

# Air Raids & Shelters

Whilst the first Air Raid warning in Bacup didn't come until 18.00 pm on the 20th June 1940 and lasted till the all-clear was given at 3.44 am. The 22nd to 23rd December saw the longest air raid warning of the war lasting from 6.38 pm to 6.27 am. Sunday 24th December 1944 saw the air raid siren sound again after a lapse of 28 months a new type of missile was now being used known as the Flying Bomb. Sand bins throughout Bacup and Stacksteads had been filled by the Corporation, and householders were encouraged to use their entitlement of a Free Bucket of sand to be kept in the house in case of fire. Warnings were given that the sand must be kept dry because wet sand was no good for Incendiary Bombs.

Kite flying and the firing of fireworks were banned as there was a possibility that large kites or balloons could be mistaken for enemy parachutist or in the case of fireworks used for other purposes other than peaceful fun. Birds were not forgotten either 49 pigeon fanciers had to register with the local police and have their pigeon lofts inspected and any birds not wearing a ring of identification had to be destroyed. Blackout rules had been in effect since the beginning of the war and to break the law was a serious offence which could result in a fine of up to £100.00 or 3 months in prison.

Because of the blackout restrictions, Bacup Market closed at 7 pm throughout September and the Bacup Trades Council advised that its members would be closing at 8 pm on Saturdays rather than the usual 9 pm. Several people found themselves fined for breaking the blackout.

Bacup had been well prepared for enemy bomb action, September 1939 saw the cellars of St Johns church on Burnley Road made ready to hold up to 150 people should the need arise. Sandbagging under the Market Hall had given access to the cellars of four of the former shops which would hold up to 180 people. In Stacksteads the cellars of the working men's club were ready to hold up to 100 persons.

By May 1940 three types of Air Raid Shelters had been built and prepared for the residents of Bacup and Stacksteads. These consisted of Semi Sunk shelters, Basement Shelters and Trench Shelters. Semi Sunk Shelters were in position at: Weir Recreation Ground, Sandfield Rochdale Road, Brick Street Tong Lane, Heyworth Street Todmorden Road, Lane Ends Road Newline, Toll Bar Newchurch Road, Brunswick Terrace, Lee Mill, Queens Terrace, Alder Street Burnley Road, opposite Farholme Lane, Corporation Yard Henrietta Street, Commerce Street and Esther Place and the Square Bankside Lane. Other shelters were in the course of erection at Springholme Mill, Sheephouses, Wesley Place and King Street. Basement Shelters: The following Basements had been strengthened. Newchurch Road, Mount School Lane Head Lane, Weir Branch of Cooperative Stores

