Taking Shelter from Falling Bombs

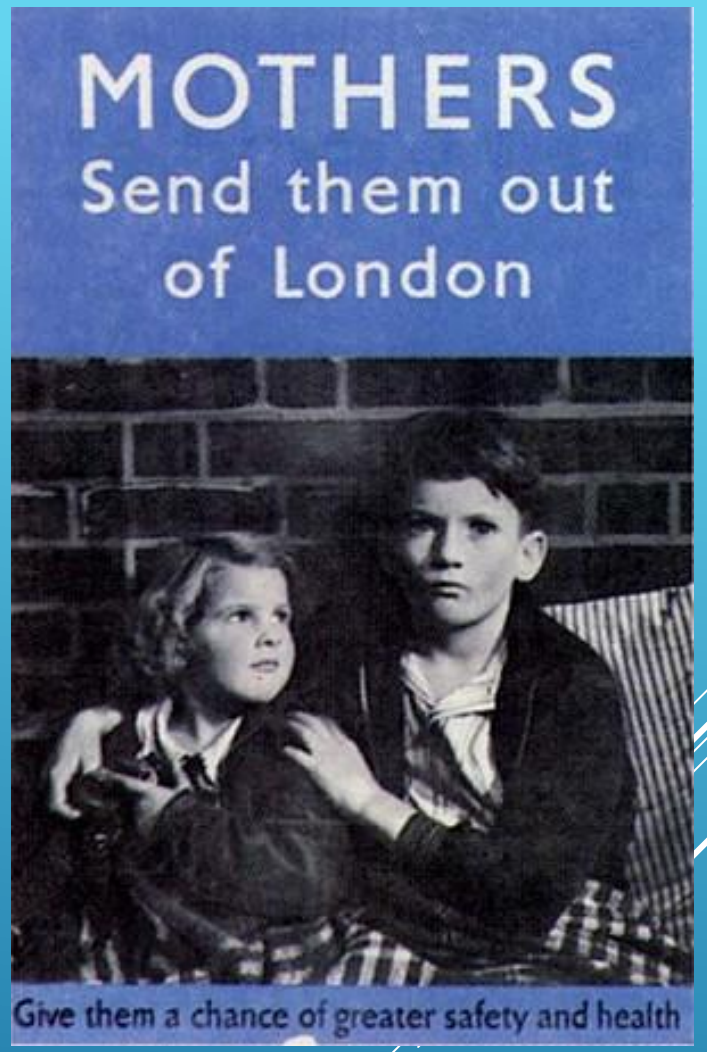
Why was this necessary?

Before war was declared the government thought about how to protect people from possible bombing raids carried out by the German Air Force which was known as the Luftwaffe.

Hitler was unable to launch an invasion so turned to bombing in the hope that it would cripple the economy and the will of the British people.

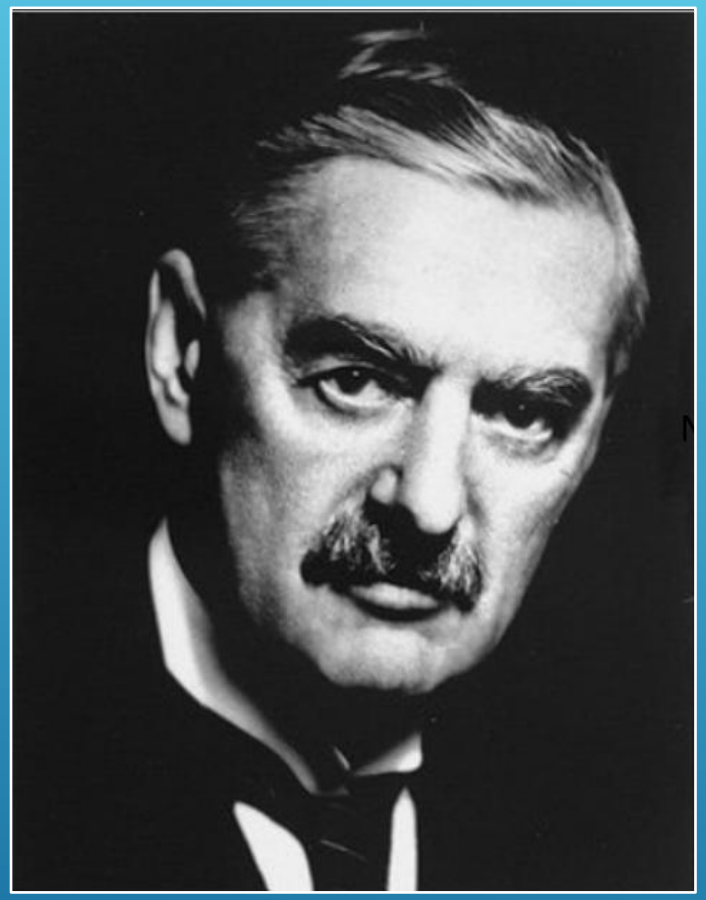
The Government planned to evacuate children (and others) from London and other cities. This came into effect on the 1st September 1939. Posters encouraged parents to send their children to safety.

The Government estimated that 3,500,000 people would be evacuated. In fact in the first four days of September 1939, 1,500,000 people took up the offer to evacuate to safer areas away from the major towns.



Whole schools were evacuated.

Who was in charge of Air Raid Precautions?



Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain

November 1938

Sir John Anderson

Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain put Sir John Anderson in charge of Air Raid Precautions in November 1938.
This was nearly a year before war was declared in September 1939.

What did Sir John Anderson do?

He immediately asked an engineer called WILLIAM PATTERSON to design a small and cheap shelter that could be erected in people's gardens.

He also made plans for air raid shelters which ranged from large communal shelters to indoor shelters.

Were these shelters needed?

The answer is YES!

The German bombing campaign that lasted from September 1940 to May 1941 was known as The Blitz.

THEN…..

