

WORLD WAR II

1942



Pooles Park Year 3 class in 1942

1943

12 th Jan	Head returns Miss Laidlaw returned in Jan 1943 after 2½ years – in evacuation area (Huntingdonshire villages) and Finsbury Park School (one year).																															
	Classroom organisation Not all the school is in use.																															
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Floor</th> <th>Rooms</th> <th>Daytime use</th> <th>4.00-7.00pm</th> <th>7.00-10.00pm</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="4">Ground Floor</td> <td>Rooms B & C</td> <td>Classrooms</td> <td>Playgroup</td> <td>Youth Movement Club</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Room H</td> <td>Used by Public Meals Service as as a Kitchen etc</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>All other rooms</td> <td>Bricked up for air raid shelters</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cloakrooms</td> <td>Pegs removed and used as air raid shelters</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Floor (JG dept)</td> <td>Rooms B, C, D, E</td> <td>Classrooms</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Floor	Rooms	Daytime use	4.00-7.00pm	7.00-10.00pm	Ground Floor	Rooms B & C	Classrooms	Playgroup	Youth Movement Club	Room H	Used by Public Meals Service as as a Kitchen etc			All other rooms	Bricked up for air raid shelters			Cloakrooms	Pegs removed and used as air raid shelters			First Floor (JG dept)	Rooms B, C, D, E	Classrooms						
Floor	Rooms	Daytime use	4.00-7.00pm	7.00-10.00pm																												
Ground Floor	Rooms B & C	Classrooms	Playgroup	Youth Movement Club																												
	Room H	Used by Public Meals Service as as a Kitchen etc																														
	All other rooms	Bricked up for air raid shelters																														
	Cloakrooms	Pegs removed and used as air raid shelters																														
First Floor (JG dept)	Rooms B, C, D, E	Classrooms																														
Jan	Staff in the Infant School Consisted of 6 asst teachers temporarily assigned to school																															
Jan 14th	Obscene Words and Sketches “Much damage to the buildings and furniture is being caused by members of the extraneous classes [the play group and Youth club].																															

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All toys, models and pictures left in the classrooms or hall ... are destroyed broken or defaced • chairs, blackboards, curtains, piano and crockery broken • the new paint and cream washed walls are scribbled on • obscene words and sketches are left on the walls, boards and window blinds” <p>The problem persisted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Head teacher’s posters and notices on strong card have now been torn down and destroyed” (3.3.43) <p>And persisted – the inventory of damage on 6th March included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Timetable and walls in Room B scribbled on with black lead • Windows rubbed over with wet white • Piano in hall forced open and lock broken” <p>And persisted (8th March):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Savings posters torn down in hall • All drawing pins taken • 3 windows broken” <p>And persisted (13th July)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackboard full of work defaced and obscene work written on it. •
	<p>Complaints from the neighbours</p> <p>“Residents from Playford and Hatley Roads came to the school and complained of the nuisance and bad language of boys and girls from the Youth Club after 10.00pm. The Air Raid Warden reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad behaviour • Indecent speech • Rudeness • Windows and Furniture broken”
5 th July	<p>Piano vandalised</p> <p>Not only was a window broken by the after school groups but 8 screws were taken out of the piano front so that it fell out and injured a teachers legs. Cigarette burns were discovered on the keys and frame.</p>

13th September 1943 Propaganda Photos

Photographs were taken today “for the publication of propaganda overseas”.





In these photos we see the Infants playground. Note the bricked up classrooms which served as air raid shelters for the whole school.


1943 Wartime initiatives




“Salute the Soldier” week collection raises £92
 Mayor’s Fund – provides Empire gifts, party and entertainment
Optimists Club of New York and Canada send chocolate to the children
 Children are encouraged to save for ‘Navy week’

1943	9 th Nov	Head’s Lumbago Infant School Head contracts lumbago “on account of her room being too cold”
1943	28 th Sept	Parent steals child’s coat June Webb’s hat and coat “stolen by an adult from the Infant’s cloakroom which cannot be locked owing to it being an Air raid shelter”.

