



**SOME EXPERIENCES OF
AN AFRICAN AIR-RAID WARDEN**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all of those who helped produce this book. Firstly Ita Ekpenyon's wife, Winifred and daughter Oku for their continued co-operation and support, to artist Jonathan Boast and College Park School for their enthusiasm and determination in producing the beautiful illustrations to accompany Ita Ekpenyon's story and to our volunteers and staff at Westminster Archives for helping write the learning resources.

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For more information and to download this resource visit www.westendatwar.org.uk



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FOREWORD

During World War II the people of Africa and those of African heritage supported the British war effort in a number of different ways. They fought for ‘the mother country’ and despite low wages Africans donated over £1.5 million to the War Fund whilst West African governments gave Britain almost £1 million from their meagre budgets as an interest free loan. In addition to this the raw materials of the colonies were very important and those from Africa were in great demand.

Africans and those of African heritage also contributed in another vital area, the home front. One such person was my father E. Ita Ekpenyon who having been a headmaster in Nigeria came to England to study law. Unfortunately, financial difficulties meant he never completed his studies, his aspirations unfulfilled. However, as soon as war broke out in September 1939 he did not hesitate to do his bit and started training as an air raid warden playing an important role in the London area he served. He also rallied support for the British cause with radio broadcasts on the BBC’s *Calling West Africa* programme and Africans were not slow to respond. Nigerians financed the cost of a tank which was made as a gift to the ‘mother country’. My father took pride in all he did as an African and as “one of many peoples of other countries that make up the Empire”.

People like my father, the contributions they made to the war effort and their willingness to serve, are all too often overlooked and forgotten, neither valued nor appreciated. Their commitment both during the years of conflict and those immediately after the war were vital to Britain. The reconstruction during the post war years was in no small measure due in part to those people of colour who supplied the labour force that was important to Britain’s recovery. However, after the war he was not able to pursue a career that was commensurate with his education and ability, something that fills me with sadness and a terrible sense of waste.

This hidden history of the involvement of those from the colonies is due partly to ignorance and a failure to acknowledge what others from overseas did for this country by what my father called “the British Commonwealth of Nations made up of peoples of many races”. There is a whole generation of young Britons who do not understand how people of colour helped to shape the nation. This is something which should be remembered as we mark the 70th anniversary of the Blitz, when London experienced a major bombing campaign by the Nazis.

Oku Ekpenyon (MBE)

**SOME EXPERIENCES OF
AN AFRICAN AIR-RAID
WARDEN**

BY

E. I. EKPENYON

OF CALABAR: A LONDON AIR-RAID WARDEN



SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN AFRICAN AIR-RAID WARDEN

1. TRAINING TO BE A WARDEN

THE people of the world are divided into two camps, one camp trying to enslave the world, the other camp fighting to have peace and freedom in the world. In this struggle civil defence is very important. So I am going to tell you about my training as an air-raid warden, which began in September, 1939.

I was one of many men and women, both old and young, who went to lectures in a large hall. We were given a syllabus of the courses of instruction and a few textbooks. The lecturer then spoke about aerial warfare and the relationships between wardens, the people, and the civil defence authorities, and what was expected from wardens when the time came for them to play their part. Then each prospective warden was enrolled in a register, in an area in the division where he or she lived.

In the syllabus of courses I noticed that the course to be taken extended over a period of several weeks and covered a number of subjects, including general organisation of civil defence, incendiary bombs control, protection against high-explosive bombs, war gases and personal protection against gas, and elements of first aid.

I attended all the lectures and saw the various demonstrations, and took part in the practical side of the course. It was very interesting, and the lecturers and the demonstrators were masters of their subjects.

I have no regrets for taking the course, and, above all, it made me able to do my share for the British Commonwealth of Nations to which I belong, during the bombing of London.

My training was tested when London was heavily bombed, and I found that it had not been in vain. My first incident was to put out an incendiary bomb with a stirrup pump. I knew exactly how to approach the bomb and the fire caused by it without exposing myself to danger. I knew when to use the jet of the pump and the spray. Of course, this was not one man's work. I had another warden to pump the water for me. Then I had to deal with an incendiary bomb which an untrained man was trying to put out. He was eager to fight the fire, but the way he was going about it would have landed him in the hospital, if not something worse. We had many such incidents to deal with during the bombing of London. After a time I had to pass my knowledge on to others. I have given lectures to people in the shelters about incendiary bombs, high explosives, war gases, and the principles of first aid. In one of the biggest shelters of which I was in charge I organised and gave instructions to fire parties. I have given first-aid treatment, have done some rescue work, and dealt with panic. All this was possible because of the confidence I gained from my training.

I am very proud of the praise given me by my District Warden and Post Warden and the people. People are very friendly in my area, and call me "Uncle Sam." During the blitz, in the course of my duties as a warden, wherever I showed my face in the shelter my presence seemed to cheer the people, for they felt the wardens were looking after them.



Though I am a fully trained warden, the ever-changing weapons of war keep me always reading and studying. My comrades and I are continually receiving further training. We attend lectures, have practice exercises, gas-mask drills, and do other things which make wardens efficient in their duties.

The borough, or part of London in which I work, is divided into divisions. A division or district is subdivided into wardens' posts, and each post is again divided into sectors. At the head of a division there is a District Warden and his acting deputies. At the post there is a Post Warden and deputy. In a sector there is a Senior Warden and a No. 2 Warden, along with other wardens. All these heads have a certain amount of responsibility. I am a Senior Warden, responsible for my sector.

I shall now tell you about a Senior Warden's responsibilities. There are the general duties, such as going on patrols, seeing no lights are showing at night, counting people in shelters and in big tenement houses.

During a quiet period, by the orders of the Post Warden, I took a census of private and business premises in my sector. In doing this I got to know the newcomers and renewed my contact with the old residents. A census is a help to the wardens' service, for should a particular house be hit by a bomb we are able to tell what persons are likely to be in it.

A Senior Warden is responsible for the checking up each night of fire guards at the various action stations in the sector. This has to be written in a Fire Log Book in the post headquarters, for the Post Warden's information.



The people in the sector go to the Senior Warden for information, and make enquiries and complaints to him regarding things relating to civil defence. Sometimes I have been questioned about matters that have nothing to do with civil defence. Once I was asked what to do with a sick cat and how to improve lighting on the landing of a house. As Senior Warden I do night duties, and some nights I look after the post. That means I must be prepared to meet the consequences of gas attacks if they come. I have to be ready to be on duty at a minute's notice if the need arises.

I have a day and night off each week. To the people of my sector, however, it does not matter whether I am on or off duty, for if they want to see me about anything they call at my place of residence. This often happens.

I am delighted that I belong to a post in a division in London which has shown conscientiousness to duty, courage, and determination in the face of danger. We have had commendation from our Head Officers, and, to crown all, one of my comrades has received the George Medal.