From June 1944, the Germans attacked again by firing V1 rockets on Britain, followed later by also V2 rockets. 1,000,000 women, children, elderly and disabled people were evacuated from London. This new way of attacking Britain carried on until the end of the war in Europe in May 1945.

V1 Flying bomb

FLYING BOMBS

V1s were called "Doodlebugs". It was really a bomb with wings. It looked like a small aeroplane but had no pilot. They sounded like a lorry engine going very fast.
They simply kept flying until they ran out of fuel, then they crashed to the ground and exploded.
Whenever people heard a doodlebug they looked up and watched it to make sure it went past. If the engine stopped that was the time to worry!
Sometimes a doodlebug dropped to earth immediately and sometimes it would continue to glide, gradually losing height. It must have been very scary!

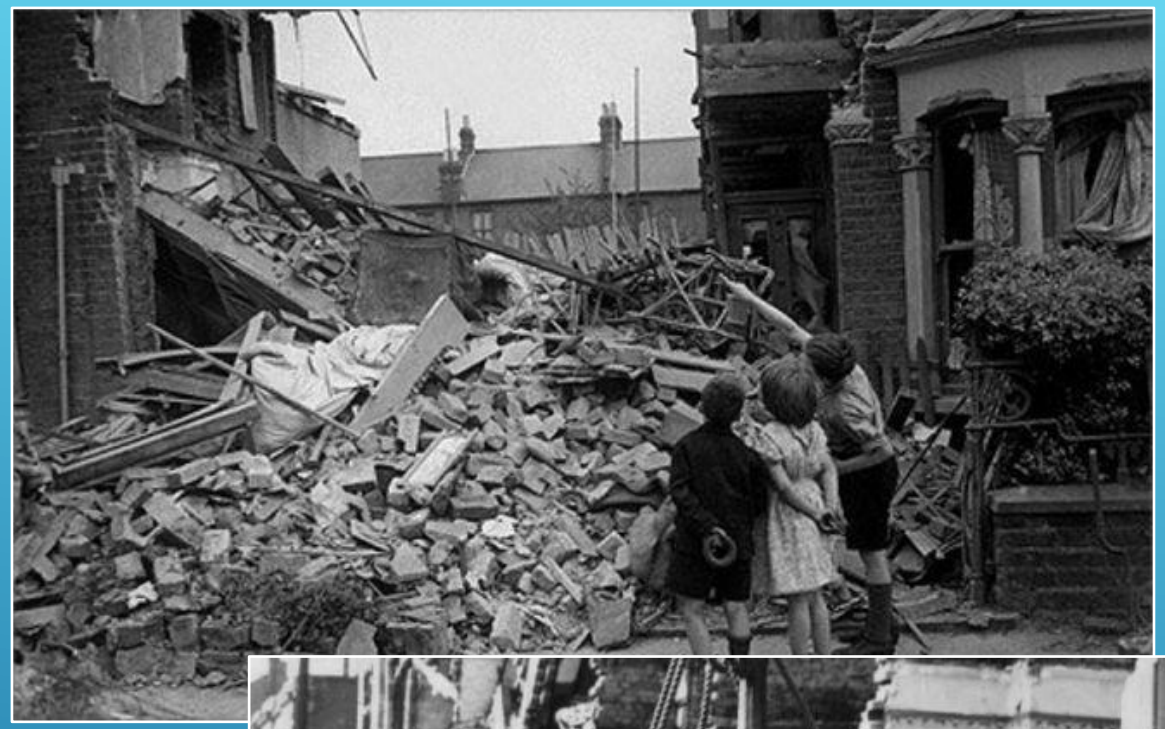
Can you see the doodlebug dropping out of the sky?

9251 doodlebugs were launched to attack London. That's more than one hundred V-1s a day. Sometimes they ran out of fuel before they reached London and they dropped on towns and villages in Kent and Sussex.

Look at this photo.

A young boy places a Union flag into the remains of his home, which was destroyed in an air raid on London in 1940.

These children lost their homes after a bombing raid on London. They managed to rescue some of their toys.



Here are some more photos of children near their bombed homes.

Surface shelters

It was quickly realized that there might be a need to protect people who were on the streets or in public spaces, perhaps on their way to or from work, out shopping or perhaps, children going to and from school.

They began to build roadside communal shelters in March 1940. These were not underground.

These surface shelters were intended to accommodate fifty people.

Do you think these would be very safe?

What other shelters were used?

What do you think might be in the boxes that the school children are carrying?

Some shelters
were just trenches.

Would you have felt
safe in one of these?