1944

5 th Jan	<p>Food Poisoning “Staff and children complained of sickness and pain after yesterday’s lunch”. Again on 16th May: “Staff and many children taken ill diarraha and sickness following school dinner yesterday. Cause appears to be infected milk powder”.</p>
17 th Jan	<p>Free Cod Liver Oil Orange juice and cod liver oil are given, free of charge, to the under fives from this date.</p>
23 rd Feb	<p>Air raid damage Air raids caused damage near school. Some school windows broken. Children very tired after successive nights of noise.</p>
Feb 25	<p>Attendances down From 91% to 79% owing to series of air raids during half term (18th-22nd incl). Dropped to 61% on June 23rd “due to flying bomb raids by day and night”.</p>
Feb 25	<p>Pupil killed in air raid Half term raids have done much damage in Thorpedale Rd and Corbyn Street. “One pupil killed and several rendered homeless”.</p>
19 th Mar	<p style="text-align: center;">War effort “Wings for Victory” raised £233.3s.3d across the whole school.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
26 th June	<p>“Fly” bombs Continual raids by ‘fly’ bombs caused absence of children through lack of sleep.</p>
30 th June	<p>Air raid shelters “All depts using air raid shelters on ground floor. The staff have been on duty at all times taking short time in rotation for their own meals. Many heavy explosions heard and felt. The children and staff responded excellently to the emergency conditions”.</p>
July 14th	<p>Teacher’s house bombed Mrs Lafeaty given a week off after her house was badly bombed “by a rocket”.</p>
July	<p>“Morale is excellent” “Alerts and incidents continue during the day and night, many in this area, children and staff are very tired but morale is excellent and all work busily in the air raid shelters. Short breaks in playground are given between the alerts”</p>
July 27th	<p>Head not pleased about the kitchen HMI visited to inform the head teacher that he had passed the plan for the kitchen that the head had thought to be a silly one “in spite of [her] strong objection to the interference and inconvenience this arrangement will cause the school.</p>

Aug 22nd	<p>Too dangerous for 5yr olds</p> <p>When the school reopened after the summer with no ‘dinner service’ there were serious and life threatening consequences: “children have to be taken to the Romily Centre for their lunches” but the problem is that, with it being some distance away, when an air raid occurred, as it did on this day, there is nowhere to hide the children. The head complained about it and the children were allowed to eat at Montem school for two weeks whilst the Pooles Park kitchens were put right.</p>
Oct 31 st	<p>Teachers withdrawn for Evacuation duty</p> <p>Miss Thomas was sent to Wales for a month and Mrs. Docherty had to accompany evacuated children to Leicester for nearly 4 months.</p>
Nov 1st	<p>3 heads unite on the kitchen</p> <p>When a divisional officer arrived to discuss plans about the new ‘kitchen on the Junior Boys’ playground’ all three head teachers suggested that “the flat roof option would be a more convenient site”.</p>
Nov 15th	<p>Miss Bowman victim of bombing</p> <p>“Miss Bowman’s house destroyed by enemy action (Rocket Bomb) on Tues night. Miss Bowman now in hospital suffering from burns, bruises and shock having been buried in the debris. Head visited the Northern Hospital, Winchmore Hill.</p> <p>Enemy action continued day and night in North London – children very tired but all those remaining in London are attending well and in good health”</p>
	<p>Fun in school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Bob and Chips’ – Safety first dogs • Punch and Judy – provided by Mayor’s Fund from Empire • Puppetry demonstration – Gillespie Road Junior school (an annual affair) • A solo demonstration of rhythmic movement and dancing – given by student teacher from Homerton College Cambridge
Jan 6	<p>Rocket Bombs</p> <p>“Rocket bombs in Hanley road – windows broken. Others in Drayton Park. Children disturbed from sleep most of the night. Others in Essex Way and Finsbury Park caused damage to windows etc in road and school.”</p> <p>The rest of the month was characterised by “heavy snowfall and further enemy action in district.</p>
March 16	<p>Optimists Club of New York and Canada</p> <p>All the children in the school received chocolate from these optimistic benefactors.</p> <p>Optimist Clubs were founded in the U.S.A. in 1911 Each club raised its own funds and chose its own service projects. Typically, these projects were aimed at children. In Canada and New York, there was growing concern for the needs of children living overseas near the fighting. Out of this concern arose a new project. Based on the conviction that children are entitled to a few little luxuries and the war had recently been depriving them of these necessities, the Optimist Clubs in New York and Canada created the Chocolate Fund. By the war's end, British children were delivered more than two million bars of chocolate - the only sweet they knew during 10 years of war and famine.</p>
March 22nd	<p>Assent for the Heads’ kitchen</p> <p>The combined forces of the 3 heads ensured that today assent was given for the construction of the kitchen on top of the flat roof “ with service lifts outside and to halls.</p>
March 28th	<p>V1 and V2 Bombs</p> <p>Enemy action (Rocket bombs V1, V2 and robot planes) making very disturbed nights – keeping the children in school shelters most of the days</p>
April 30th	<p>The bombing lets up</p> <p>No further disturbance from enemy action this month</p>