2. ON DUTY DURING AIR RAIDS

When I became an air-raid warden I did not think that what the people of Britain have faced through the German air raids would have been so dreadful.

One night in the course of my duties I was on top of a building 100 feet high with two other wardens. The events of that night will always remain in my memory. The sky was lit with searchlights, the bursting shells of anti-aircraft guns, and big fires in some parts of the city.



The droning of planes was to be heard, and, to crown it all, I saw an explosion of an enemy bomb about a quarter of a mile from where I stood.

Once I had to help to evacuate people from a bombed shelter. As I was leading a lady to another shelter, a whistling bomb came sailing overhead, and I had to throw the lady down on the pavement and lie on top of her. I was pleased that she was not hurt, though she was very shaken. In the shelter to which I took her I noticed that there was uneasiness. But I assured the people that all was well, and that there was no need to be alarmed.

Then I went on to visit another shelter in my own sector. I found the shelter had been damaged and was in darkness, and about 120 people were in a state of confusion. As I was standing on top of the stairs, I shone my torch on my face and signalled to them to be quiet. I managed to make myself heard, and told them plainly that if they wanted to be saved from fire they had to keep cool and take orders from me. Failing that, they and I would have to remain in the building and face our fate, which would be a very unpleasant one. The people became quiet and we were able to evacuate everyone, with only one minor casualty of a sprained ankle, which was promptly attended to.

I had to carry a frightened woman from the damaged shelter. In the street the droning of the planes and bursting shells increased her fright, so that she gripped me round the neck and I was nearly choked. I braced myself and carried her to a place of safety. A few days later in a shelter a woman came to me and thanked me for my action. She said she was the one I carried out of the shelter. I joked with her for nearly being a murderess!



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It amuses me to know that in the district where I work the people believe that because I am a man of colour I am a lucky omen. I had heard of such child-like beliefs, but I am delighted that such beliefs exist, for wherever my duties take me the people listen to my instructions and orders, and are willing to allow me to lead them. So I am able to control them, which makes my duties lighter in these troublous days.

I have had to put out fires, with members of the public giving me assistance when I needed it. In a neighbouring post area another warden and I had to put out an incendiary bomb. The police had helped us to break into a five-storey house which was unoccupied, where we found that there was neither water, stirrup pump, nor sand. I had to go for a stirrup pump and water. The nearest base I knew of was my post, which was about 200 yards away. As I hurried along I met a man wearing a steel helmet who lived in the next house but one. I asked him for a stirrup pump. Instead of saying "Yes" or "No" he said "What for?" I pointed upwards, saying, "Look!" Without a word he dived into his house like a hare, and I after him like a greyhound dog. A pump and a bucket of water were handed to me. In a few minutes the fire was out and the borrowed pump returned to the owner. Then we had a friendly chat, and I could see that the belief in colour had affected him. So you see that the asset of colour has played an important part in the course of my duties.

3. AIR-RAID SHELTERS

You know that air-raid wardens are in charge of the shelters. They are assisted by shelter marshals. In my post area I was in charge of one of the biggest shelters. This was, of course, in addition to other duties as a warden. In this particular shelter I had a couple of marshals to help me.

As the year 1940 was drawing to a close the raids got very frequent and very heavy. So the population made use of the shelters from early evening till morning. They also slept in them, so sleeping bunks were put in. Sometimes there were as many as four to six raids before nightfall, so life in London was a matter of going in and out of shelters.

In my own shelter I was faced with all kinds of problems. I am glad to say that I had a Post Warden who was very far-sighted and a good administrator. I often discussed my problems with him and took counsel. This gentleman gave me a free hand to carry on my work in the shelter.

I shall tell you of one or two of my outstanding problems of those early days. In this shelter I am talking about the shelterers were peoples of many nations, with a variety of beliefs. They were young and old people, and children. The bombing of London forced a mixed crowd to be in one another's company, though their ways and manners and views of life in some cases were as opposite as the north and south poles.

Some of the shelterers told the others to go back to their own countries, and some tried to practise segregation. A spirit of friendliness and comradeship was lacking. If this spirit had continued it would, as certainly as the night follows the day, have led to riots.

So I told the people that the British Empire, which is also known as the British Commonwealth of Nations, is made up of peoples of many races. I said that though I am an air-raid warden in London, I am still an African. I also said that I am one of many peoples of other countries that make up the Empire.

Then I spoke of the three classes in the shelter – namely, His Majesty’s subjects, protected persons, and guests. These last were refugees from other countries. I said that this third group of people who were in the shelter, and who were not interned, were entitled to the protection of the Union Jack. I said that this being the case I would like to see a spirit of friendliness, cooperation, and comradeship prevail at this very trying time in the history of the Empire. I further warned my audience that if what I had said was not going to be practised, I would advise those who did not agree to seek shelter somewhere else. For to remain in the shelter and to behave in an unfriendly way would force me to report them, because they were trying to create disunity in the Empire. The people responded, and few left the shelter.

The next move was to create a spirit of understanding, friendliness, and comradeship. This was possible because of the good administration of the Post Warden, ably supported by his assistants. They arranged for concerts and dances in the shelters. My marshals and I gave cinema shows in my shelter, and arranged darts games. Through these recreations the shelterers got to know each other better. In 1940, when the gas mains were damaged by enemy action, we borrowed a Primus oil stove, and the shelterers were provided with hot tea, coffee, or soup before going to bed, and similar drinks in the mornings before they returned to their homes.

THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS



TOGETHER





Gradually merriment and friendliness spread in the shelter. Its fame spread beyond the district, and almost every night visitors came from far and near. Some of these visitors expressed a desire to stay, but this was impossible, for the shelter was quite full.

As Christmas of 1940 drew near we formed a committee of the shelterers, and agreed to have a party on Christmas Day. When this was made known the shelterers worked together and decorated the four rooms of the shelter, to the admiration of visitors. Even some of the civil defence higher officials were impressed. We also managed to raise funds for the party.

On Christmas Day the eighteen children who were the young shelterers were entertained to a tea-party. I asked a kind-hearted lady warden from my post to manage the children's party. As I stood aside and watched the distribution of presents and sweets to each child, I was happy to see them so merry and bright.

After the children's party the grown-ups had tea. We had plenty of music and songs, and there was laughter and happiness on all faces. Before the end of the grown-ups' party the Post Warden distributed the presents. There were thirty presents in all. But as the shelter held 300 or more people, everyone could not have a present, so the grown-ups drew lots for what there were, so as not create ill-feeling.

It was sad news to the shelterers as well as to me when, after the building we were in was badly damaged, we were told that the shelter was to be closed. The day of parting came and the shelterers were sent to other shelters.