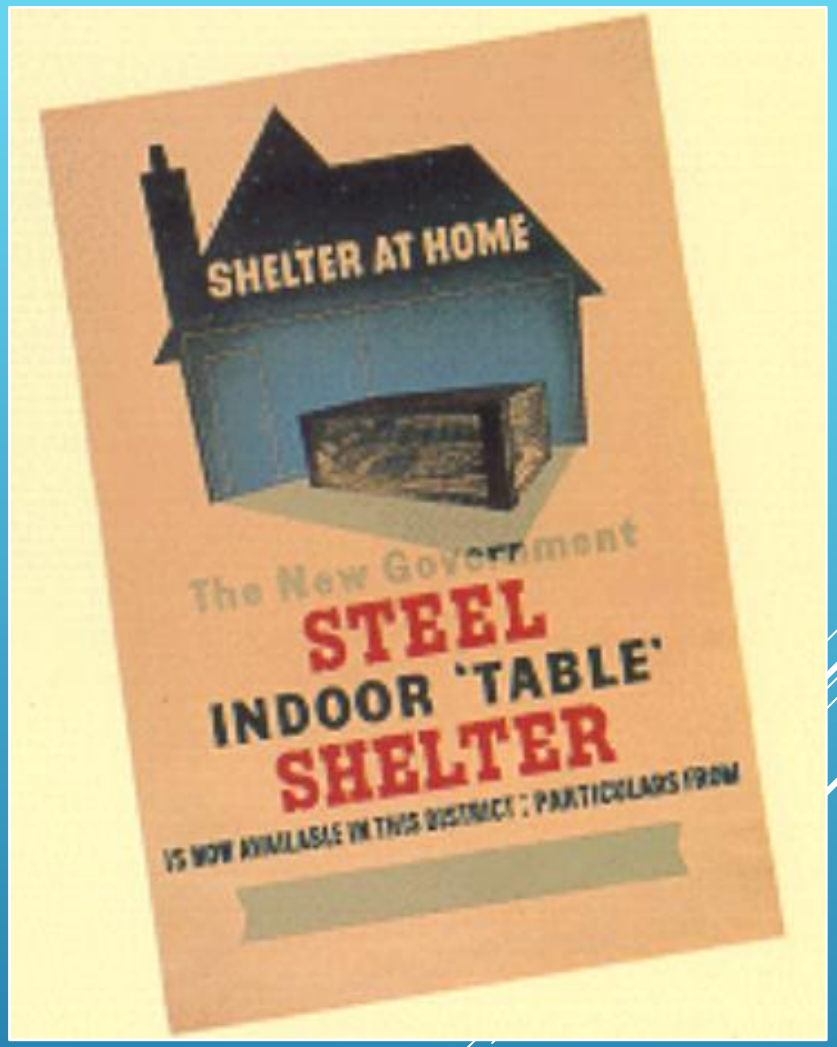
What do you think the
children are looking at?

Underground stations

In London people felt safest underground and preferred to use the underground tunnels and platforms.
Stations were fitted with bunks for 22,000 people, supplied with first aid facilities and equipped with chemical toilets. There were 124 canteens that provided food and drinks. An estimated 170,000 people sheltered in the tunnels and stations during World War 2.

The Morrison Shelter

Another type of shelter issued was the Morrison shelter. Introduced in 1941, it was designed by John Baker and named after Herbert Morrison, Minister of Home Security. This family shelter was free for most people and could be erected indoors. It had a steel plate on top, which could be used as a table in the day time, and sides of wire mesh 2ft, 9in high.
Over half million had been distributed by 1941.

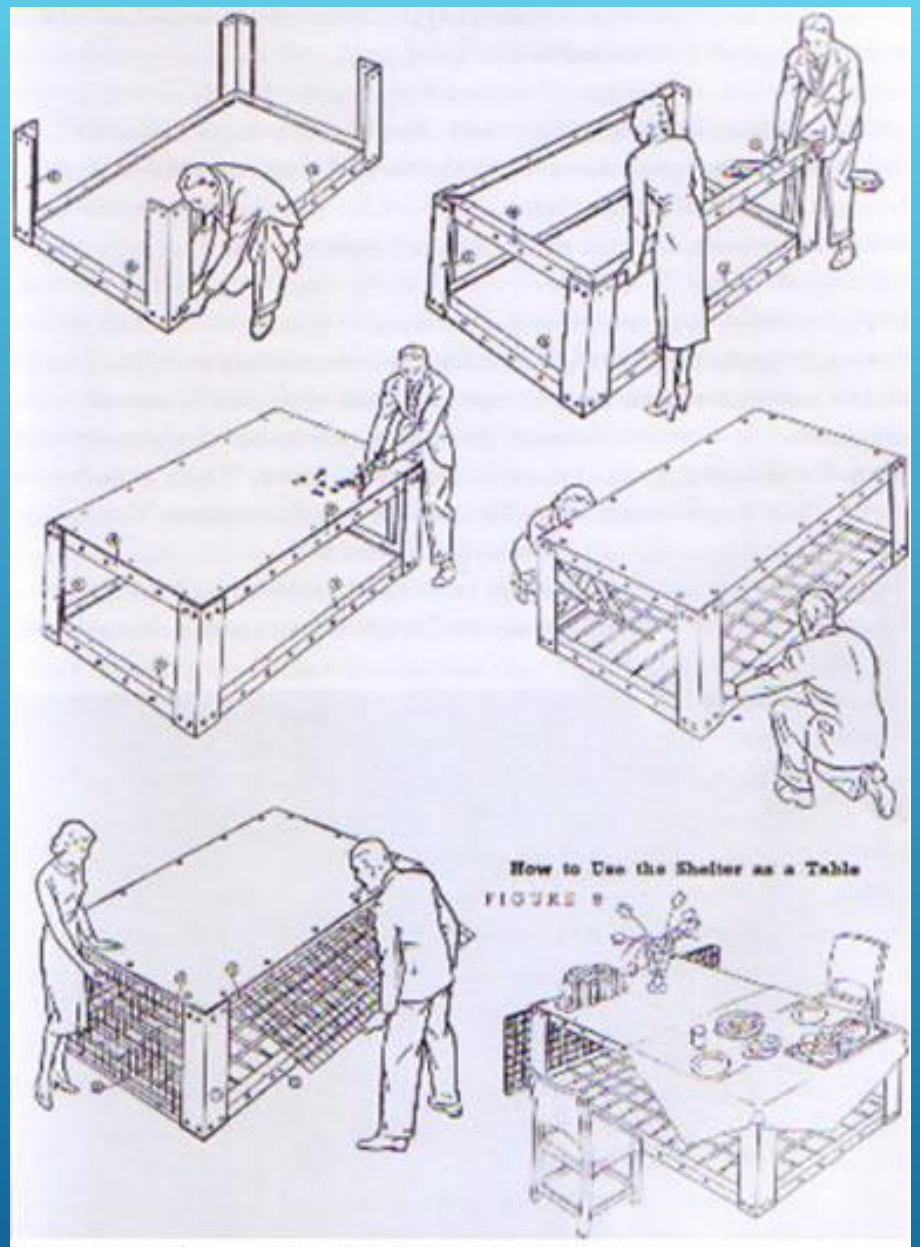


CARTOON CAPTION: "By the way, did you remember to feed the canary?"