May 8th	VE Day  “Surrender agreed to Britain and America. 2.10am cease fire”
May 9th	VE Day “Surrender agreed to Russia. Public celebration and holidays”
May 30th	Part-time school “Evacuee returns. School reorganised in two sections to attend half periods”.
June 22	Air raid shelters demolished “Shelter walls round Infants dept now being demolished – dust and noise very disturbing”.
July 9th	Full time school again All teachers have returned

WORLD WAR II in Islington

The first Air Raid Warning sounded within hours of the declaration of war. Carrying the gas mask and identity card when war broke out became inevitable,

Air Raids

Air Raid Shelters varied. Some were communal like those underground at Islington Green, Finsbury Square, and on the platforms of Underground Stations; also underground were the Anderson shelters of corrugated iron installed in private gardens; another type, similar to a cage, could be placed under a table; but the most popular in Islington were the windowless brick huts constructed in the street for general use, or in back gardens for individual households.

Because of the importance of the shunting yards at Finsbury Park an anti-aircraft battery was stationed there, and a barrage balloon installed on Highbury Fields. Despite these defences (or perhaps because of them) Highbury attracted the attention of the enemy, not only with conventional bombs, but also with sticks of fire-bombs, VI's VII's and Land Mines, so even those buildings that were not destroyed, lost ceilings and glass. To protect themselves from the effect of this 'blast' many householders. fixed thin material, such as curtaining to their windows with such proprietary glues as Glarpex, which only minimally reduced the light, while keeping the splintered glass together.

The ringing of church bells was prohibited.

Among the buildings destroyed by bombing was the historic parish church of St Mary in Upper Street, so St Mary Magdalene, in Holloway Road, became very popular for weddings, with brides taking up 'bag residence' with friends living in that parish.

To avoid giving help to enemy bombers at night a complete blackout was enforced. Streets were unlit, and a strict check kept on buildings to insure that no light should escape through windows and doors. So essential was this black-out considered that even torches used by people finding their way about the darkened streets were extinguished once an air-raid warning had sounded.

Some people wore bracelets engraved with their name, address, and religion for identification purposes in case of injury or death through enemy action.

Clothes

Clothing of all types was in short supply, and could only be obtained by the surrender of 'clothing coupons', which was very hard on those who, having been still at school at the outbreak of war, had no reserve of clothes, so school uniforms were picket to pieces to be reassembled in adult styles; aunts were persuaded to give up pre-war evening clothes which were transformed into day wear; curtains which were not suitable for blacking out light made pretty dressing gowns to wear at night in an air-raid shelter; and young men coming home on leave frequently found that their only suit had been transformed into one for a sister. To help women with these sewing tasks Make Do And Mend classes were organised, the most popular in Islington being at the Union Chapel on Compton Terrace. Stockings were a constant problem as, before the invention of nylon, they wore out quickly, but if one stocking, of whatever shade, was still in reasonable condition, it would be put to one side, then, when several had been collected, they could be boiled together in a saucepan, from which they emerge the same colour. Alternatively legs could be painted with a suitable brown dye and a line drawn up the back of the leg to give the impression of a fully-fashioned stocking with a back seam.

