

KENILWORTH IN WORLD WAR II

You are standing by the bricked-up entrance to one of at least 12 air-raid shelters built by Kenilworth Urban District Council as air-raid precautions in 1940. This underground shelter can be seen as a mound just over the sandstone wall.

Residents and those visiting the Church or nearby public houses and shops could shelter during an air-raid. The greatest danger to civilians was from shrapnel – mainly falling pieces of anti-aircraft shells fired into the skies at enemy aeroplanes.



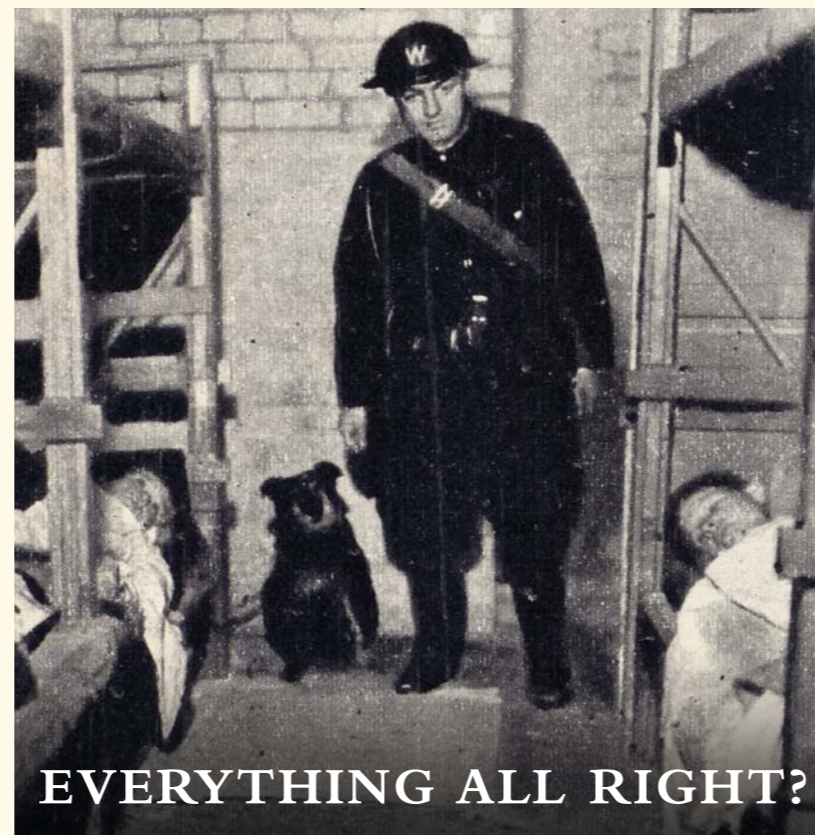
This 11cm (4½ inch) nose-cone from an anti-aircraft shell landed on Parliament Piece, Kenilworth, and is now in the Abbey Barn Museum.

The fuse was set to detonate after 26 seconds.

The brass cone weighs almost a kilogram (2lbs), so the tin hat worn by the warden in the picture above right would not have protected him from shrapnel of this kind.

Other World War II sites to look for:

- Two more shelters in Abbey Fields (near Rosemary Hill and Brookside Avenue)
- Memorial to those killed in the Globe Hotel (Abbey End)
- Gas cleansing station by St John's Church (near the Parish Hall)
- Anti-Aircraft battery at Bannerhill, Rouncil Lane.



EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

▲ Inside a shelter, 1941, from a booklet of the time produced by the Ministry of Home Security.



▲ A photograph taken in 2006 looking down the 9.3m (30½ feet) length x 2.2m (7 feet) width, towards the end wall, with a cross wall on the right which provided a screen against draughts or bomb blast coming down the entrance steps. There would have been benches for seating. Behind the photographer was a divided cross wall, leaving space for a chemical toilet and a ventilator or escape hatch in the position of the present-day manhole cover.



▲ A photograph taken in 2006 looking up the ten steps towards the entrance, now bricked up. You are standing on the other side of this wall.

▼ Few bombs landed in Kenilworth but, in 1940, a parachute-mine wrecked the Globe Hotel in Abbey End, with the loss of 28 lives, mostly people trying to escape from the Coventry Blitz.

