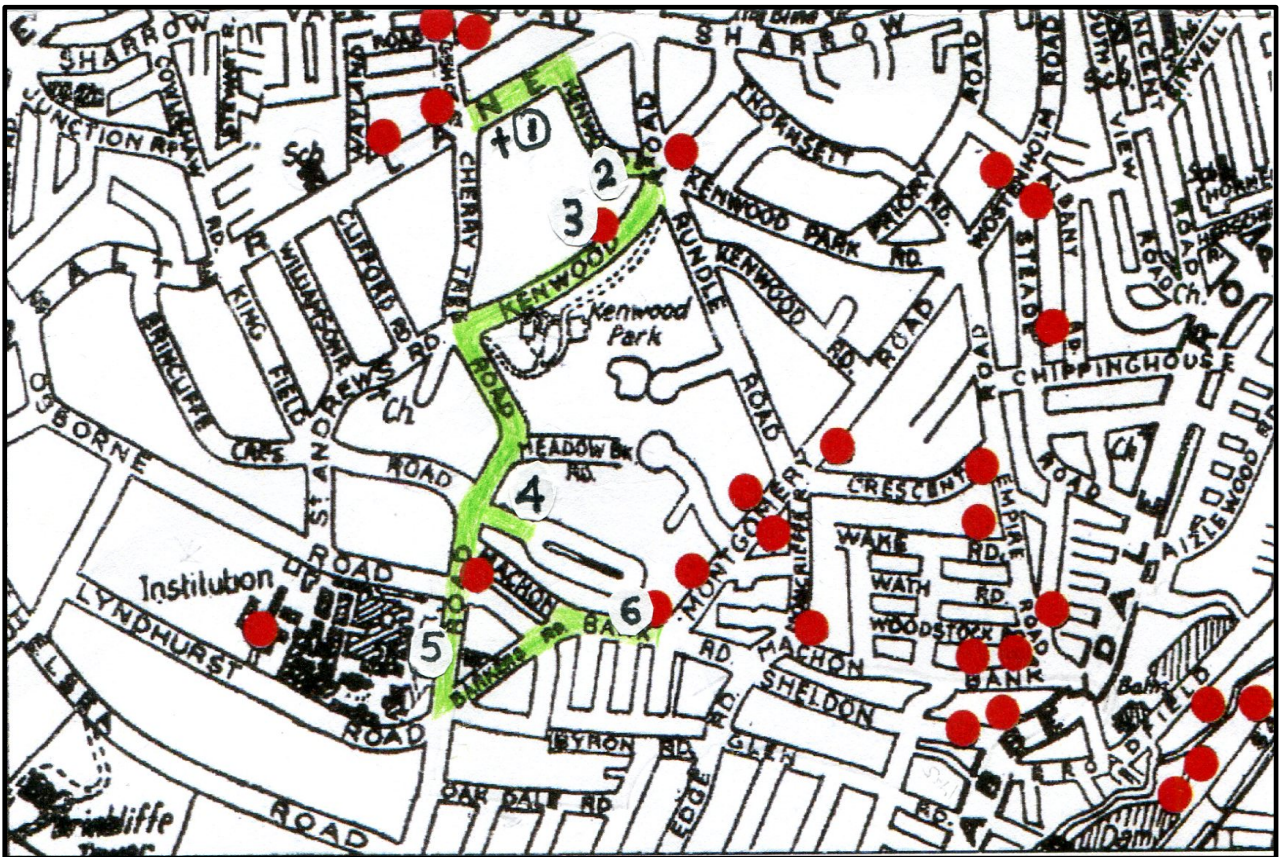


NETHER EDGE DURING THE BLITZ, DECEMBER 12th and 14th 1940

- This self-guided walk aims to capture some of the key features and impact of the German air raids.
- Your starting point is St Andrew's Church on Psalter Lane (at the junction with Cherry Tree Road). The walk ends on Machon Bank Road opposite Sainsbury's supermarket.
- Blitz images are identified in the notes by letter and are grouped together on separate pages.
- Eye witness accounts are included in italics. These can be read out at the appropriate stops
- The route of the walk and stopping points are marked on the map below. The red dots give an approximate indication of where bombs fell.

