

The night in December 1940 when incendiary bombs fell on Saltford

as told to Bunty Dunford by Mr Wilson

The heavy bombing raids of Bristol by the *Luftwaffe* during WWII from November 1940 to April 1941, known as the "Bristol Blitz", also affected the surrounding area including Saltford.

This article has been provided by Saltford resident Mrs Bunty Dunford, a 7-year-old schoolgirl living in The Shallows in 1941 and describes the experiences of Mr Wilson who lived next-door to one of the village shops at "South View" in the High Street on the night of **2/3 December 1940**. Bunty has kindly allowed Saltford Environment Group to publish the account given to her by Mr Wilson in 2001 for SEG's Online Museum (History of Saltford project).

I [Mr Wilson] lived next door with my family at 5, South View, since re-numbered 47, High Street. My sister and brother-in-law and their children had come to stay the night to avoid the bombing of Bristol. Several of our family and friends were on what was termed "Fire-watching duty". We heard the whistle of bombs falling and took cover. We then saw a bright light outside of our own front door. We realised that an incendiary bomb had struck the large slab which was our front doorstep. We eased open the door and smothered the bomb with sand using a standard issue very long handled shovel. We then discovered another bomb in our back garden and dealt with it in a similar fashion.

The alarm was then raised that a bomb had penetrated the roof of Southview House, the home of our next-door neighbour who was Miss Louise Mitchell. Miss Mitchell had a little shop in the front room of the house from which she sold sweets, tobacco, tea, cocoa, and many other items of household goods. We could see flames through the window of a first-floor bedroom. My brother-in-law, Stanley Foale, rushed into the house and gained access to the bedroom. Fortunately, the bomb had fallen on a mattress on a bed but was already alight. Stanley rolled the bomb up in the mattress and threw both through a window and out onto the front garden.

There was a large number of incendiary bombs that fell in a small area which led us to believe that they formed what became known as a Molotov breadbasket. This term was given to a number of incendiary bombs (say 30) which were secured to a high explosive bomb. When the HE bomb was released from the aircraft and reached a certain height, the incendiary bombs became detached and made their own flight to earth. In the graveyard attached to St. Mary's Church and in the fields behind Saltford Manor, the tail fins of many incendiary bombs could be seen the next morning protruding from the ground.

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