I am pleased to say that though we had had very bad and dark days of heavy and damaging raids on London, though high-explosive bombs, incendiary bombs, and even land mines, had fallen near the shelter, though doors had been blasted out, though parts of the shelter had been flooded, though there had been big fires on two sides of the shelter within a distance of about ten yards, no one was hurt.

Occasionally I meet some of the old shelterers, and we often talk about the bygone days.

4. "KATSINA" THE TANK

One morning in the month of June, 1942, I set out with an officer from the Nigerian Regiment for a place many miles out of London. When we arrived at the end of the first stage of our journey, we met Sir Donald Cameron, the ex-Governor-General of Nigeria. When I was introduced to him, he was able, without hesitation, not only to tell of my native town in Nigeria, but also the tribe I belonged to.

We came to a war factory. The whole party of us, numbering about eight people, were shown into a large room where I saw about five people, among whom were two major-generals and a captain of the British Army. Light refreshments were served. Another gentleman walked in. I at once recognized him as Lord Nuffield. A few seconds after, Lord Nuffield and Sir Donald Cameron walked up to me. I was warmly greeted with a cordial handshake by his lordship, and Sir Donald Cameron told his lordship where I hailed from and the geographical position of my native district in Nigeria.

We then went to a courtyard where there was a squad of Home Guards. Major-General N. B. Barrows, D.S.O., M.C., accompanied by his captain, mounted the platform, the bugle sounded, the General stood at attention and took the salute, and afterwards inspected the guard of honour. At the end of this we made a tour of the factory. This particular factory was devoted to the production of tanks. It was manned by men, women, boys and girls. I had a friendly chat with some of them, and they gave me a cordial handshake and a cheery smile. These factory workers seemed very happy and interested in their work. I also observed that they were all doing something – none were idle.

We then went to the north side of the factory, where the flags of different nations were displayed. Those of China and the United States of America were prominent; the Union Jack, the symbol of the British Commonwealth, was beside the flag of Russia. The flags were in pairs, on either side of Lord Nuffield's photograph. Below the flags stood the great monster weapon of war, the tank, which was the object of my visit to that factory. A bell rang, and I turned around to see that we were surrounded by the factory workers. I looked at their faces and saw pride and satisfaction in their eyes.

The Managing Director of the factory which had built the tank made a speech and called upon Lord Nuffield to speak; his lordship spoke for a few minutes, and at the end called upon Sir Donald Cameron, who knows Nigeria and her people well, to say a few words. This was heralded by loud cheers and applause. His Excellency spoke about the people of Nigeria and more particularly about the Emir of Katsina of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, and his brother Emir of Daura, also of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria.

He spoke about the co-operative efforts of these two Emirs and their subjects, of how funds were raised to purchase the tank as a gift to His Majesty's Government – a very noble gesture on their part. His Excellency unveiled the tank, which had previously been covered by the Union Jack, and I saw in clear block letters the name of this monster of war – “Katsina.” He then formally presented “Katsina” to Major-General Barrows of the British Army, representing His Majesty's Government, as a gift from the two great sons of Africa and their subjects. There were prolonged cheers. The General made a short but stirring speech, and appealed to the workers for more tanks. After that, “Katsina” was driven away, followed by deafening cheers.

After this ceremony twenty of us sat down to a really good luncheon. I was bombarded with questions regarding my country. I was also questioned about my experiences during air raids on London.

After Luncheon, a party of us motored to the open country to attend tank exercises. I was thrilled when Sir Donald Cameron invited me to accompany him for a ride in “Katsina.” As I walked with Sir Donald towards the tank, Sir Donald told me about a certain metal in the wheels of the tank which came from the Gold Coast. I remarked: “Surely, your Excellency, this is really a West African affair.” Sir Donald was helped to climb into the tank, and I was also helped to climb in immediately after him. I remained standing at the gun turret, and in the next few seconds “Katsina” of Nigeria, now of His Majesty's Army, thundered up and down the hills. I thought of those Nigerians who were responsible for this gift, who may see the pictures of “Katsina,” for films were taken of the event.





Good fortune to “Katsina” and the crews who ride in her, and may they be spared and be able to prove their worth as men of valour in whichever field of battle they are sent.

Bravo “Katsina!”
Bravo! Bravo!
Good luck to you!
Let victory be yours.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Key Stage 2

English/History/Geography/Citizenship/Art & Design

To download this teaching resource visit the Learning Resource page at www.westendatwar.org.uk

E. Ita Ekpenyon in Brief

E. Ita Ekpenyon was born in Creek Town, Calabar, Nigeria in 1899. He worked as a teacher and later a Headmaster before coming to London in 1928 to study Law.

At the outbreak of war Ekpenyon was an early volunteer to the St Marylebone wardens' service.

During the war he made several radio broadcasts in support of the British war effort for the Calling West Africa programme on the BBC Empire Service. One of the talks was later published as *Some Experiences of An African Air-Raid Warden*.

In his account of his experiences as a warden, he described vividly his often hazardous duties and responsibilities, conveying with immediacy the fears, camaraderie and divisions that existed in London during the Blitz.

Ekpenyon's dedication, aptitude and popularity with those he served was recognised by his superiors and he gained promotion first to Senior Warden in charge of his sector and later to Deputy Post Warden for his division.



St. Marylebone Borough Council
CIVIL DEFENCE GENERAL SERVICES

NAME **EKPENYON, Ita (MR)** ADDRESS **146 GREAT TITCHFIELD STREET, W.1.**
National Reg. Identity No. **ARAN/89/1**

Date of Birth if UNDER 18 yrs. _____

Service in which employed **Wardens** From **5/2/40** to **1/7/45**

PAID SERVICE ONLY. LESS Absences without pay, short-term release, &c., with dates _____

MONTHS **64**

TOTAL + **64**

GRATUITY GROUP No. **1**

Details of Rank, with dates. Where relegated, reason to be given :-
D.P.W 25/9/44

GRATUITY PAYABLE + **64** x **7/6** per month ... **1278 0/6**

POST-WAR CREDIT (see P.W. Credit Card) _____

IMPORTANT NOTE.—Where an employee is dismissed through misconduct, or, being "frozen," leaves without consent, no gratuity is payable and this card should be marked diagonally in red ink.

£ 24: - -
£ 31: 19: -
£ 55. 19 -

2000 FM 443 111

Ita Ekpenyon's Service Card
Westminster City Archives

Task Examine Ita Ekpenyon's service card above and answer the following questions	Write your answers below
What date did Ita Ekpenyon start his service?	
What date did he finish?	
How many months did he serve as an ARP Warden?	
How much was Ita paid as gratuity?*	

* Gratuity was a lump sum bonus paid at the end of the war in recognition of service.

E. Ita Ekpenyon in Brief

Ita took part in a documentary film which recorded the commissioning of a tank funded by Nigerians as a wartime gift to Britain. He also featured as an extra in films featuring famous Black American actor, singer, athlete, lawyer and political activist, Paul Robeson.

