



What was life like for people from Maidstone during the wars?

World War 2 - Personal Account



Read through Milly's account of being a child living in Maidstone 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.

Lined writing area for notes.



Maidstone



What was life like for people from Maidstone during the wars?

I was just under 3 when war was declared. My father was called up despite his age (37) because to earn a few extra pounds he had joined the TA a few years before. My mother was obliged to keep on his job as school caretaker because the accommodation was tied. She was expected to do a full hard days work and look after me and my two older sisters (8 and 10). Fortunately my Aunt lived with us so was able to help.

My sisters and I slept under the Morrison shelter in the living room together with cats of assorted ages and my mother and aunt slept in a cupboard under the stairs. There was also an Anderson shelter in the playground but it smelt disgusting so I tried to avoid that.

Many bombs were dropped in and around Maidstone - by accident as the targets were West Malling, Detling, Manston and Biggin Hill. We lived near a busy railway junction and that too was a target. A bomb dropped near the station and killed several men loading up a brewers dray at the nearby Fremlins brewery.

Later in 1943 a doodlebug dropped on the line about 100 yards away from my infants school. I remember the teacher telling us to get under our desks and I saw the large windows falling into the classroom. At the time my mother and her friend were walking up from the town and were knocked flat by the blast - she never did find her hat! Their first thought was to get to the school but luckily no child was hurt but soon after that my sisters and I were evacuated to Wales.

The main things I remember were lack of "goodies" - I never tasted a banana or ice cream until well after 1945. I was allowed oranges on my ration book because I was under 5 but there were no oranges to be had anyway. I had a friend who had a beautiful dolls pram and I used to nag and nag my mother. One Christmas I awoke to find a funny little tin box on wheels - my new pram. I was disgusted being too young to realise that I simply couldn't have what I wanted.



Maidstone





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My older sister has told me since the efforts my mother went to to make this pram and my sister herself knitted blankets and dolls clothes. By this time my mother was dead and how I wish I could have thanked her properly. How women managed during that time I have no idea. Many a time I remember her sitting with an empty plate. She said she had had hers already but of course in time we realised that she had had nothing to eat at all. Queueing for food was taken for granted. If work got round that a certain butcher had a fresh supply of sausages, all the children would be sent running down to the town to queue up.

No cinemas or theatres were open, neither was the swimming pool, although attached to this were public baths. We would plod down once a week for a precious bath. Otherwise it meant a tin bath in front of the fire. One lot of water would do the lot of us and we took it in turns to go first! There was no shampoo, only soap which wouldn't wash out, no washing up liquid, only soda, no washing machines of course. Many people grew their own vegetables and fruit and reared chickens but we had no back garden and in any case my poor mother couldn't possibly have found time to work in a garden. She had to clean the schools (infant and junior), no electric cleaners either. She would put something called "Dusmo" on the floor then sweep it up. Every classroom had a coal fire which she had to tend, she also helped with the school dinners and did the laundry.

There were many heroes serving in the Services during the war but women like my mother were to my mind equally brave and strong, facing as they did the bombing, fires, rocket attacks, rationing, as well as looking after families and their own parents.



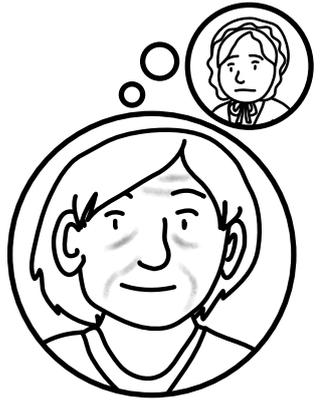
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Teacher's Pet



Historic England

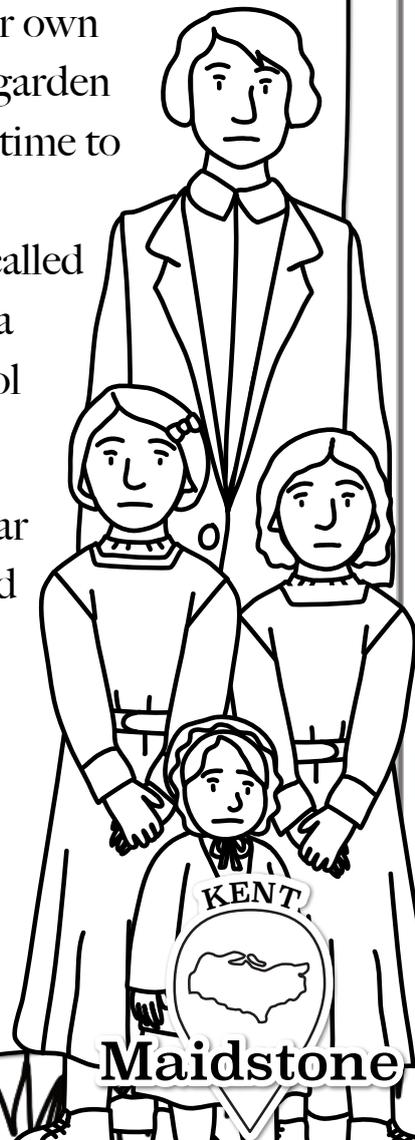


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Local History

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.



Historic England



Teacher's Pet

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.