Aid Raid Precautions

A.R.P. Wardens

When Adolf Hitler began making speeches in August 1938 suggesting that he was going to invade neighbouring countries, the British Government feared that there would be a war with Germany. Neville Chamberlain ordered Air Raid Precautions Wardens (A.R.P.) to be mobilized. These men and women were volunteers and, at first, they wore their own clothes, their only protection being a steel helmet. Once the war started they were issued with uniforms - a one piece dark blue boiler suit, a steel helmet and rubber Wellington boots. They carried their gas masks and a whistle at all times.



It was the job of the A.R.P. wardens to try and ensure the safety of the public before, during and after an air raid. They were responsible for enforcing the blackout and for arranging the sounding of the air raid sirens. It was also their job to make sure people took shelter once the siren sounded.

The A.R.P. also had to deal with any unexploded bombs. As many as one in ten bombs dropped on Britain failed to explode. If an unexploded bomb was discovered, the A.R.P. would seal the site and evacuate the area. They would then send for the Bomb Disposal Unit, who would diffuse the bomb.

Points for discussion

- Why do you think people volunteered to become A.R.P. wardens?
- What do you think would have been the most dangerous part of an A.R.P. warden's job?
- If you were alive during the Second World War and your father was an A.R.P. warden, how do you think you would feel?

Air Raid Shelters

In November 1938, the Prime Minister appointed Sir John Anderson to be in charge of Air Raid Precautions. Sir John immediately arranged for William Patterson, a well-known engineer, to begin work on designing a small, cheap but effective air raid shelter that could be distributed to the public and easily erected in people's gardens. Patterson came up with a curved, metal construction that came to be known as an **Anderson Shelter**. When Sir John first saw the model shelter, to the amazement of all those watching, he immediately jumped onto the roof with both feet in order to test its strength! Satisfied with the design, Sir John ordered the shelter to be mass-produced.



By the end of February 1939 the first batch of Anderson Shelters had been delivered to householders in London and, within a few months, nearly one and a half million were distributed to areas considered to be most at risk. The shelters were free to families earning less than £250 a year but a charge of £7 was made to those with a higher income.

Of course, once delivered to householders, the shelters had to be erected. Each shelter was made up of fourteen sheets of corrugated iron. Six curved sheets were bolted together at the top and the other eight sheets formed the front, back and sides. The entrance to the shelter was reinforced with a steel shield. The shelters were partly buried in the ground and so the first job was to dig out an area measuring 6ft,6in (1.95 metres) by 4ft,6in (1.35 metres). Once erected, some creative families planted flowers or vegetables on the roof of their shelters!



The Anderson Shelter was designed to accommodate up to six people but inside, it was cramped, dark and quite uncomfortable. To make matters worse, because the shelters were

partly sunk into the ground, they were usually damp and often flooded. Families tried to make them as comfortable as possible, fitting them with bunks or benches, but on a cold, wet winter night, with the sound of bombers overhead, the Anderson Shelter was a miserable place to spend any length of time.

Of course, not everyone had the space to erect an Anderson Shelter and yet such people still felt vulnerable to air raids. Thus, in March 1941 the **Morrison Shelter** was introduced. It was named after Herbert Morrison, who was the Home Secretary at the time. The Morrison Shelter looked like a large table. It was made out of very heavy steel and was usually placed in the living room, where it was used instead of a table. The sides of the table were made out of strengthened wire and one side lifted so that people could crawl underneath.

People were not always at home when the air raid sirens wailed out their warning of an imminent attack. In March 1940 the government began to provide **communal shelters** made out of brick and concrete. Although they offered more protection than an Anderson Shelter, there was soon a severe shortage of concrete and the building programme for such shelters was badly affected.

London was a major target for the **Luftwaffe** (the German Air Force) and, during The Blitz, many people chose to leave the capital each night. The citizens of London also used the **underground tube stations**, believing them to be safe shelters. A platform ticket could be bought for a couple of pence and people wishing to shelter for the night would equip themselves with blankets and flasks in readiness to camp on the platforms.

FIGURE 3

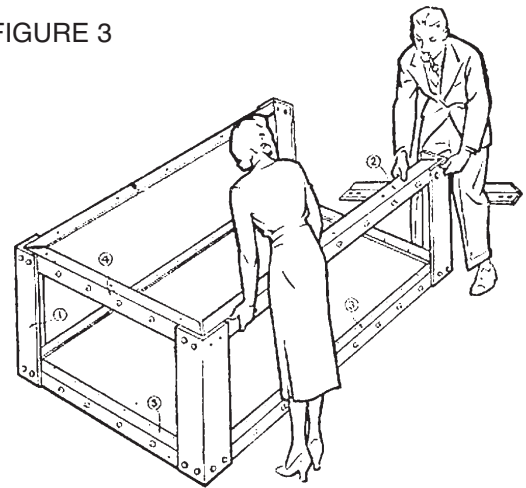
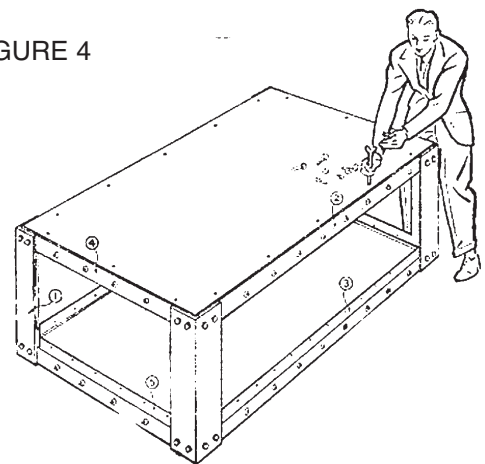


FIGURE 4





The underground stations were not as safe as people thought. Although they were warmer and drier than Anderson shelters the German bombs could cause tremendous damage if there was a direct hit and many of the stations were situated in areas that were targeted by the Luftwaffe. In one raid, on 17th September 1940, a bomb hit Marble Arch Station and caused widespread devastation, killing twenty civilians and injuring many more. Furthermore, the underground stations became very unpleasant with so many people crammed together in a small area. The air became stagnant and the smell was

unbearable. George Dyer, who was just ten years old in 1940, wrote about his experience of using a tube station for shelter:

'We were on our way home when the sirens sounded. I wasn't scared - I was used to the raids - but I hated using the underground. Everyone pushed and jostled and tried to get the best spot. I remember feeling bored and hot but the worst thing of all was the smell. It was all right at first but the longer you were down there the worse it got. I'll never forget that dreadful smell as long as I live.'

Task: Work in pairs to make a model of an Anderson Shelter.

You could make your model more interesting by placing it in a back garden. Begin by making a rough sketch of what you want to include in your model (e.g. the Anderson Shelter, grass, bushes, flowers, a path etc.).

You should also make a list of the materials you will need (e.g. corrugated card, glue, sugar paper, coloured tissue paper, pebbles, twigs etc.).