During the war Ita met his wife Winifred and they had two daughters. Financial hardship frustrated his ambition to pursue a legal career and unable to find employment fitting his education and abilities, and having to support a young family, he worked in later life as a postman. Ita died aged 52 of a heart condition.



E. Ita Ekpenyon
Winifred Ekpenyon

<p>Task Read pages 24 to 25 of Ita Ekpenyon's account and answer the following questions</p>	<p>Write your answers below</p>
<p>What was the product the factory made?</p>	
<p>Which two Emirs donated the tank?</p>	
<p>What place in Nigeria was the tank named after?</p>	
<p>How did Ita describe the tank?</p>	
<p>Which flags were displayed on the north side of the factory?</p>	

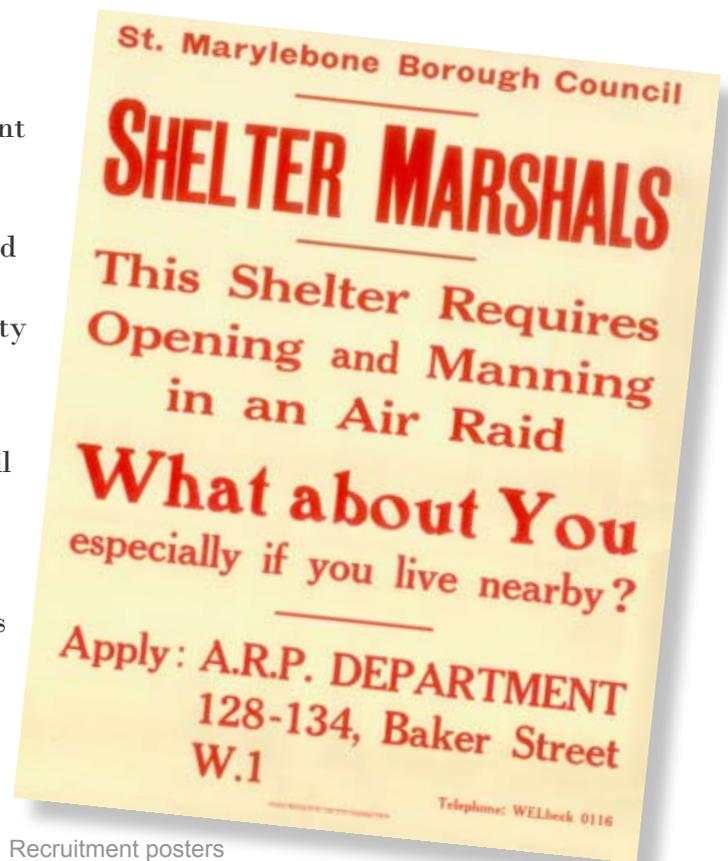


Great Titchfield Street
Westminster City Archives

Preparation on the Home Front

Preparations for the local civil defence of British towns and cities against enemy aerial bombardment had begun in earnest following the Munich Crisis of 1938. The Air-Raid Precautions Act of 1937 had requested that all local authorities prepare and submit to the Home Office an air-raid precautions scheme, for “the protection of persons and property from injury and damage in the event of hostile attack from the air”

Proposed for London was a two tier system of civil defence: the London County Council would direct the fire and ambulance services and a number of other functions, such as the Heavy Rescue Service and rest centres for the homeless; the cities of London and Westminster and the London metropolitan boroughs would, under Home Office scrutiny, each make their own arrangements for air-raid precautions.



