

## Written by John Rosher

1944

We occupied a terraced house in New Cross Gate in south London just off the Old Kent Road. Dad was in the army away in (Africa I think) leaving Mum to look after 4 of us. Anne 10, me, John 8, David 6 and Ron just over 12 months.

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November after we had finished breakfast Mum took David & me to Lewisham to buy shoes in the Co-op store, in those days you would save tokens from weekly shopping and when you had enough they could be used to purchase expensive items like clothing, shoes etc. And so it was decided that while Mum took us to Lewisham by tram, Anne would push Ron in his pram to Woolworths at New Cross and then go on to our Gran's before returning home. Visiting Grandma's was a weekly event but Anne wanted to do some shopping at Woolly's – the decision on which she did first was left to her.

As we left home Mum reminded Anne to make sure that the front door was closed and that she had keys to let herself in should she arrive home before us.

Our trip to Lewisham on the tram and the subsequent 'trying on' of shoes passed without much excitement and we were soon back on the tram heading for home, a journey of about three miles.

We had heard the Air Raid Siren go and seen several ambulances rushing about, but this was nothing unusual, in fact it had become part of life, we knew that WE were alive and I suppose we were thankful for that. The return tram journey became slower and slower as we approached the Marquis of Granby, about a mile from home, I could hear the wheels of the tram grinding on the glass and rubble in the tracks, the noise got louder and louder until the tram shuddered to a halt, the conductor said he was sorry but they could go no further, a bomb had fallen somewhere ahead and the road was closed.

There were not many people on the tram and as we got off a policeman with arms outstretched tried to direct everyone down a side street saying the road ahead was closed, however while he was occupied Mum slipped past pulling us with her and in an attempt to prevent us from seeing things she would us not-to she made us pull our raincoats over our heads as she guided us along in front of the Town Hall opposite Woolworths. It must have been clear to her that Woolly's had taken a direct hit as there was only a pile of rubble where a large shop once stood.

I cannot say I saw much from under the raincoat apart from pieces on jagged metal parts of a car, glass and brick rubble was everywhere, we stumbled on for what seemed like hours to get past the worst, all we could hear was men shouting as they dug for survivors, the smell of brick plaster filled the air, a smell which can never be forgotten.

Of course Mum would have seen the full extent of the horror, knowing that Ann & Ron may be beneath. She must have seen the services frantically pulling and digging and at the rubble knowing

there was little she could do to help. We made our way down Harts Lane and into Hatcham Park Road where we lived, and it was only when we were just 50 yards away we could see Anne with Ron in his pram waiting at the front gate. Anne was more concerned that the front door had blown-off which was now laying in the front garden. Realising that we were all safe we put our arms around each other and cried and cried.

Anne had decided not to go to Woolworth's at all and has spent the whole time at Grandma's.

We later learned that it was Britain's worst disaster in the whole V-weapon campaign caused by a V2 rocket falling at 12.26pm killing 160 and injuring over 120.