



# What was life like for people in Gateshead during the wars?

## World War 2 - Personal Account



Read through Lillian's account of being a child living in Gateshead during World War 2.



What do her memories tell you about life during this time?

Choose four things from the text to focus on and write about them.

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## What was life like for people in Gateshead during the wars?

As a very young child, I knew no other way of life than that of a country at war. The scarcity of food and sweets due to rationing was not a hardship. Between the ages of two and three as all the family gathered around the radio to hear the news I increasingly became aware of a dreadful man called Hitler. The loss of my dummy which mysteriously disappeared when I was about three was attributed to having been “stolen by Mr Hitler”. While ill with measles my mother told me as each spot disappeared that it had been “sent to Hitler”. Just after I had recovered, radio broadcasts reported that Hitler was ill and my mother immediately attributed this to me sending him my measles. I remember feeling quite proud at the time. On reflection I suppose my Mother carried on a game to keep life as light hearted as possible.

Despite living reasonably close to the coast I never saw the seaside. The building of sandcastles, paddling in the sea and looking in rock pools for crabs were only for the future as at that time beaches were covered in barbed wire to prevent an invasion and were a “no go” area. However, on looking through old family photographs it appears that as a baby I had been taken to Marske by the Sea in Yorkshire for a holiday during the Summer of 1939. On family days out during the war we visited safer inland places such as Morpeth in Northumberland which in those days was regarded as the country. To be taken to Saltwell Park in Gateshead was a special treat for me as there were swings and roundabouts to enjoy and a lake where I fished for “tiddlers”.

An air raid shelter with a corrugated iron roof was built at the bottom of our garden. During the night when the air raid sirens went off I was carried there wrapped in a blanket.



**Gateshead**





## What was life like for people in Gateshead during the wars?

We would remain there huddled together until the all clear sounded. Because my Grandmother who suffered from asthma became more frail we were provided with an “iron shelter”. This was a cage with a solid iron roof which was housed in our living room and occupied almost a third of the room. On some occasions we sheltered in a large cupboard under the stairs. During the long nights when we were awake due to air raids we would fill in the time doing jigsaw puzzles. I remember on one occasion being taken upstairs and being stood on a chair to enable me to look through the bedroom window at flames leaping up from the River Tyne following an air raid on the Byker area of Newcastle.

As soon as darkness descended black blinds had to be pulled down over all of the windows before switching on lights (in our case gas mantles) to prevent German aircraft being able to locate town areas. A chink of light showing from a house during this time known as “The Blackout” would quickly bring about a knock on the door by a member of the Home Guard to tell you to adjust your blinds to block the light. At times during the day large silver balloons known as barrage balloons would appear in the sky to signal an impending air raid. When these balloons appeared we would rush home to take shelter.

Other memories are of metal railings being removed from garden walls to provide for the war effort and a large part of our garden being turned into a vegetable patch as households were encouraged to grow their own vegetables.

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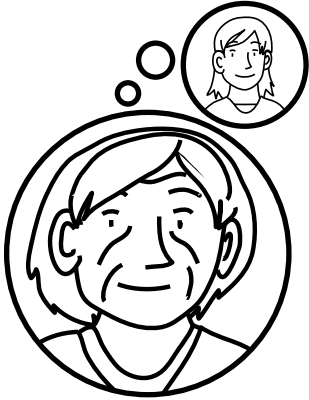
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**Gateshead**



Teacher's Pet



Historic England

# Local History

Historic England and Teacher's Pet have come together to bring you a collection of free resources that you can use in your local history teaching.

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Historic England



Teacher's Pet

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## Who are Teacher's Pet?

Teacher's Pet have been providing downloadable and playable educational content to early years and primary school teachers for over 14 years. We cover all areas of the curriculum and use a team of in-house teachers and designers to create engaging and memorable concepts, that the children will love.

## Why local history?

At [Teacher's Pet](#) we want to empower primary school teachers by giving them the tools they need to deliver inspiring and thoughtful lessons about the local area and its history. We believe local history teaching has such an important part to play in a child's wellbeing – helping to give children a sense of pride in where they live.

Our Local History project is designed to provide teachers across the UK with everything they need to successfully carry out a full scheme of teaching about their local area, through key enquiry questions and source led activities.

Working with [Historic England](#) gives us access to archived maps and photos for resources and information from knowledgeable local historians, as well helping us to provide the content to you free of charge.

For more information about our Local History project or to find out more about Teacher's Pet Classroom Resources, please visit our website.