

## **Air Raid while at Hamble Senior School**

On 13 August 1940, children at Hamble Senior School were sitting down "enjoying" their midday meal of "stew" and jam tart when the public air raid siren sounded and they were directed to their air raid shelters across Satchell Lane.

Why were they at school in the middle of August? It was a scheme to keep them off the streets in those troubled times, the school had closed for three weeks at the end of July to coincide with the summer break at the local aircraft works, which was only 10 days at that time.

Ordinary lessons were abandoned for the rest of August and games, gardening for the boys and knitting and sewing (for the services) for the girls were the order of the day. The school's "spotters" were not yet operational although they had been given a little training by an engineer from Air Service Training.

In the shelters, the children started their routine of singing - "She'll be coming round the mountain" for example - but it was obvious that the air raid was taking place not too far away as the scream of dive bombers could be heard above the noise of anti-aircraft guns, and they could feel the thud as bombs exploded.

The teachers, who were now shelter wardens, encouraged those on one side of the shelter to sing louder than the other side to try and drown out the noise.

The big question was where? This was answered when a boy, who had gone home for lunch and returned in a lull, said it was Lee-on-Solent, which was some way away but the wind was blowing from that direction which made it sound closer.

After about an hour, the raid ceased, all went quiet and the all clear sounded. They all trooped back to the dining hall only to find their half eaten dinners had gone cold and a white film of grease covered them.

In spite of the fact that the food was revolting, the headmaster made them eat it and even the pudding of pastry and a dollop of bright red jam did not take away the taste of cold mutton stew. So they followed the teachers' example and ate it (although a couple of them left the table rather quickly).