WHERE THE BOMBS FELL DURING THE SHEFFIELD BLITZ



Please limit your group size to 6, make sure that you take care when crossing roads and always stop in a safe place, especially if you have children with you.

Background to the Blitz

In 1935 Hitler and the Nazis were elected to govern Germany: their aim was to rebuild Germany's power in Europe. They created the Luftwaffe, a huge air force of new fighter planes and on September 1st 1939 Germany began to attack and conquer its neighbour, Poland. Two days later Britain was at War with Germany. In May 1940 Hitler invaded Belgium and France. Britain responded but failed to stop the Germans and British troops had to be evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk.

Hitler wanted to invade England from France, but knew the Royal Air Force had to be destroyed. Only then would German ships be able to cross the Channel without being bombed. This led to the Battle of Britain in July 1940. Germany had more planes and more experienced fighter pilots but Britain had better radar and shot down hundreds of German planes flying from France to England.

In the Autumn of 1940 the Germans changed tactics and began bombing non-military targets at night. They 'Blitzed' cities including London, Coventry, Southampton, Birmingham, Liverpool and Bristol – their targets were the docks, fuel stores and factories.

Blitz attacks all followed the same pattern;

1. The first wave of German planes dropped **incendiaries** or fire sticks.
2. Any fires that took hold from incendiaries could guide planes carrying larger, **high explosive** bombs towards their targets.
3. The third type of bombs were the huge **parachute landmines**, weighing 500kg or 1000kg and capable of causing devastating damage. All 3 types of bomb fell on Nether Edge.

Sheffield was worst hit on the nights of 12th and 14th December 1940. The red alert alarm sounded at 7pm on the 12th and the bombing lasted until 4am. In nine hours of bombing a total of 280 German planes dropped bombs on Sheffield that night. Over 660 people died in the Sheffield Blitz, 1,500 were injured, 40,000 made homeless and 78,000 homes were damaged.

STARTING POINT /STOP 1 ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, PSALTER LANE

Defending the City

Sheffield knew it was a target because of its industries, making steel and weapons for the War. The city tried to protect itself from air raids:

- High on the moors above Sheffield, lines of lights were laid out to look like tramlines. The aim was to trick the pilots into thinking they were over built up areas, encouraging them to drop their bombs.
- 78 large Barrage balloons were put up across Sheffield – one was here at Psalter Lane Church. Their purpose was to divert the bombers and prevent them from flying low. A winch was used to get the balloons into the air.

a) Barrage balloon over St Andrew's Church. (see picture sheet)

- Local men and women volunteered to help protect residents. They served as air raid wardens, fire service crews, ambulance drivers, messengers and members of the Home Guard. The air raid wardens were out all night during the attacks. They had to walk round the streets to check that the blackout was complete; no lights were allowed to be showing. They also had to check on every house to record those living there. One local man, Ken Neville, served as a warden on Sharrow Vale, Psalter Lane, Clifford Road and Kenwood. This is an extract from his account of the Blitz on December 12th;

My Post was in the cellars of 30 Psalter Lane. If the sirens sounded we all had to get back to our Post and stay there till we heard the All Clear. On the 12th December I was on my way to Night School at Hunters Bar when the sirens sounded. I dashed back to my Post. Within half an hour incendiaries were dropping and many fires were started. One of the biggest was on Westbrook Bank (off Bagshot Street opposite the Church). We were trying to deal with it when we heard another bomb coming down. We ran for our lives to the shelter of a passage way between the houses and lay flat on the ground. This was on the upper side of the street. The bomb came down on the other side; we would have been killed if we hadn't crossed the road. Six people died and numbers 4-14 Westbrook Bank, were destroyed.

b) The bombed Westbrook Bank houses

There were other bombs nearby. One fell opposite the church, at the junction of Psalter Lane and Bagshot Street. Another made a direct hit on 92 and 94 Psalter Lane, near Wayland Road. The houses were occupied by support staff at the time and several men died. No. 96 was also damaged and later collapsed in the crater.

