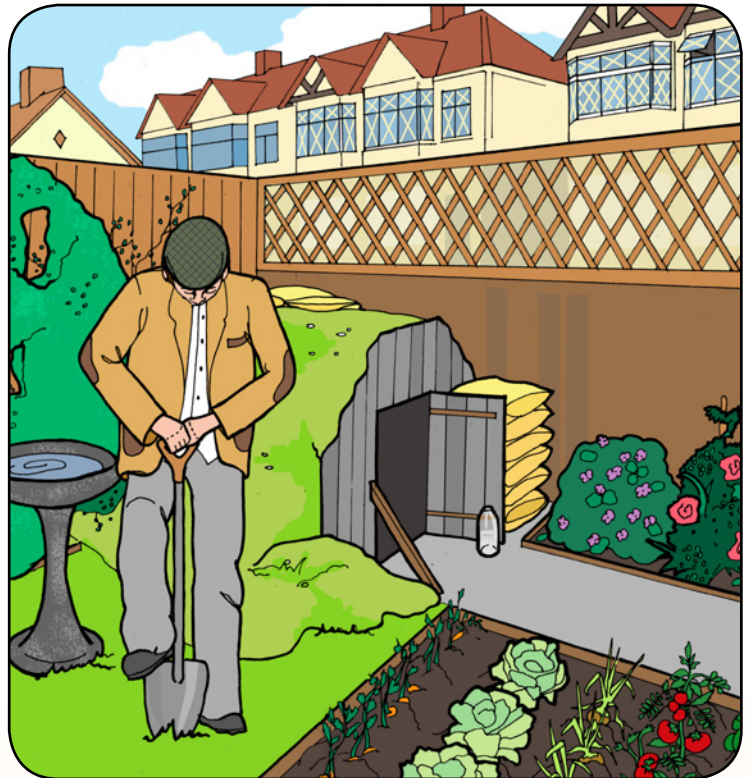


Keeping Safe in World War II (WWII) Homes

World War II (1939 - 1945) was a dangerous time, with air raids on many UK cities. The bombs damaged buildings and caused awful injuries. People had to 'black out' their windows so that enemy planes wouldn't be able to see the light and know where the towns were.

Some people built air raid shelters called 'Anderson shelters' in their gardens, made of strong sheets of iron covering a hole dug in the earth. Shelters were often dark, damp and cramped. Some people had a 'Morrison shelter' in their living room. This was like a strong table with a large metal block on top and wire fence around the sides.



Many children were evacuated (moved away) from the big cities and towns and sent to live with strangers in the countryside, away from bomb attacks.

But even when there were no air raids, people had to make sure they kept safe in and around their homes. As you read about some of the dangers found in WWII homes, think about which ones still exist today.

Danger from fire and heat

- When you have a bath, you get hot water from the tap, but WWII people weren't so lucky! Some homes didn't have bathrooms. Poorer people heated pans and kettles and poured the water into a tin bathtub, which was placed in front of the kitchen fire. They had to be very careful when carrying the water and moving about near the tub.
- There was no central heating or double-glazed windows to keep houses warm. Many homes had only open coal or wood fires to heat the rooms. Some homes had gas cookers but many people had to cook on an old-fashioned 'range', a type of cooker heated by a fire. People had to make sure they didn't leave things nearby that could catch alight.

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Keeping Safe in WWII Homes (Continued)

Danger from trips, slips and falls

- Although many homes had electric lighting, bombs often knocked out electricity cables and gas pipes, so many houses had candlesticks and matches in each room so people didn't stumble in the dark. They had to be careful when moving about the house with the candles and make sure that floors were kept clear so that they didn't trip over things.
- Blasts from bombs weakened and damaged buildings, so people had to be very careful that parts of buildings didn't collapse and injure them.
- Anderson shelters were sometimes hidden with earth and so children playing in the garden had to watch their step, to make sure they didn't fall down into one.

Danger from sharp things

- When bombs exploded, windows could be blown in and spread sharp broken glass everywhere. People stuck tape on their windows so they would not shatter into pieces.
- Pieces of exploded metal bombs and bullets (known as shrapnel) were found lying on the ground and were extremely sharp. People had to watch where they stepped!

Danger from poisons

- People were worried about attacks with poisonous gas (and not the sort you get from your dad after eating baked beans!) They carried gas masks to protect themselves and even babies had special gas masks to keep them safe. But there was also gas in some homes - in gas cookers. People had to make sure the gas was switched off when the cooker wasn't being used, as it could poison the lungs.
- Food was stored in a room called a 'pantry' and bowls of porridge filled with rat poison were commonly used to keep rats from eating the family's food. But people had to make sure that children and pets didn't eat the poison by mistake!

