

the bombs fell
and resident Joan Herbert remembers that fateful day

during World War II, 80 years ago, that a bombing raid claimed the lives of four in Portishead. The bombs fell on Albert Road on September 3, 1940 and Joan can remember every minute.

Joan was seven-years-old, living at number 18 Albert Road with her sister and their parents. She was an air raid precaution (ARP) warden and she can remember her mum filled her with courage to help protect buildings around the town.

Joan says: "On September 3 1940, it was after 10pm when the siren sounded. My sister and I went our way to the shelter at the bottom of the garden, like we always did when the sirens were coming. No-one actually thought a bomb would drop anywhere near us. The raids were a regular occurrence. They meant a quick trip down to the shelter and until that day it was followed by a return to our beds sometime later, once the raid was over. German pilots used the Bristol Channel as a marker to reach targets like Filton Airfield and the Bristol Docks. Unfortunately Portishead Power Station was also a target but that was a long way from Albert Road, so we felt pretty safe.

During the raid on September 3, while we were in the shelter I remember my mum was talking to our neighbours at the front gate. I didn't like my mum not being in the shelter with us, so when I started to get upset about it my sister ran out to fetch my mum who then came back. Thank goodness she did because just minutes later the bombs dropped, badly damaging more than 14 houses in Albert Road, including ours, and killing four people, one of whom was the poor chap who had been standing chatting in the street with my mum earlier. There was noise and chaos, I was terrified and couldn't stop crying. The air raid wardens soon turned up and helped all of us whose houses had been damaged. We were a close-knit community and everyone was devastated.

My father was out on duty that night. He had thrown himself on the floor alongside a wall to protect himself when the bombs fell, but he came straight back to make sure we were safe.

After the raid, her family were moved to a flat in Gardner Road while the houses were repaired. Joan recalled: "We discovered later that the Germans had dropped a number of bombs on other parts of the town that night. Homes were damaged in Kew Villas in Bristol Road and the Council House on Slade Road also sustained damage. The repairs took a long time to complete as with most of the men serving in the war there were few builders at home to help with the rebuilding."

The three people to lose their lives in Portishead that night were Charles Dolman, William Leslie Tripp and Mable Tripp.

A stone feature can be found in a flower bed, close to where one of the bombs fell, at the southern end of Albert Road (now Brampton Way), in memory of those who lost their lives. The memorial includes Miss E Gill of Channel View Crescent, another local civilian casualty who died on April 11 1941.