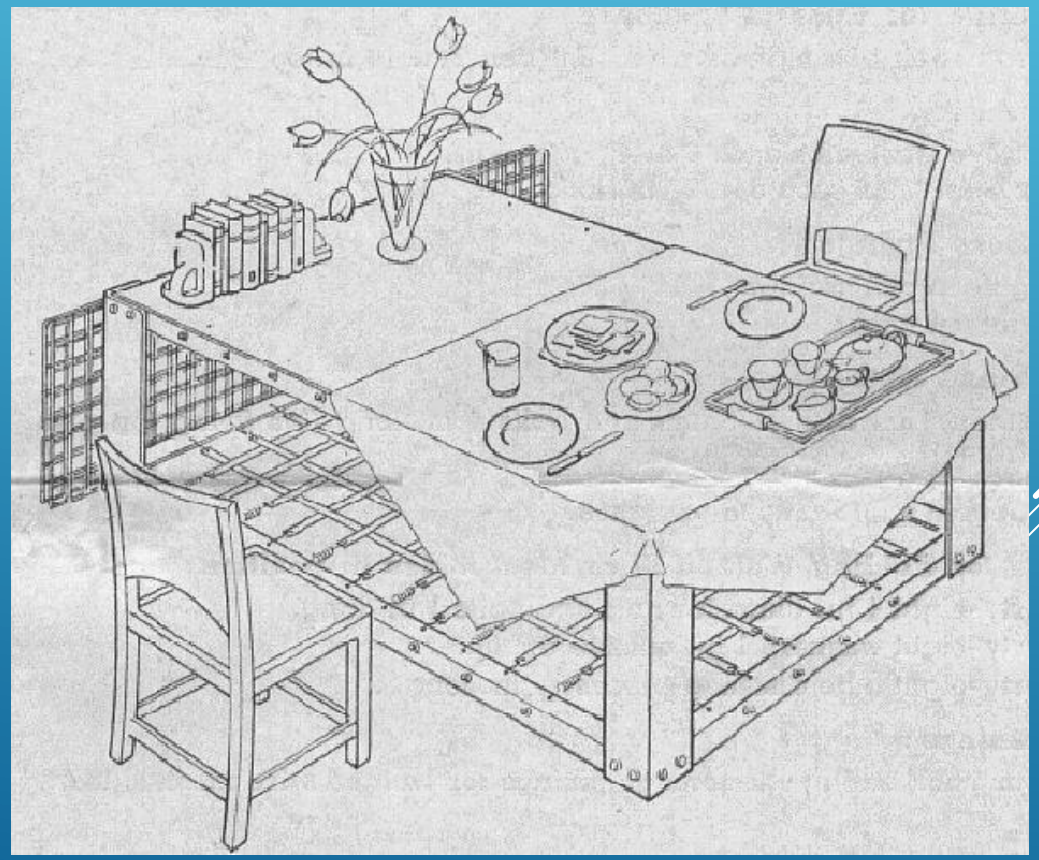
Morrison shelters came in self assembly form and the householder bolted it together.

Each pack had 359 parts and three tools supplied.

Making up the Morrison shelter.



Illustrations from the booklet 'How to Put up Your Morrison Shelter', issued by the Ministry of Home Security in 1941.



The Morrison Shelter was useful for lots of things – you could even play table tennis on it!

Did they save lives?

This photo shows a Morrison Shelter containing a dummy AFTER the house it was in had been destroyed as a test.

The Morrison shelter was very effective as long as there was no fire and the rescue teams could remove the rubble to reach the shelter and rescue the occupants.

The Anderson Shelter

Shelters must be up by June 11

IF you have an Anderson shelter and have not yet erected it and covered it with earth, you MUST do so before June 11—or give a good reason in writing to your local authority.

This order was announced last night by the Ministry of Home Security under a new Defence Regulation. Failure to comply with it renders you liable to substantial penalties.

If a householder is unable to erect the shelter himself, the local authority may help him if a good reason is given. If not, the shelter will be taken away and penalties may be imposed.

"Covering the shelter properly" means covering to a depth of 15ins. on top and 30ins. on sides and back.

This was the shelter designed by William Patterson. It was a small, cheaply made shelter that people could have in their garden. It was called an Anderson Shelter after Sir John Anderson who was in charge of Air Raid Precautions.

The first 'Anderson' shelter was erected in 1939. It was built in a garden in Islington, London on 25 February, 1939, six months before the war started.

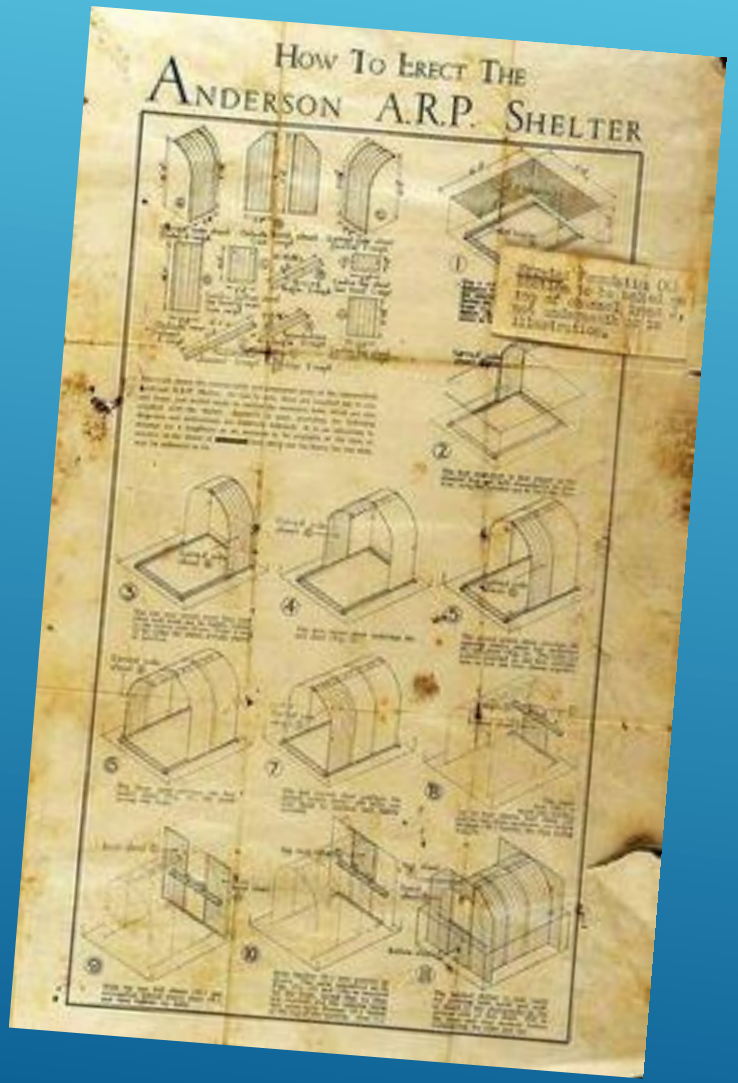
The Anderson Shelter was very popular. By September 1940, 2,300,000 had been distributed.