Many schools in the area experienced bomb damage and Clifford School narrowly escaped total destruction when a large bomb fell into a field just below it. In preparation for War, all children were issued with gas masks. They were trained how to use them and the masks had to be taken to school every day. Hunters Bar and Abbeydale Junior Schools also suffered damage – the roof at Abbeydale was set on fire by incendiaries which had to be put out by the wardens. Frank Tembey was Chief Warden at Abbeydale School. He too had a narrow escape and his account shows how dangerous it was to be out on the streets:

'On the night of the Blitz hundreds of local people came to the School to shelter. Bombs fell all around us for hours; one of the biggest fell in Abbeydale Rd., right in front of the School; it left a huge crater. Many casualties were brought into the Post for treatment. One man was very badly hurt and needed to go to hospital but the phones were dead so I volunteered to walk to Chelsea Road Post. A man who'd been in the Army offered to come with me. On our way there we came under machine gun fire and also narrowly missed the large landmine that exploded on Lyndhurst Road, close to the Hospital. Luckily the phones were working at the Chelsea Road Post and we were able to call an ambulance.'

The next stage of our walk takes us to some of the other bombsites near here. You will hear how people who were at home experienced the Blitz.

STOP 2 FROM THE CHURCH WALK ALONG PSALTER LANE TOWARDS 'THE STAG'. TURN RIGHT BEFORE THE PUB INTO KENWOOD BANK. WALK ALONG HERE AND STOP ON THE PAVEMENT WHEN YOU REACH THE END OF THE ROAD.

Several large bombs exploded close to this spot, causing loss of life and damage to property. A bomb on Kenwood Park Road destroyed the house of the Homer family at number 52. Mr and Mrs Homer were out but their daughter was in the house and she died. She would have been 21 the next day and the family had been preparing for her party. If you look across the roundabout you'll see the house which replaced the original number 52. Its gateposts are much older than the house. This is quite a common feature across Nether Edge where bombs fell.

STOP 3. TURN RIGHT INTO KENWOOD ROAD AND WALK A FEW YARDS TO WHERE THERE IS A GAP IN THE PAVEMENT TREES.

Ronald Wilson, who lived close by describes what happened here on December 12th, the first night of the Blitz. In 1940 Ronald was 18, living with his parents at 12 Rundle Road. His Father had created a shelter in the cellar and had also made an emergency exit. When the sirens sounded they went into the shelter. After the first wave of incendiaries had dropped Ronald and his Father went outside to have a look. They spotted an incendiary blazing in the garden next door, so Mr Wilson jumped over the fence with a spade and shovelled earth over it. The bomb was quickly put out. In the second wave of bombing, high explosive bombs were dropped. Ronald remembered;

'The most terrifying was the enormous bomb that fell on Kenwood Road. I remember the whistle of that bomb as it came down getting louder and louder and louder...and when the explosion finally came the whole house lifted around us and my father rose several inches into the air. We were unhurt though shocked.'

You are standing where the Kenwood Road bomb dropped, causing a 30 metres wide crater and a seven metres high spoil heap. The blast destroyed 38 Kenwood Road and number 40 was very badly damaged. 5 huge trees were lifted out of the ground and disappeared. Ronald went to look at the damage. He climbed up the pile of rubble. As he stood on the top he heard a ticking sound. Could it be an unexploded bomb? Fortunately when he kicked the earth to one side he could see that it was just a time clock from one of the street lamps – still upright but covered in debris. The gap in the line of trees remains; newer houses now stand where the originals were destroyed.

c) Bombed houses on Kenwood Road

CONTINUE WALKING ALONG KENWOOD ROAD. AT THE CROSSROADS TURN LEFT ON TO CHERRY TREE ROAD. CROSS CAREFULLY TO THE PAVEMENT ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ROAD AND CONTINUE TO WALK LEFT

Just after the lane to the Merlin Theatre, notice the driveway to 2 newer houses. These replaced Meadow Bank House, bombed beyond repair on 12th Dec 1940.

STOP 4 TURN LEFT INTO MEADOW BANK AVENUE; WALK TO THE LARGE TREES AT THE TOP OF THE GREEN.

