

MEMORIES 2.

. . . and so we returned to South London (apparently) with my mum and I sharing a house with her younger sister and my gran. It was quite a large house which I remember quite well as we lived there until I was six or seven years old.

Another very early memory which I talked to mum about not long before she died involved an impression of me watching several people sitting with legs outstretched. I was at the end, furthest away from a low square opening and someone was combing their hair. It was like sitting in a box. Apparently I was describing being in a Morrison Shelter, an indoor bomb shelter which was set up in the hall and my aunt usually put her curlers in her hair and I was always put at the back of the shelter together with my cot mattress and blankets (and teddy no doubt).

I don't know how effective these shelters were in saving lives but I looked up brief details: They were made up with a steel table top and measured 2 metres long, 12 metres wide and 75cms tall. Our shelter contained a minimum of three adults and me at any one time. Although I do not consciously recall the noise of bombs going off, to this day I cannot stand loud bangs, even balloons, and am very claustrophobic. No doubt due to these experiences.

I remember travelling with mum, to what I now know to be a railway station. I was about three years old. Suddenly I realised that mummy had stopped focusing on me and was being hugged and kissed by a stranger, a male person in a grey coat. On being told to say hello and accept a kiss from him I decided hiding behind mummy was the preferred option and wouldn't look at him. Mum had been my world for three years and I didn't wish to alter it. Then we were on the underground seated in a row, dad, then mum, then me. I would not look him in the face but could see him clearly in the windows opposite and heard mum saying "don't worry, she will come round once she gets used to you". I obviously did and he was a lovely dad, but I think was a bit upset with that part of his return from war.

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