The shelters were free to those that earned less than £250 a year with a charge of £7 made to those that were on a higher income.

NEWSPAPER CUTTING: A headline from the Daily Express in May 1940 stressing that shelters should be assembled.

Construction

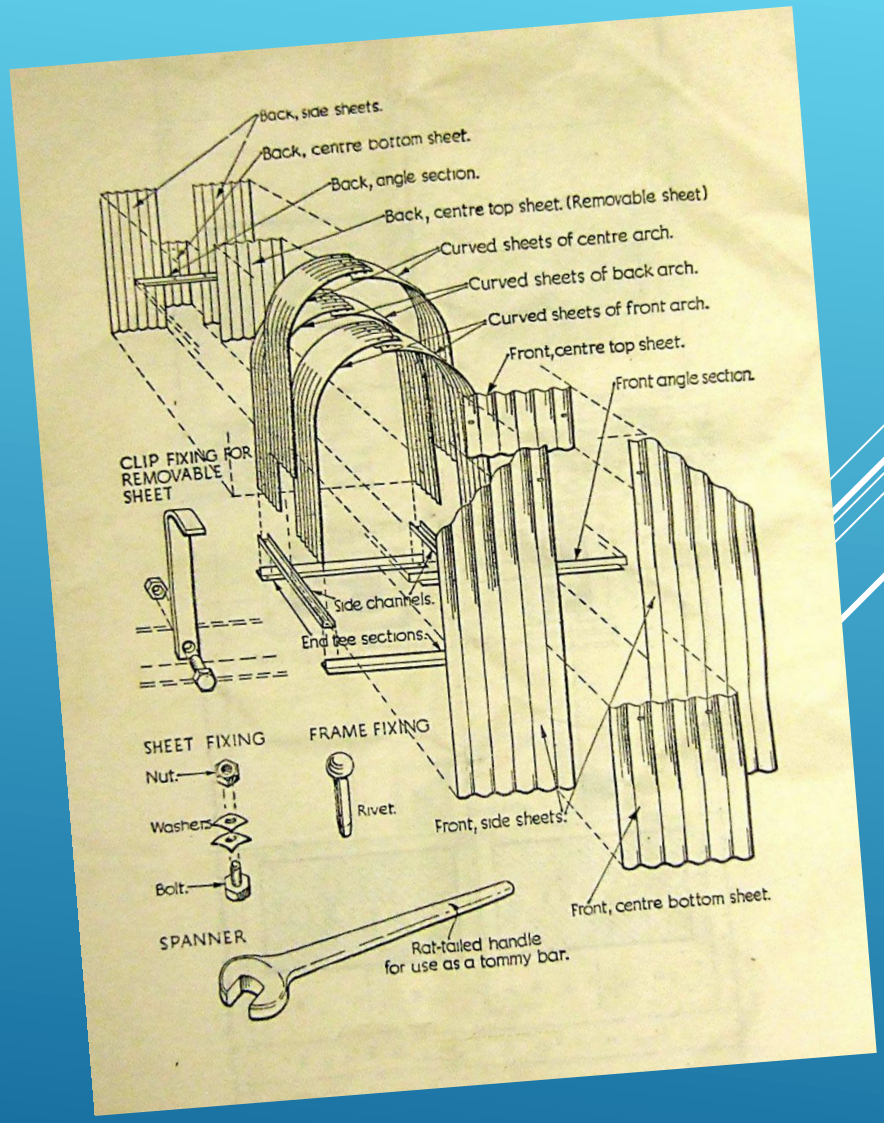
People were expected to assemble their own shelters.
Families received their shelter with an instruction guide and materials to put the Anderson shelter together.