Staying Safe at home

How did the people who lived here try to protect themselves from the bombs? We know from old Avenue record books that many households relied on their cellars for protection. Often these were reinforced with extra walls to resist bomb blasts. Neighbours would go into the houses with the best defences when the Air Raid sirens sounded and would stay there until the 'All Clear' signal came.

Bryan Ellis who lived at 2 Edge Bank (at the end of Meadow Bank Avenue) recalled a different type of shelter. *'Mr and Mrs Garwood at number 5 had a Morrison table shelter. It was erected on the wall, inside the back room of the cottage. It looked like a large metal box and on the front of it was a wire screen - like the wire used to reinforce concrete. Both ends, the back and top of the box were made of steel and you could make a bed in it'*.

Where there were no cellars people might build Anderson Shelters in their gardens or backyards. These were made of corrugated steel and were partly underground. The earth from the hole that was dug for the shelter was piled onto its roof for added protection. Some Andersons were big enough for several families to share. Some still exist in Nether Edge, in use as garden stores.

d) Two images of Morrison and Anderson shelters

Incendiary bombs fell on some of the dormer windows of houses on the Avenue. To deal with these the residents had ladders placed in four strategic points around the wall of the central Green. There were two at each end, one on either side. At the lower end of the Green they were sited across from numbers 43 and 52; at the top the ladders were opposite numbers 15 and 22. In front of each ladder was placed a contraption like a zinc bath on wheels. If fires were started these could be pushed along to where they were needed; the

water was then pumped out by stirrup pump. The residents responsible for the pumps had SP painted on their gates.

e) Firemen using Stirrup pump

RETRACE YOUR STEPS UP TO CHERRY TREE ROAD, TURN LEFT AND WALK PAST THE UNION PUB TO OSBORNE ROAD. TAKE CARE CROSSING THE ROAD AND WALK STRAIGHT ON, TOWARDS THE BUS TERMINUS. STOP AT THE GATES OF THE PRIVATE ESTATE/ FORMER NETHER EDGE HOSPITAL

STOP 5. NETHER EDGE HOSPITAL

At the beginning of WW2 Nether Edge Hospital had a maternity unit, 4 sanatoria (for people with Tuberculosis) and 6 wards for chronically sick patients. It could accommodate 600 people. In the Blitz it was damaged by 3 high-explosive bombs and numerous incendiaries. Although the main buildings didn't take a direct hit the hospital lost all power and water. By January the next year it was running as normal again. From November 1944 to May 1945 one ward was used to care for sick and wounded German prisoners of war.

Very large bombs fell in the streets close to the Hospital, including one on Lyndhurst Rd. Fortunately, several 500kg parachute bombs which fell in the area failed to explode; one very large one fell in a garden on Oakhill Road – it was half in and half out of the ground. Another was retrieved from Chelsea Road.

f) Bomb damage at Nether Edge Hospital g) Chelsea Road unexploded bombs on lorry.

Some of the people who experienced the bombs near the Hospital that night recalled their experiences for the book *'They Lived in Nether Edge'*. Edited versions of the accounts of two women are included here to illustrate how traumatic the Blitz was on the night of December 12th

Mrs Eva Jarman, 11 Union Road

'We lived at Cherry Tree Cottage on the corner of Osborne Road. I had a little boy, aged 21 months and was expecting my second baby. My husband was working in the south of England and I was staying with my parents. One of the cellars had been converted into a shelter, with bunk beds and a space for a cot. I was sewing baby clothes when the sirens started. The planes started to drop flares and a Warden shouted, 'If you've got a shelter stay in it'. The sound of planes and bombs grew nearer, the electricity failed and my little boy was shouting 'Bang' every time a bomb dropped. One big landmine exploded on Lyndhurst Road but the nearest was only a few yards away on Machon Bank Road (just below the Union pub) – it killed all the Pearson family. Another fell on the Hospital and patients were overcome with fumes and dust. We never slept that night. When the 'All Clear' sounded we came up from the cellar to find that the shelves had collapsed and all our eggs and jars of jam lay broken on the steps. All 13 windows in the house were smashed and the yard was full of debris from the bombed house. My Father arranged for the windows to be covered – then he went off to work. We were all lucky to be alive.'