Knitting was another way of eking out coupons, especially if a pattern was economic. If the same colour was used to make more than one pair of men's socks, when the feet were beyond mending, one pair could be re-footed with the good wool from the leg of the other pair.

Using up scraps of pre-war wool made fair-isle designs fashionable. When this source ran out darning wool was used. To discourage this method of avoiding sacrificing coupons the manufacturers were instructed to cut the hanks of wool into short lengths, but clothes-starve women soon discovered that each strand was just long enough to do one row for anyone of average bust size, as long as the pattern was not too elaborate.

Service women whose cloths were provided, received some clothing coupons with which to purchase an outfit for their wedding, but for those who wanted a traditional white dress, these were insufficient, so brides in America donated their own wedding dresses to a 'pool' of clothes to be lent to brides from the women's forces and nurses.

Food and other rationed goods

Most food was rationed, and that which was not was in short supply, but somehow mothers managed to feed their children and men folk, frequently by going without themselves.

Such items as meat, butter, margarine, bacon, tea and sugar were rationed by weight; the number of eggs and amount of milk varied, but was frequently as little as 1 egg and 1 pint of milk a week; for tinned goods, dried fruit, dried egg etc. everyone had an allocation of 'points' to be spent on whatever was available; As households had different requirements it was sometimes possible to economise with, say, tea and sugar, which could then be unofficially 'swapped' with other households for butter. Fish, although un-rationed, was scarce, so if a fishmonger was known to have received a supply long queues quickly formed outside the shop.

Much ingenuity went into making interesting meals - a slice of corned beef, or Spam (a minces, highly flavoured ham-like product) could be oven baked between layers of carrot, beetroot and mashed potato (known as 'Woolton Pie' after the minister of food); the whole family's ration of bacon rashers, stitched together could be cooked as a boiled bacon joint; birthday Victoria Sandwich cakes were made with dried egg and liquid paraffin, Christmas cake had Soya flour and gravy browning to hide the lack of fruit, and a tame rabbit, slowly baked, substituted for turkey at Christmas.

Sometimes a food parcel from relatives in Australia, Canada, South Africa, or USA, or brought home by service men who had been training in these countries, would bring great cheer, especially if it coincided with a wedding or other family celebration, enabling guests to be invited without the family going short of food for the next couple of weeks.

A limited choice of meals could be purchased in restaurants works canteens, state sponsored British Restaurants, and schools, while children under sixteen were given a drink made of cocoa, dried milk and sugar; expectant mothers and infants were entitled to cod-liver oil and a drink made from oranges; and those certificated as having a health problem related to died might, by giving up some other part of their ration, obtain extra milk and eggs.

Soap was another rationed commodity, but as shaving soap was exempt, many women used this instead, especially for removing make-up, which although not rationed, was in very short supply, so service personnel returning from abroad were encouraged by their women folk to bring toilet soap and cosmetic products home as presents.

Housing

The bombing of London left many people homeless. As an emergency measure Rest Centres were set up in church and school halls, and other large underused buildings, until more permanent accommodation could be found, usually in another part of the Capital. Fortunately there were properties whose normal inhabitants were living elsewhere. These were requisitioned, with several families sharing a house or flat. Most of these people, having lost everything, were dependent on the generosity of others for even the bare necessities. One retired East End headmistress had decided when war started to live with her daughter in Hampstead Garden Suburb. When 'her school' and the surrounding district was flattened she asked that her, now stored, furniture should be given to bombed-out families. This was done, and a few weeks later, two men appeared at her daughter's house to thank her – both had been her pupils.

Pregnant service women, discharged from the forces, were not housed, so had either to return to their families, or if this was not possible, either hope to be taken in by a friend, or find a place to rent, but this last alternative was frequently a great strain on their meagre incomes.