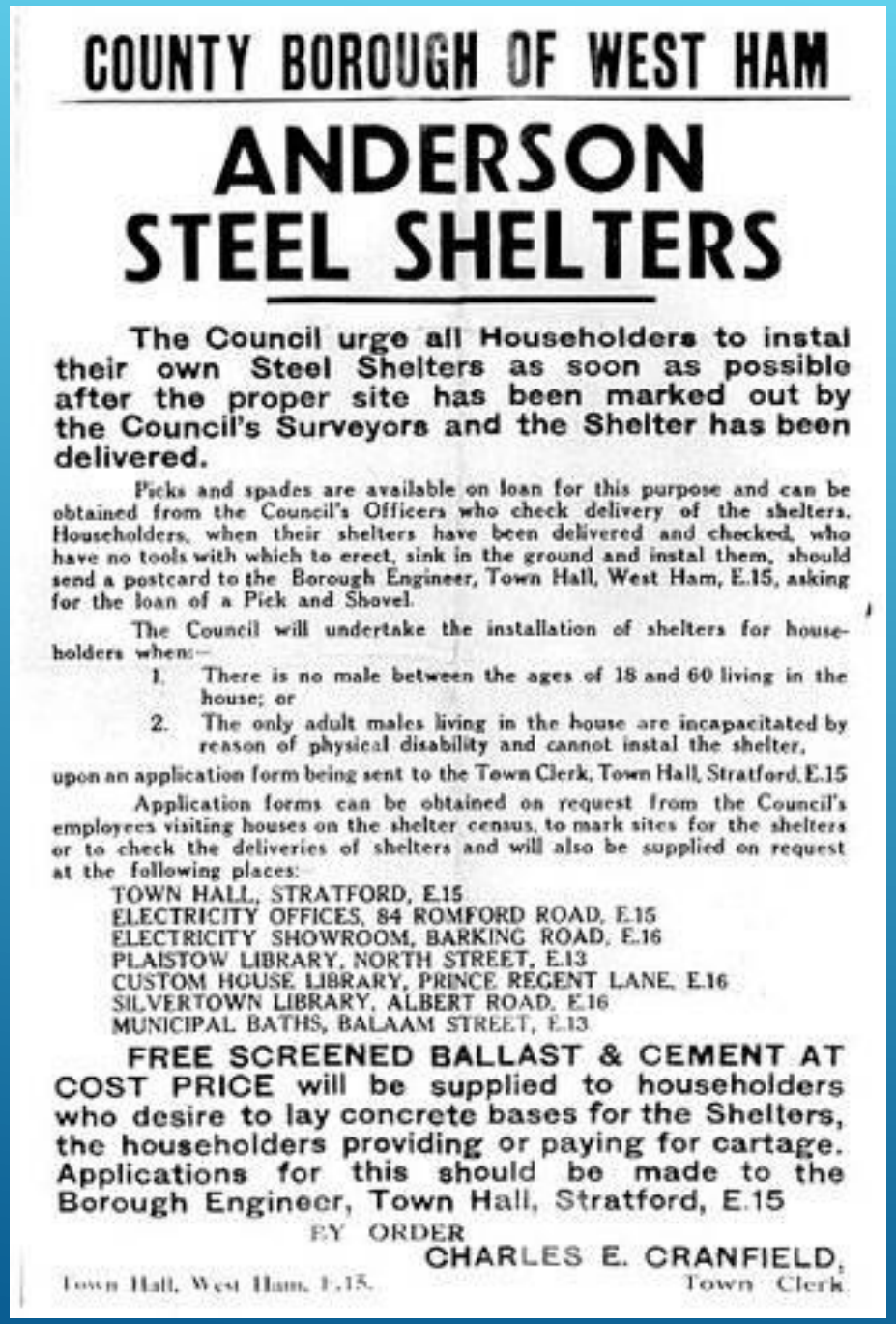


The construction of the shelters was quite simple. They were made from six curved panels of corrugated steel that were bolted together at the top. They had steel plates at either end, and measured 1.95m by 1.35m.

Once they were built, the shelters were buried up to 1m into the ground. They would be covered with a thick layer of soil (45 cm was recommended) and turf was often heaped on top to keep them secure.

The Anderson Shelter was incredibly strong because they were made of corrugated steel.





COUNTY BOROUGH OF WEST HAM

ANDERSON STEEL SHELTERS

The Council urge all Householders to instal their own Steel Shelters as soon as possible after the proper site has been marked out by the Council's Surveyors and the Shelter has been delivered.

Picks and spades are available on loan for this purpose and can be obtained from the Council's Officers who check delivery of the shelters. Householders, when their shelters have been delivered and checked, who have no tools with which to erect, sink in the ground and instal them, should send a postcard to the Borough Engineer, Town Hall, West Ham, E.15, asking for the loan of a Pick and Shovel.

The Council will undertake the installation of shelters for householders when:—

1. There is no male between the ages of 18 and 60 living in the house; or
2. The only adult males living in the house are incapacitated by reason of physical disability and cannot instal the shelter,

upon an application form being sent to the Town Clerk, Town Hall, Stratford, E.15

Application forms can be obtained on request from the Council's employees visiting houses on the shelter census, to mark sites for the shelters or to check the deliveries of shelters and will also be supplied on request at the following places:

TOWN HALL, STRATFORD, E.15
ELECTRICITY OFFICES, 84 ROMFORD ROAD, E.15
ELECTRICITY SHOWROOM, BARKING ROAD, E.16
PLAISTOW LIBRARY, NORTH STREET, E.13
CUSTOM HOUSE LIBRARY, PRINCE REGENT LANE, E.16
SILVERTOWN LIBRARY, ALBERT ROAD, E.16
MUNICIPAL BATHS, BALAAM STREET, E.13

FREE SCREENED BALLAST & CEMENT AT COST PRICE will be supplied to householders who desire to lay concrete bases for the Shelters, the householders providing or paying for cartage. Applications for this should be made to the Borough Engineer, Town Hall, Stratford, E.15

BY ORDER
CHARLES E. CRANFIELD,
Town Clerk.

Town Hall, West Ham, E.15.

Councils helped people to install their shelters if there were no males living in a house or if the males were disabled.

They also provided free ballast and cement at cost price so that concrete bases could be laid.

What was an Anderson Shelter like?

