

Transcript of Audio Clip with Jean Gordon

Interviewer: Were you affected by the bombing once it started?

Jean: Well, the thing was we were in Chatham and what happened, every or most houses, in their back gardens, had an Anderson air raid shelter which was a deep digging, it was dug out of the ground and it had steps that went down and then over the top was this galvanised roof thing. We had, where we were, in the garden was the Anderson shelter and we had two camp beds, one on each side having gone down the steps. You would have the sirens going off but in actual fact Chatham where we were, I have no recollections of actual bombing. There might well have been some over the dockyard, I have no, honestly, no idea. But I know that my mother would say, come on we're going to sleep in the shelter anyway rather than have to get up in the middle of the night because the air raid sirens went off but what happened was the planes flew over Chatham coming up to London, you see. So the Medway towns, they were bypassed, a lot of them. We would sleep in the shelter and one of my stories I can tell you that I can clearly remember. My mum had washed my hair for me and had, what she called, 'set it' to make the waves and things. Then when I went to sleep at night I put, what was called a hairnet, a brown hairnet over my hair, and I was tossing and turning and going to sleep. All of a sudden I sat up to try to shake my pillow up and I screamed and my mother woke up, 'What's the matter?' 'There's a great big spider on my pillow'. She said, 'Wait a minute, I'll light the candle' cos we had to have – we didn't have a torch even. So there she was she lit the candle, held it up on a candlestick¹ and there on the pillow, she said, 'You silly thing, it's your hairnet!' [laughs]. But I was in an absolute – I was, oh, absolutely terrified of the spider, let alone the [laughs]. That's one of my very vivid memories of sleeping in the Anderson shelter. But all of that bombing did go on, you see, in London and the suburbs of London. Certain parts of us might have had the occasional bomb, but I have no recollections of anything like that.

¹ 15 min