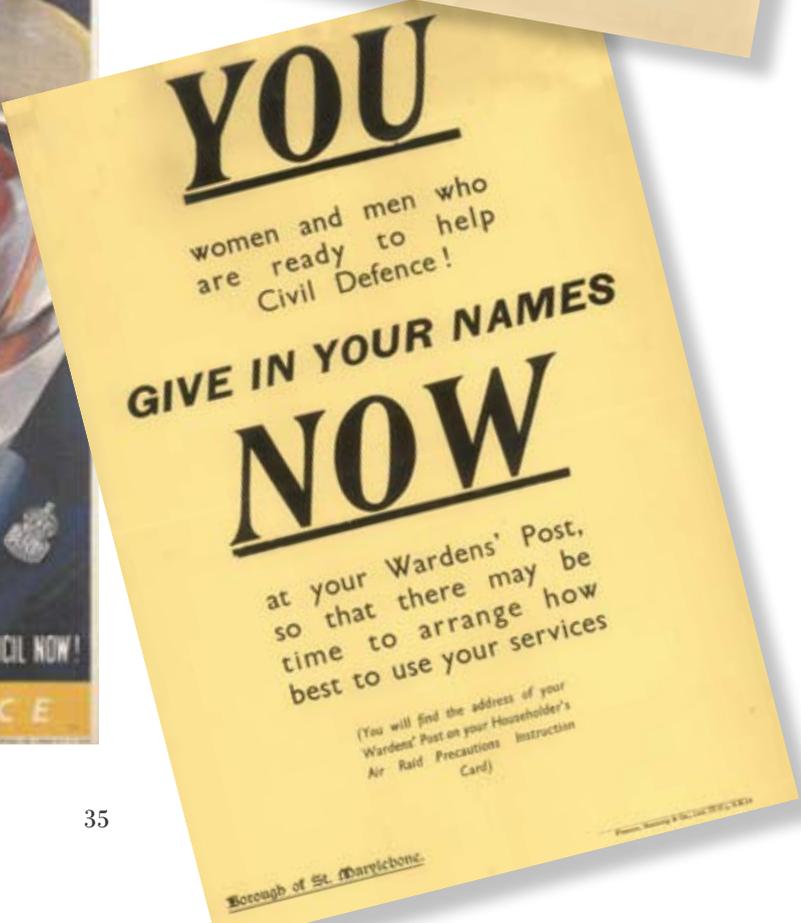
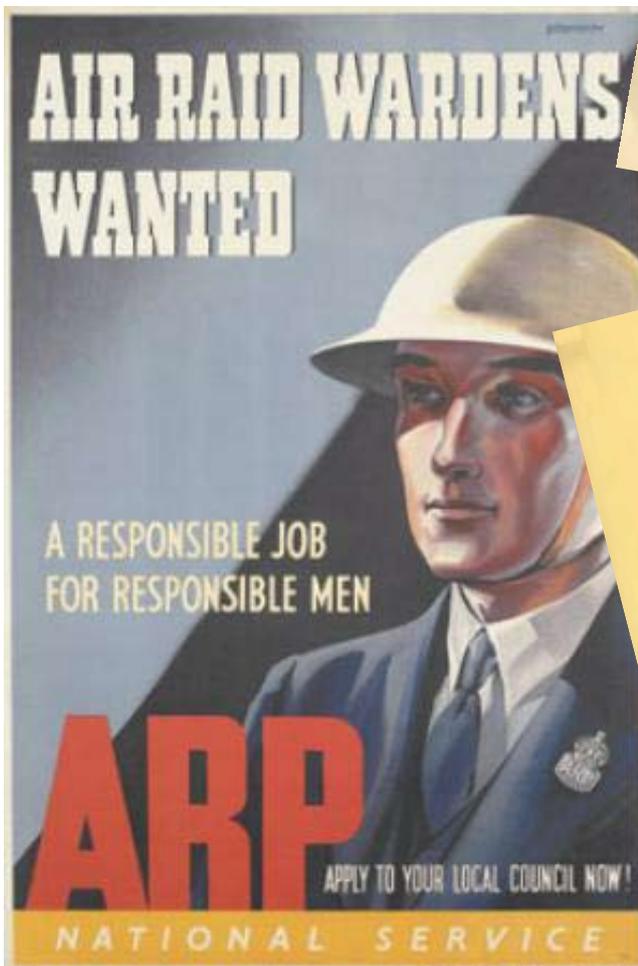
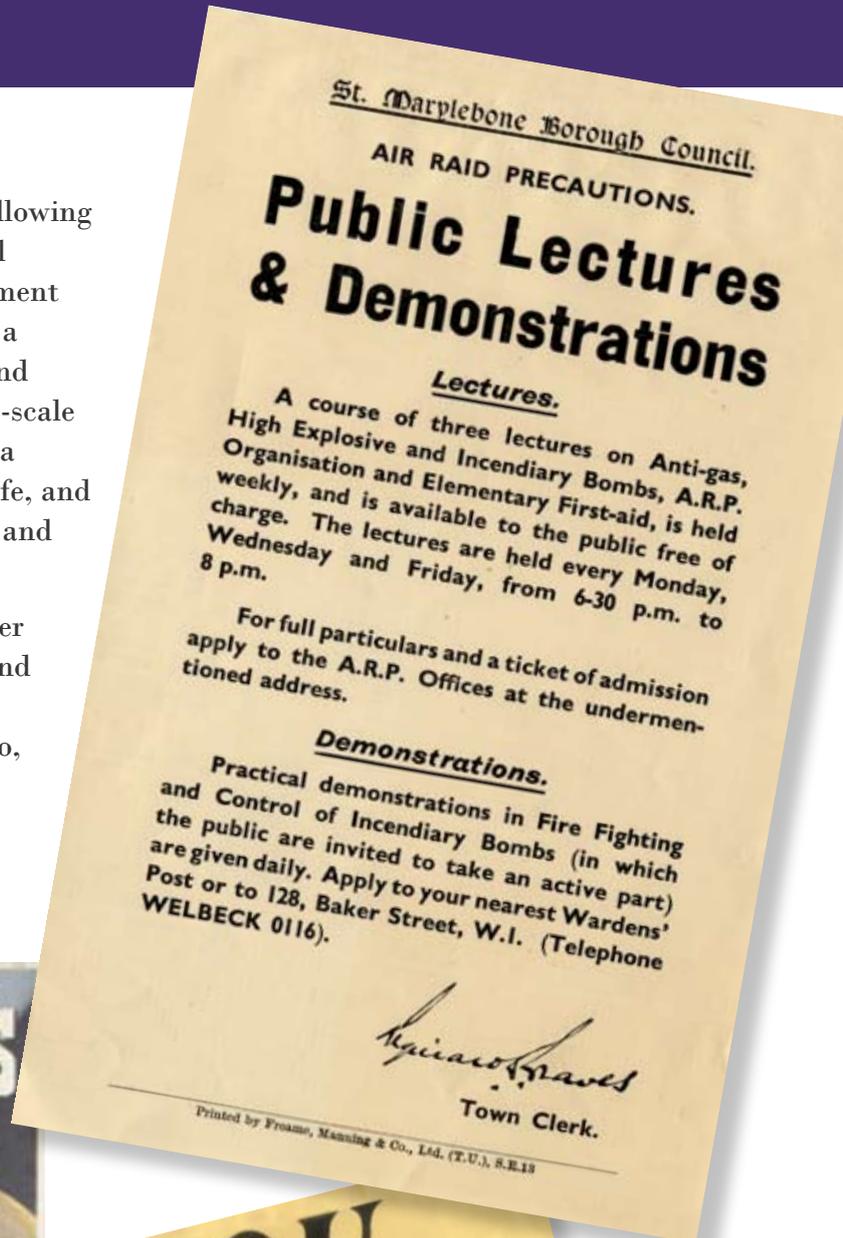
Recruitment posters
Westminster City Archives

<p>Task Read pages 9, 10 & 12 of Ita Ekpenyon’s account and answer the questions below</p>	<p>Write your answers below</p>
<p>Name three of the subjects that Ita’s training course covered?</p>	
<p>What did Ita have to use to put out the incendiary bomb at his first incident?</p>	
<p>What four subjects did Ita give lectures on for the people in the shelter?</p>	
<p>What type of Warden was Ita?</p>	
<p>Why did Ita and the other Wardens need to keep attending lectures and training sessions?</p>	
<p>Name two responsibilities of a Senior Warden?</p>	
<p>Why was the census an important duty for the wardens? What could a census tell a Warden?</p>	

Preparation on the Home Front

In the months preceding and immediately following the outbreak of war in September 1939, local authorities proceeded with urgency to implement their air-raid precaution schemes. There was a fear however that no matter how thorough and efficient defensive measures might be, a large-scale enemy air attack upon London could deliver a devastating, knock-out blow, a huge loss of life, and a psychological shock that would demoralise and disorientate surviving Londoners.

The St Marylebone borough council, like other London boroughs, began their recruitment and training of volunteer civil defence personnel. One such volunteer was E. Ita Ekpenyon who, at his post near his home in Great Titchfield Street, was to serve his borough with distinction.



Recruitment posters
Imperial War Museum

St Marylebone set up its air-raid report and control centre in the Town Hall in Marylebone Road. From here direction was given for the creation of public shelters, the enforcement of lighting restrictions, and the establishment of air-raid warning systems and a Wardens service.