Building Anderson Shelters

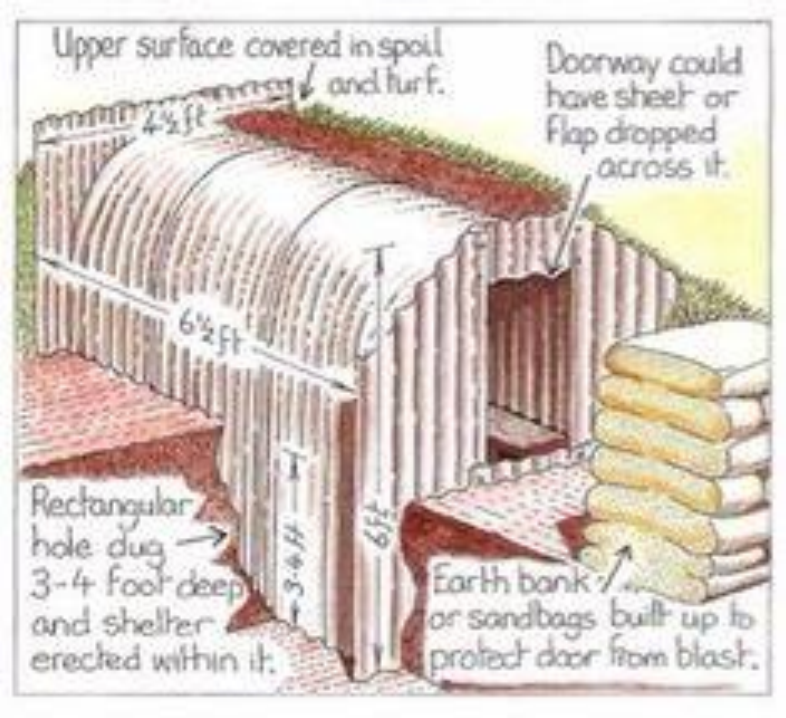
What was it like inside an Anderson shelter?

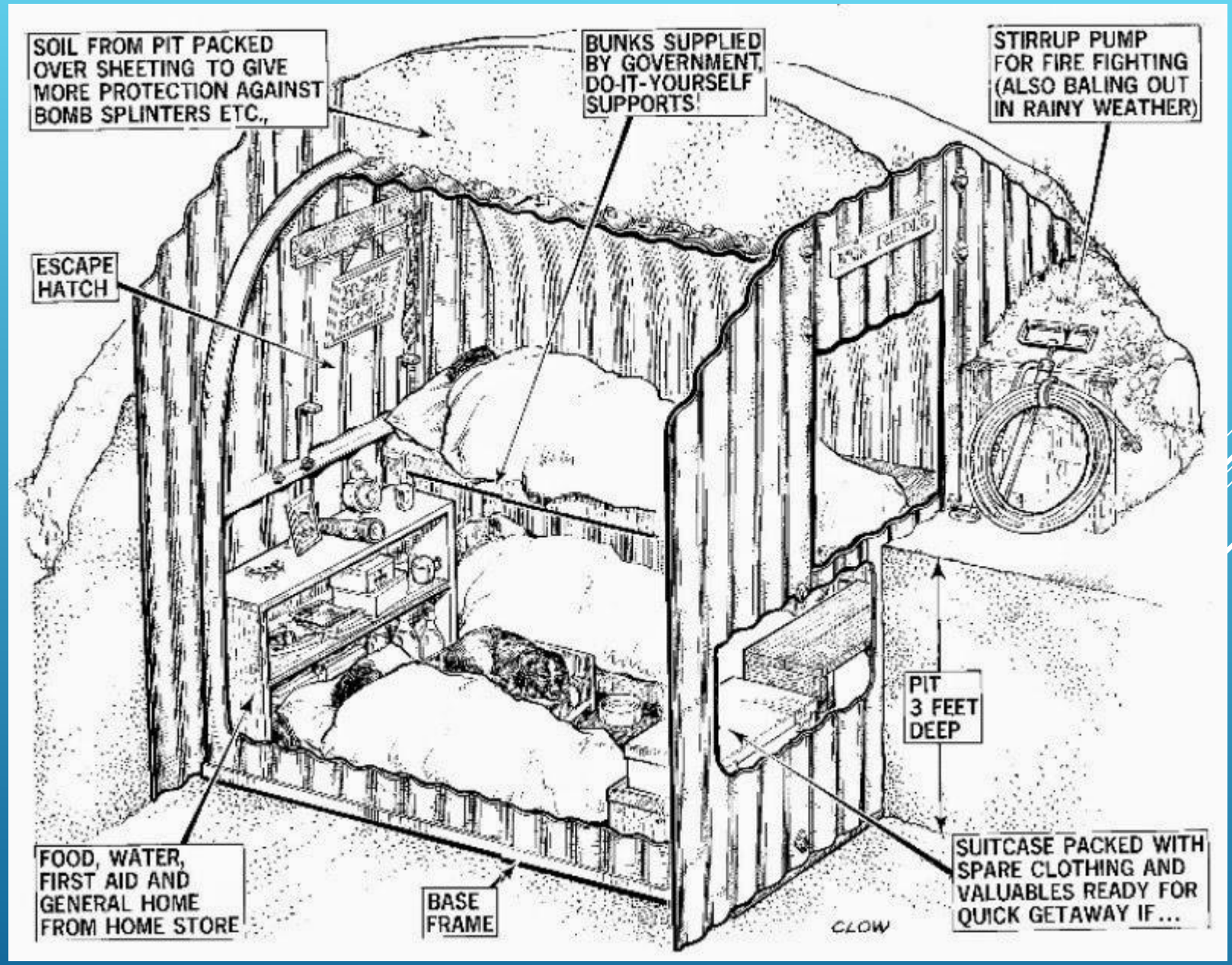
- **The Anderson shelter was built to accommodate up to six people.**

- **The shelters were quite cramped for taller people**. Somebody over 6ft would have found it difficult to fit inside comfortably.

