



The Blitz

After months of fighting in the air and attempting to bomb British air bases, the German forces realised that they weren't going to successfully destroy the British RAF. Instead of retreating, they decided to put their planes to a different use - bombing civilians. The Germans had developed a type of warfare known as Blitzkrieg, which meant "lightning war". The idea was to hit their enemies with such speed and force that they had no option but to surrender. It was how they had first invaded Poland at the beginning of the war.

The German "blitz" of Britain began immediately after the Battle of Britain. The first bombing run began on the 7th of September, 1940. It continued for eight devastating months, wiping out large sections of British cities and destroying tens of thousands of homes and lives.

That first night of the bombing became known as Black Saturday. 430 people were killed and 1,600 injured in a single day. London was bombed for 57 consecutive nights - although there were also many raids during the day. The biggest raid of all struck London between the 10th and 11th of May, 1941. German Luftwaffe planes dropped thousands of bombs across the city, killing over 1,400 civilians.

It wasn't just London that was attacked. Smaller cities were often impacted more because a smaller number of bombs could have a much more devastating effect. Coventry was one of the most seriously damaged cities. On the night of the 14th of November 1940, 500 tons of high explosives and 30,000 incendiary bombs were dropped on the city. Nearly 600 people were killed and 850 injured. The cathedral was destroyed, and almost a third of the city's houses were uninhabitable. Over a third of its shops were destroyed too.

To protect themselves against the air raids, people began to seek shelter. In London, many people fled to the nearest London Underground tube station. In other cities, people began to build bomb shelters in their gardens.

There were two main types of shelter - Anderson and Morrison.

The Anderson shelter was built in the garden. It mainly consisted of a



corrugated metal sheet bent over a large hole or room dug down into the ground. The sheet was then covered with soil. Many people took to growing vegetables in the dirt - this helped to feed the family and made them look better! If a bomb exploded nearby, the explosion would be diverted over the curve of the roof, protecting the people inside. Over 3.6 million Anderson shelters were used during the war - some people had to use theirs every night for weeks.

Morrison shelters were designed to be used indoors. Most British houses didn't have cellars or basements, so there was nowhere to go to escape a blast or crumbling walls. The Morrison shelter looked like a dining table with a metal cage around the legs. It was designed to fit a couple of people and would keep them safe if the walls or ceiling collapsed during a bombing raid. 600,000 of these were sold during the war.

The Blitz finally ended in May 1941, when Germany diverted its resources elsewhere in Europe.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a word in the first paragraph that means "trying".
2. What does "retreating" mean?
3. Find and copy a word that tells you how hard the months of the Blitz were.
4. What does "consecutive" mean?
5. What is the word "incendiary" linked with?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

Which city other than London was impacted heavily by the Blitz bombings, according to the text?

R

Which type of shelter was used inside the house?

S

Why did people flee to underground stations?

I

What evidence is there that lots of people wanted to use shelters to protect themselves?

R

What does Blitzkrieg mean?