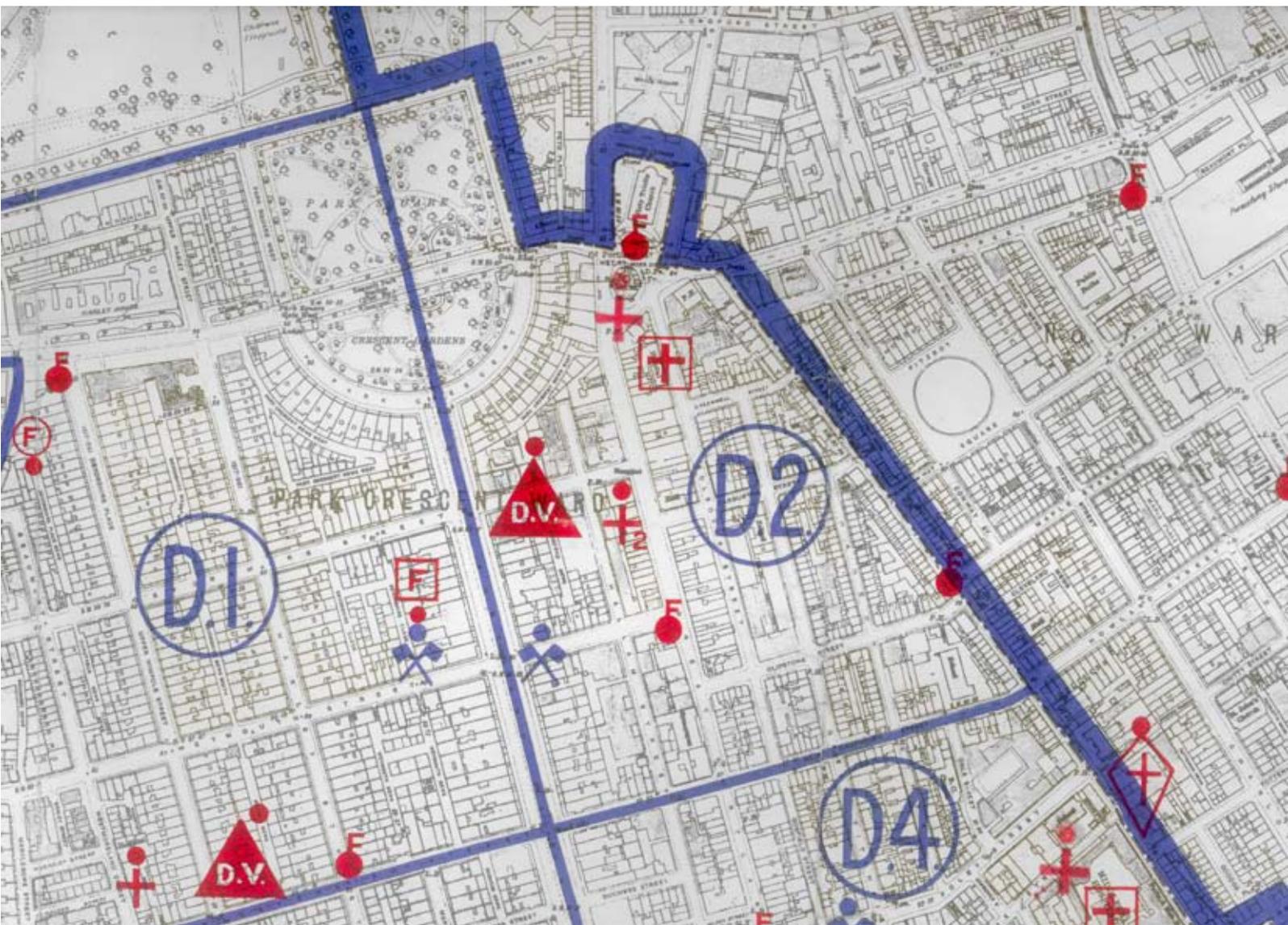
The borough was divided into four divisions, with each division sub-divided into five groups, a bombing incident reporting post attached to each group. Among the twenty reporting posts were Lord's Cricket Ground, the St John's Wood Road Synagogue, the RIBA building, the Langham Hotel, the Francis Holland School, All Saints' Parish Hall, the De Walden Institute, the Portman Day Nursery, and the Salvation Army Hostel in Lisson Street.

Task

The map of St Marylebone was divided into four divisions. Ita Ekpenyon was stationed in D2 (division 2)

Look at the code references on the opposite page and match them to the codes in D2 division on the map below.

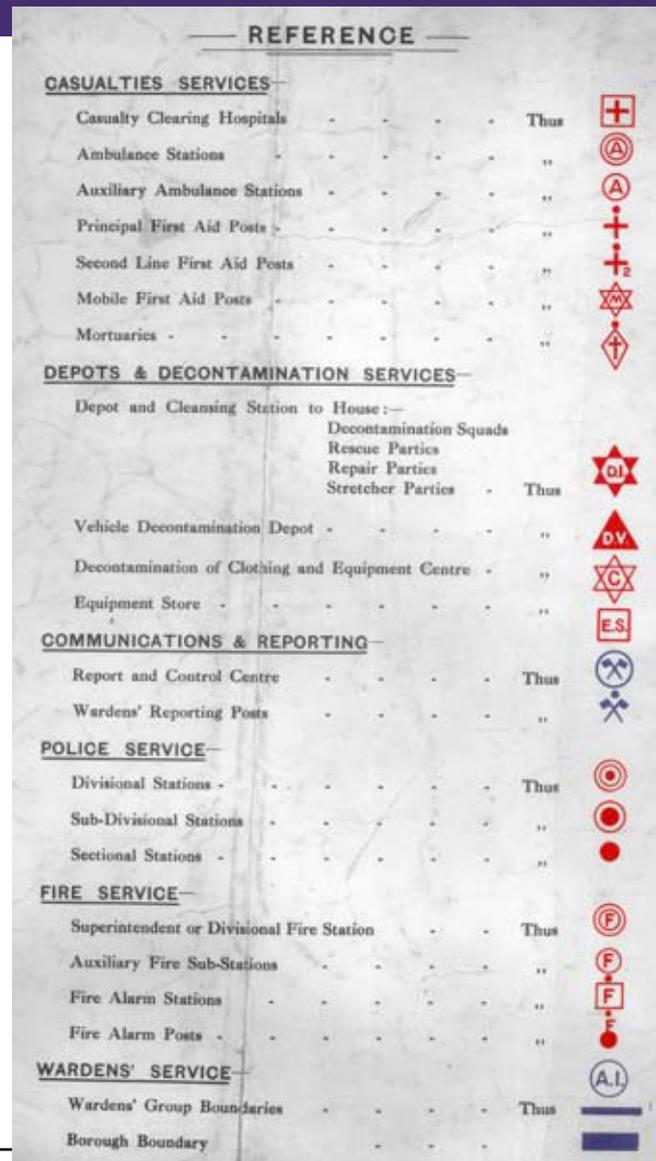
Using the table opposite write the names of the services that were stationed in Ita's division.



Across the borough facilities were set-up for the care of casualties, first aid posts established, stretcher parties and an ambulance service formed, hospitals and mortuaries made ready. Depots were created for rescue, repair, decontamination, and demolition parties.