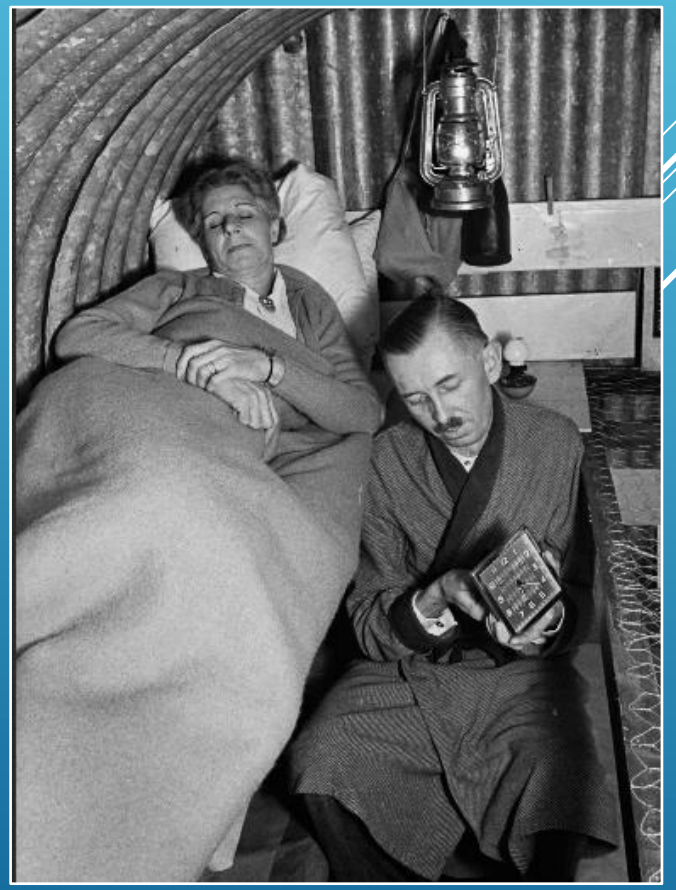
- **It was very cold inside the Anderson shelter.** To deter people from leaving their shelter to go back to their warmer homes at night, the Government issued some guidelines on how to make them warmer and more comfortable.

Climbing into the Anderson Shelter

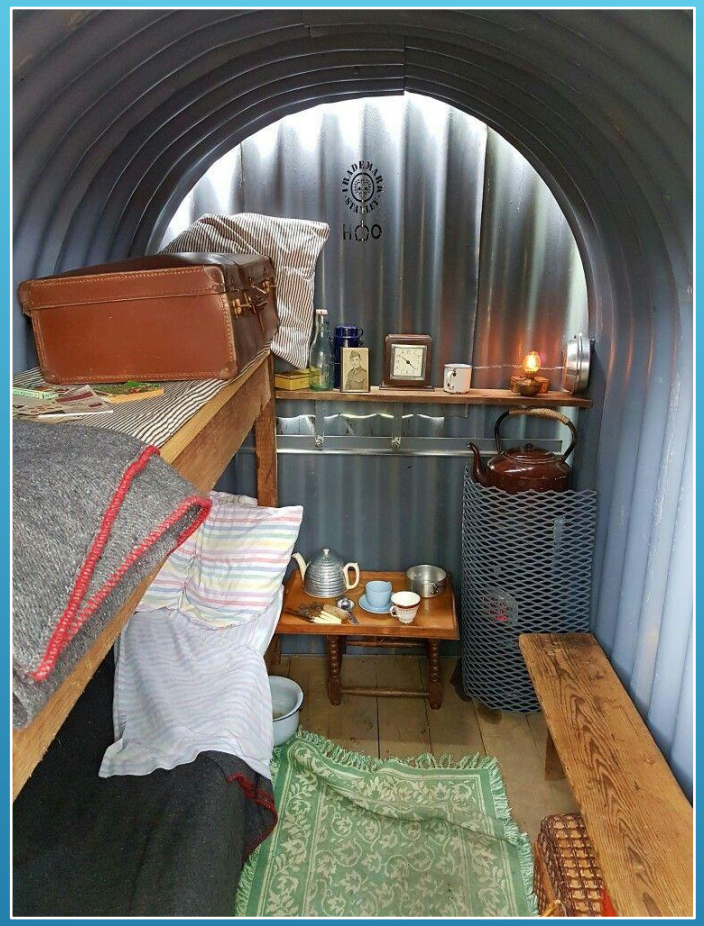

Upper surface covered in spoil and turf.
Doorway could have sheet or flap dropped across it.
4½ ft
6½ ft
3-4 ft
6ft
Rectangular hole dug 3-4 foot deep and shelter erected within it.
Earth bank or sandbags built up to protect door from blast.


SOIL FROM PIT PACKED OVER SHEETING TO GIVE MORE PROTECTION AGAINST BOMB SPLINTERS ETC.,
BUNKS SUPPLIED BY GOVERNMENT, DO-IT-YOURSELF SUPPORTS!
STIRRUP PUMP FOR FIRE FIGHTING (ALSO BALING OUT IN RAINY WEATHER)
ESCAPE HATCH
PIT 3 FEET DEEP
FOOD, WATER, FIRST AID AND GENERAL HOME FROM HOME STORE
BASE FRAME
SUITCASE PACKED WITH SPARE CLOTHING AND VALUABLES READY FOR QUICK GETAWAY IF...
CLOW

Inside an Anderson shelter.



Inside some more Anderson shelters.



People tried to make them as comfortable as they could.

Were Anderson Shelters effective?

The Anderson Shelter could withstand anything but a direct hit.
Families usually kept books, non perishable foods and toilet facilities in the shelter.
Although advised against it for health reasons, toilets usually meant a bucket in the corner just in case!

- **Many families used to try and brighten up their shelters.** They would often grow flowers and vegetables on the roof. One person actually wrote: "There is more danger of being hit by a vegetable marrow falling off the roof, than of being hit by a bomb!"

- **A lot of Anderson shelters still exist today**. Many people dug up the shelters after the war and used them as garden sheds.

Although the Anderson Shelter was a good idea, only about ¼ of the population could use one as many people did not have a garden where they could build a shelter.

You may want to watch this Pathe film. It is just over 2 mins long.

https://youtu.be/rHyxP3epU-w

https://www.britishpathe.com/video/your-anderson-shelter-this-winter

Where do you think people would have watched this film? People didn't have television in their homes.