

# The Shelling of Dover 1940 - 1944

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## *An Article from the Joe Harman Collection*

I have a very vivid memory of when the shelling of Dover started on Monday 12th August 1940. We heard an explosion at about 10 o'clock. Looking up to Prospect Place close to the railway we could see smoke curling up. I went up with others to give assistance, but the only real casualty was a dog. Then there was another crack and we could see smoke rising from behind the gasworks wall near St. Radigund's Road railway bridge. It was very eerie and I began to look round for cover and the only trench was between the rows of potatoes on the allotments. I realised it was much nearer home and rushed back down Edgar Road. The emergency services were just arriving and I was told that two of our neighbours from Oswald Road had been killed. The area was cordoned off and pieces of hot metal retrieved; we started to speculate as no plane had been heard diving out of the sky.

I can well recall the shooting down of the barrage balloons and can still see the pilot of the Messerschmitt as he careered along Magdala Road at about 15 feet after destroying our own balloon at Cherry Tree Avenue. I beat a strategic retreat behind the brick pillar of our side gate.

My sister had been to visit our grandmother at New Romney and I was on the way down to meet her from the Hastings to Margate coastal bus. I was only about 50 yards from home when I heard a crack like a pistol shot and looked up to see chimney pots spinning around on the opposite side of the road. I ran back to check on my neighbours, but fortunately there was only blast damage as the shell had landed in soft ground. Recently, I have met Freddie Best who lived nearby and was in his back garden at the time; he

was as lucky as me, as we were only about 50 yards from the impact. I proceeded downtown by bus and heard more explosions. The coastal bus had been stopped at Maxton under the usual procedure and I managed to get up there to join my sister after passing the Alma public house, which had a narrow escape; I remember seeing pieces of shrapnel embedded in the road.

My mother had died at the end of September 1940 due to kidney failure, vowing she would not leave dear old Dover. I had to go down to Dr. Elliot's residence in Maison Dieu Road to collect the certificate, returned up Ladywell by the Fire Station and shortly afterwards a shell landed on the building doing considerable damage. It was with some trepidation when five days later we filed up behind the coffin in Charlton Cemetery, but luckily it was a quiet day!

My work place at the East Kent garage was in the firing line and the enemy proceeded to knock pieces off the Burlington Hotel. I can recall sitting on an orange box in the repair pit as the so-called "Large Lumps" landed and pieces of shrapnel skated across the concrete floor. The reporters often talked about the shells whistling, but the only whistle I heard was when a piece of shrapnel hurtled by from an explosion some 300 yards away.



*WWII Shell Damage Snargate Street at Five Post Lane*