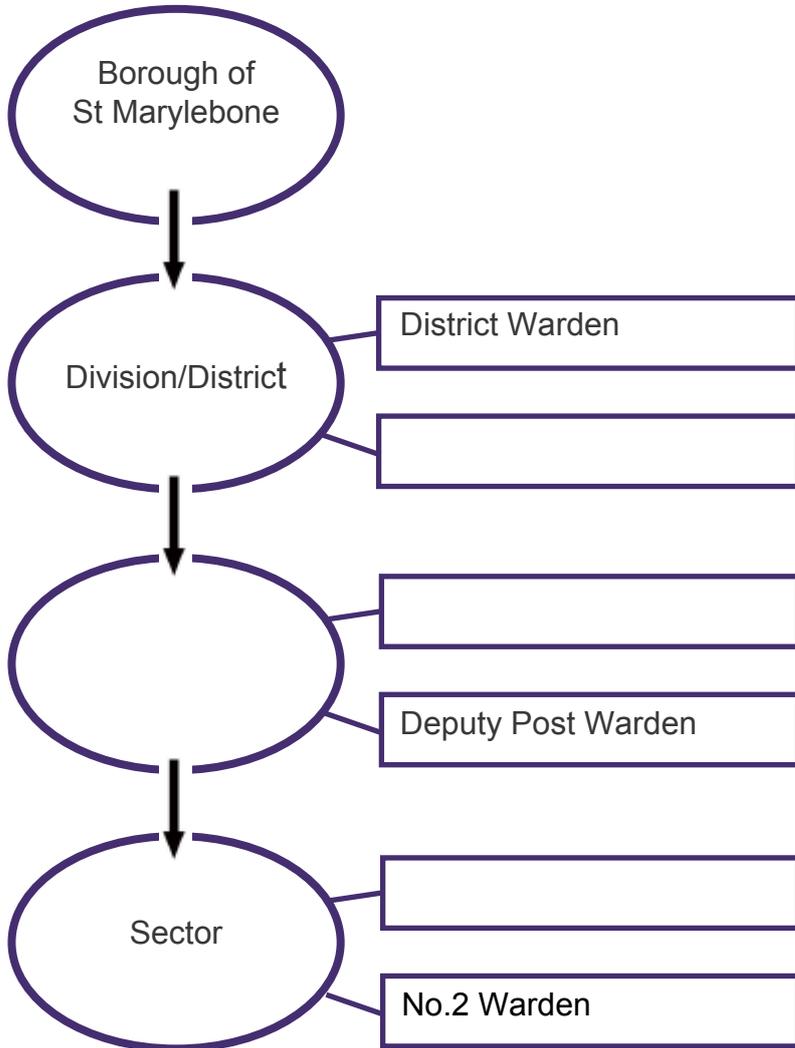
At full strength the borough's civil defence personnel numbered some 2,400, including 936 women. There were 1,136 ARP Wardens, 284 of whom were women.

Whilst the dreaded knock-out blow was not struck upon the breakout of war in September 1939, a year later the blitz upon London began, with large-scale bombing of the East End and south east London, shortly followed by raids upon London's central boroughs. By March 1945, when the last V2 rockets fell upon London, almost thirty thousand civilians had perished during the bombing of the capital.



Code	Name of Service

ARP Wardens: Who Does What and Where?



Task

Read page 12 of Ita's account. He explains how the borough is divided into divisions or districts and the different positions of the Wardens.

Using Ita's account fill in the missing words in the boxes on the left.

Write Ita Ekpenyon's job title in the box below.

Ita Ekpenyon volunteered as an:



ARP Wardens in training
Westminster City Archives



E. Ita Ekpenyon
Winifred Ekpenyon



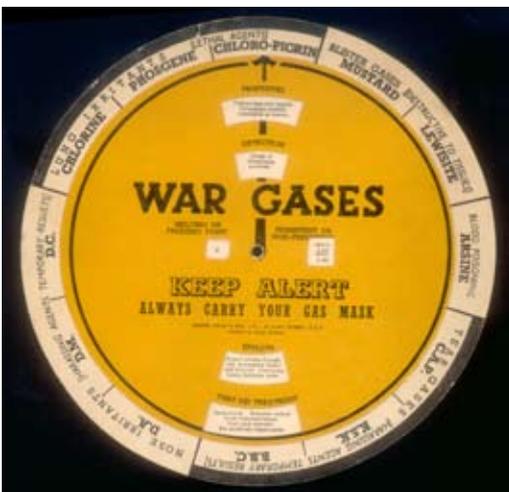
ARP Wardens: Who Does What and Where?

Task
 Read page 12 & 13 of Ita's account and in the box provided list 6 key duties that a Senior Warden was responsible for:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.



Air-raid wardens



War Gas chart
 Westminster City Archives

What two things was Ita asked to do that were not part of his job as a Senior Warden:

1.
2.



West End at War

Emergency in C5 district

In the 1940s telecommunications were very limited, mobile phones and emails didn't exist. Air Raid Wardens relied on paper message forms to report and respond to bomb incidents. For more examples of Message Forms visit www.westendatwar.org.uk

MESSAGE FORM A.R.P. M.1

DATE	Time at which despatch of message was completed	Telephonist's Initials
6/17/44	23-28	BFB

ADDRESS TO :- *Control*

TEXT OF MESSAGE :- *Priority*
Duke St near Barnett St
Long range rocket - big
incident - casualties.

TIME OF ORIGIN OF MESSAGE :- *23-20*

ADDRESS FROM :- *C5*

Serial No. of Occurrence
(For use in Control Room)
1707

In Message form

OUT MESSAGE FORM A.R.P. M.3

DATE	Time at which despatch of message was completed	Telephonist's Initials
6/12/44	00-01	BFB

ADDRESS TO :- *Ambulance Stat 39.*

TEXT OF MESSAGE :-
Please expect shortly
for incident at Duke St
2 Ambulances from each of
following Stations :-
No 19 Menemenhü
No 26 Paddington
No 38 Paddington
Report arrival, + do not
despatch until instructed.

Inf 2nd

TIME OF ORIGIN OF MESSAGE :- *23-55.*

ADDRESS FROM :- *Control*

SIGNATURE (of official authorising the despatch of this "out" message). *R. H.*

Serial No. of Occurrence
(For use in Control Room)
1707

Out Message form

Task	Write your answers below
See if you can read the handwritten message forms above and answer these questions	
What date and time was the 'in message form' written?	
What type of bomb hit the area?	
What date and time was the 'out message form' written?	
How many ambulances were sent to the incident?	

Emergency in C5 district

Task Read the message form below and answer these questions	Write your answers below
Which division was the Warden from?	
What type of Officer did the Warden meet at the shelter?	
What famous shop had a direct hit?	
What do you think H.E. stands for?	
What date and time was the message form written?	

MESSAGE FORM A.R.P./M.A.

