

George Murray pays tribute to his parents and remembers evacuation and the Home Front in Edinburgh



I was born in 1940 and was lucky enough to survive an air raid that year which damaged building in the Warrender Park area of Edinburgh. I was evacuated to Oxton in Berwickshire to stay with an aunt, and my earliest recollection was of going to a farm for milk when I was about two; one of the advantages of being in the country was that rationing didn't have the same impact and grew up during the war. But I do remember the ration books and the cutting out of points from the books; it was quite a good diet.

But when it became clear that Edinburgh was not going to be a major target for bombing we came back, but we did go down to Oxton sometimes and I remember travelling there and back by the AEC single decker bus.

As far as I was concerned my father was away for the whole of the war, but he took me to school on my first day in 1945. He was on embarkation leave before a posting to Egypt. I have early memories of going to see my mother's mother at Liberton Dams by the no18 Tram; it must have been before the end of the war because I remember on one occasion on the way back on a dark evening when the air raid siren sounded. The noise was horrible; it made your hair stand on end. I remember the conductor lowering the trolley and then shepherding us into the shelter on the Meadows. The whole of the Meadows was taken up by air raid shelters.

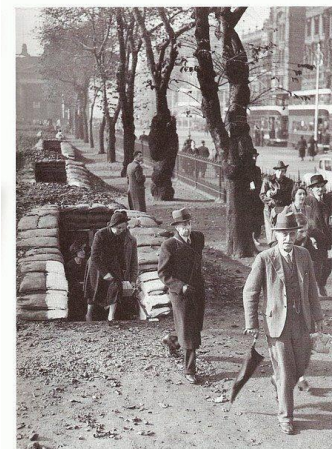
My father was **James Murray** and he had volunteered for the RAF in 1939 and was called up in 1940. Before joining up he had worked with John Menzies and he told of an occasion in 1939 when he was visiting a customer in Goldenacre. They heard the rata-tat-tat of gunfire and went out onto the street to see a Heinkel flying low and eastwards, appearing to follow the line of ferry Road, pursued by a Spitfire which appeared to be shepherding the bomber away from the city. The customer, thinking in First War terms couldn't believe a German bomber could be over Edinburgh within a month of the outbreak of war, and said "they must be practicing with real ammunition!'

My father went on to be a technician working on Radio Direction Finding (RDF which preceded RADAR. He spent most of the war in Britain, at Kinloss and Blackpool, and then in North Yorkshire with Bomber Command. He was also posted to Essex where he helped to establish and then served at a new USAF aerodrome; rations were quite different and he even managed to bring some back, quite legitimately, when he was on leave. But, in April 1945, just before the end of the war he was posted to Egypt and was demobbed from there. He met Lord Louis Mountbatten while there, and was eventually demobbed in early 1946.

I remember meeting him at Princes Street Station when he eventually returned home and I clearly remember both that he was very sunburned and that he had this most enormous kitbag full of goodies with him.

My sister's husband, **Archie**, had joined the regular army in 1937 because employment prospects were poor in the 30's; he was a motor mechanic in the Royal Engineers with the BEF in France and was evacuated back to Britain just before Dunkirk in 1940.

My mother, apart for looking after us, raised money for the war effort by selling war bonds door to door in our area, and I remember going round collecting with her.



Air Raid Shelters
East Princes Street Gardens