Leisure

Personal time was at a premium, so not a moment was wasted, especially when relatives or friends came on leave. The first question they would be asked was: 'When do you go back?' This sounds unwelcoming, but it was so that every moment could be enjoyed.

Dancing was the most popular form of entertainment, either at a services club, or a public dance hall (the Royal Opera House and Lyceum Theatres had both been turned into dance halls). For special occasions, such as New Year's Eve, dances were held in hospital halls of residence for which invitations were issued to men either on leave or stationed in London.

A number of theatres remained open putting on everything from reviews to the classics, and cinemas offered frequently changing programmes.

Sunday afternoon poetry readings for those in uniform at the Stage Door Canteen, given by stage personalities attracted big audiences, but musical performances, other than piano recitals (the most memorable of which were those given by Dame Myra Hess at the National Gallery) were rare, as were works of art as the contents of galleries and museums had been pit into store outside the Capital. Keeping contact with friends and relatives serving abroad was another leisure activity. This took various forms, the most usual being the Airgram – a quarto-sized sheet on which the letter was written, photographed by the Post Office, and transmitted in a much reduced form to the recipient. The reduction in size had curious results, as when a relative serving in India, found a cobbler willing to make bespoke shoes that could be legally delivered in England without involving the surrender of clothing coupons, all that was required was that an outline of the proposed recipients feet should be provided. Unfortunately the wife for whom the shoes were to be made, instead of sending a full-price airmail letter sent the information on an airgram, which, when reduced by photography, was the foot-size of a new baby.

It seems amazing that the postal service was so efficient that letters, and parcels were delivered to every theatre of operation. The parcels would contain not only books and games such as chess, but also for the 8th Army in North Africa, cans of DDT.

War Effort

Everyone, whatever their age, was involved in war work of some kind, even if it was only Digging for Victory, by growing vegetables in a garden, or on an allotment in the local park, stripping old cables into their individual parts to be used for making new cables, or giving their aluminium cooking pots to be re-cycles as aircraft parts Iron gates and railings were also taken towards the production of armaments, but these were commandeered without the consent of the owners.

Those under 18 were recruited to organisations such as the scouts, guides, and training groups run by the services, where they prepared for call-up by learning a variety of skills such as Morse code and first aid, and helped the civil defence services as messengers etc.

Over-18's of both sexes were drafted either into the armed services, or some other form of work, unless, like myself, they were in a 'reserved occupation', when they did a full-time job, going on afterwards to duties as a fire-watcher, warden, fire-fighter, or nurse.

My normal timetable for those years will give some idea of what this meant.

In the hope of being called up and put into nursing, I had joined the British Red Cross at the age of 17, passed my first-aid and home nursing exams, and completed 50 hours work on a hospital ward. At the Bank of England my usual working week was 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, 1 p.m. on Saturday. Monday evening was allocated for Red Cross lectures, Tuesday for work at a health centre (usually washing neglected children and seeing if they needed referring to a doctor); Wednesday evening was 'free time; Thursday – ward duty until 8.30, then supper, and, if there was no air-raid, bed at the hospital, but on call, until 7.00 a.m.; Friday duty with another VAD at Archway Underground, where we had a hut at the end of a platform from which we dispensed first-aid to shelterers there, and at another station on the Northern Line; Saturday afternoon was free time, with an evening duty at the first-aid post in a Holloway cinema (where, with another nurse, I sat in the front row of the circle, and if not called to an incident, had to watch the film at least three times); Sunday morning brought another hospital ward duty, but the afternoon and evening were free.

World War II Ends

V-E Day

Although this brought great relief, for most people it was not a happy day. Everyone had lost a

relative or friend, so the overwhelming feeling was that of mourning, and many, like myself, took the opportunity of a day off from work to visit the grave of a loved one. There was also the realisation that many service personnel might be transferred to the Japanese theatre of operations.

V-J Day

It was not until after V-J Day that people dared hope that, however slow the recovery, the future had been worth fighting for.