Mrs Ruby McDonald, 76 Osborne Road

Mrs McDonald had just put her 5 year old daughter Jemima to bed when the sirens sounded. Her husband was working on the other side of Sheffield.

'I took Jemima to the cellar for safety and then went next door to fetch the neighbours, an old lady and her daughter. We all stayed in the shelter with the family pets (2 cats and a bulldog) and at about 9 o'clock I went upstairs to check the house. I opened the attic door to see a large hole in the roof and I could see the sky. An incendiary had hit the house and it was on fire. I had to get the others out of the house and into the public shelter in the Hospital grounds. The old lady didn't want to go outside but luckily a soldier arrived. He had seen the flames and persuaded her that we needed to escape the fire. We made it to the shelter at the corner of Osborne and Union Road. The buildings were strongly built, which was fortunate because, when the landmine struck just a few yards away, the walls shook around us. Thankfully the bomb landed in the middle of the road rather than on the Hospital. Casualties could have been much higher. When the All Clear sounded in the morning we returned to our house, only to find that it was burnt to the ground. Everything was lost. A kind neighbour at number 70 took us in and we later moved into a rented house for the rest of the War years. When it finally ended, number 76 was rebuilt and we moved back.'

LEAVE THE HOSPITAL SITE AND WALK DOWN BARKERS ROAD TOWARDS THE CENTRE OF NETHER EDGE. CROSS MACHON BANK CAREFULLY TO THE SPACE AT THE BOTTOM OF EDGE BANK

STOP 6. EDGE BANK

Evacuees.

Some people left Nether Edge to escape the bombing. Others came to live here after their homes had been destroyed in other parts of the city. Here are 2 examples:

Bryan Ellis, 2 Edge Bank; evacuated to Carterknowle School and Holmesfield

Bryan was only 5 when his family came to live on Edge Bank in 1939 but he never forgot his experiences of the Blitz. He had seen the red glow of the city centre on fire and had clear memories of the night that unexploded bombs fell on Violet Bank and Briar Roads, across from where you are standing.

'The residents of Edge Bank were considered to be at risk from the bombs and were evacuated to Carterknowle School. When father came home from work he found we had flown and Edge Bank was cordoned off. Evacuees lived in the classrooms and hall of the school, where there were also air raid shelters. We didn't stay there long because Mr Moorhouse, who lived at 7 Edge Bank, invited us to live in his 'weekend retreat' (built from a decommissioned Sheffield tram) near Holmesfield in Derbyshire. Our family and another neighbour, Miss Dixon, went there for about ten days, staying until the emergency was over.'

Ann Brown; evacuated with her family from the Moor to 16 Machon Bank Road.

Ann was 4 when her home, close to The Moor in the centre of Sheffield, was bombed on the first night of the Blitz; the family lost everything they had in the fire. The Women's Royal Voluntary Service and Civil Defence helped people whose homes had been destroyed: Ann's family was sent to a school for shelter. The next day they walked to her Grandmother's house in Totley and stayed there for 6 months. The Council offered the family a flat at 16 Machon Bank Road, and gave them £350 to buy everything they needed. Across the road from their new home was the old tram shed, (now occupied by Sainsbury's and the garage), where American troop vehicles were repaired. Ann had never seen black Americans before and she remembers them giving her chewing gum and coffee. There was strict food rationing but Ann's father had relatives in Ireland and they sent butter wrapped in leaves as well as trays of eggs and chickens. An Aunt in Grindleford reared pigs

and sent joints of pork at Christmas. It took 10 years for the family to be allocated a council house and they then moved away from Nether Edge. Ann still has fond memories of her time here.

The War would continue for 5 more years after the Sheffield Blitz. When it ended in 1945 there were parties and bonfires to celebrate.

h) Photograph of Edge Bank VE Day Party, 1945. The group includes Bryan Ellis (front row).

This concludes the walk but it can be extended by using the map to identify other Nether Edge Blitz bombsites on Machon Bank, Montgomery, Moncrieffe, Crescent and Wake roads.

A new book on **Nether Edge and World War Two** is being published this year to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the War. Written by members of Nether Edge History Group it will contain information on all aspects of the War, including profiles of local service personnel, and the longer term impact of the War on life in Nether Edge.