Date <i>19.9.40</i>	Time at which receipt or despatch of message was completed <i>07:30</i>	Telephonist's Initials <i>H.H.G.</i>
------------------------	--	---

ADDRESS TO: *Control*

TEXT OF MESSAGE:—

Warden of C5 reports he has just met an officer of the Royal Air Force, who was in the shelter at Selfridges last night and he states definitely that there was a direct hit on Selfridges, and also some fire. Says it was an H.E. bomb. Warden is trying to get further information.

0116

TIME OF ORIGIN OF MESSAGE:— *07:28*

ADDRESS FROM *C.5.*

SIGNATURE (of official authorising the despatch of an "out" message).

MESSAGE FORM		
DATE <i>19.9.40</i>	Time at which receipt of despatch of message was completed	Telephonist's Initials <i>H.H.G.</i>
ADDRESS TO: <i>Central</i>		
<p><i>Warden of C5 reports he has just met an officer of the Royal Air Force, who was in the shelter at Selfridges last night and he states definitely that there was a direct hit on Selfridges, and also some fire. Says it was an H.E. bomb. Warden is trying to get further information.</i></p>		
Time of message: <i>07.28</i>		
ADDRESS FROM <i>C.5.</i>		

Message forms
Westminster City Archives

On 30 June 1944, Aldwych suffered one of the deadliest VI flying bomb attacks on London of the war. A fortnight after the first VI's had hit the capital, the menacing drone of yet another 'doodlebug' was heard over Aldwych. The semicircular street was crowded with workers returning from their lunch hour or queuing at the local Post Office.

At 2.07 pm a VI glided silently in over the Thames, diving down to explode on the road between the Air Ministry and the north east wing of Bush House, home to the BBC External Services. The blast wave scythed down the street. Forty six people were killed, 399 were seriously injured and around 200 others suffered superficial injuries. Five members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) were killed together on the upper floors of the Air Ministry. Nearby, Australia House suffered serious damage.

One BBC employee described the scene:

"It was as though a foggy November evening had materialised at the throw of a switch...through the dust and smoke the casement of the bomb lay burning at the corner of Kingsway: three victims lay unmoving at the top of the steps only thirty yards from where we had crouched and huddled and figures were scattered all over the road."

When the fog cleared, a deep hole was seen gouged in the road surface. Passing vehicles, including two London double-decker buses, had been completely ripped apart. Banknotes floated surreally past. Leaves were stripped from the few trees left standing. BBC Bush House was peppered with shrapnel: 66 years on the marks are still visible on the building's façade and on the road outside. **Civil defence teams rushed to the aid of the injured and covered up the dead. By chance, a fleet of army lorries was parked nearby and these, along with 16 ambulances, ferried the survivors to hospital. A first aid post was set up in Bush House and The Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) dealt with hundreds of anxious enquiries. One civilian was treated for a leg wound caused by a flying brass button.**



Aftermath at the Aldwych
Westminster City Archives



Aftermath at the Aldwych
Westminster City Archives



The Plume of the Aldwych flying bomb
Westminster City Archives

Disunity in the Empire

Ita Ekpenyon expressed his loyalty to Britain through volunteering “it made me able to do my share for the British Commonwealth of Nations to which I belong”. Many other non-white peoples from across the Empire shared this sense of loyalty and desire to contribute to the wartime struggle - but they were commonly frustrated and rebuffed by a widespread colour bar.

In WWI a colour bar had existed denying the granting of commissions to people of non-European descent. Although this had been removed by WWII, it was still in practice very difficult for non white serviceman to gain recognition. The exception to this rule was the RAF who took in a significant number of Black recruits from the West Indies.



Together poster
Imperial War Museum

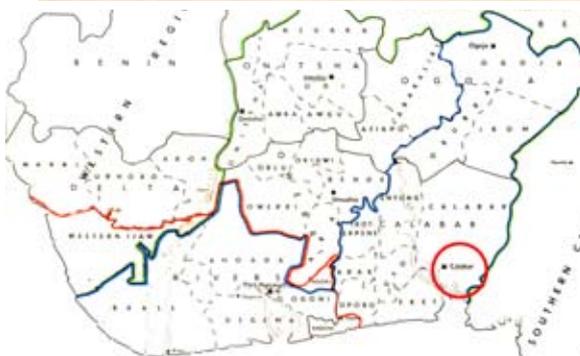
Task

Working in pairs look for a map of the British Commonwealth using the Google search engine. Write a list of the countries that you find.

Imagine you are someone from the British Commonwealth who is seeing the “Together” poster for the first time. With your partner discuss the following questions.

- Would you feel inspired to join the army and support the war effort?
- Read the passage on the right by Ita Ekpenyon
- Do you think it troubled him to see disunity in his shelter?
- Design your own WWII ARP poster targetting people from the British Empire who you want to inspire to volunteer as Air Raid Wardens. Aim to create a feeling of togetherness and cooperation

“Some of the shelterers told others to go back to their own countries, and some tried to practice segregation...So I told the people that the British Empire, which is also known as the British Commonwealth of Nations, is made up of peoples of many races. I said that though I am an air-raid warden in London, I am still an African. I also said that I am one of many people of other countries that make up the Empire...I said that this being the case I would like to see a spirit of friendliness, co-operation, and comradeship prevail at this very trying time in the history of the Empire...”



When I became an air-raid warden I did not think of what the people of Britain have faced through the German air-raids would be so dreadful. Once I had to carry a frightened woman from the damaged shelter, she gripped me so tight round my neck I nearly choked!

Task

Imagine you are Ita Ekpenyon

- Write a postcard back to your family in Calabar, Nigeria
- Tell your family about your training
- Describe some of your struggles
- Explain to your family why you are volunteering for the Empire
- Tell them what you miss from home



In his account, Ekpenyon describes one evening when hostility was shown by a few people in the bomb shelter to others because of their race or nationality. Ekpenyon advised that those “trying to create a spirit of disunity in the Empire” should move to another shelter.

“The next move was to create a spirit of understanding, friendliness, and comradeship... They [the post warden and his assistants] arranged for concerts and dances in the shelters. My marshals and I gave cinema shows in my shelter, and arranged dart games. Through these recreations the shelterers got to know each other better... Gradually merriment and friendliness spread in the shelter. Its fame spread beyond the district, and almost every night visitors came from far and near...”



Shelterers in a London air-raid shelter
Westminster City Archives

Task

Read the excerpt above taken from page 20 of Ita's account.
Now imagine you are Ita Ekpenyon

- Write a letter to the editor of the Marylebone Gazette using the template on page 47
- Argue the case for togetherness and the importance of working together to overcome the bombing raids on London
- Use the writing frame below to help you, it has been split into 6 paragraphs

1	In your first paragraph let the editor know the purpose of your letter.
2	Give your main reason why you feel togetherness and working together are important in wartime.
3	Give some examples of how a feeling of togetherness can be achieved. Hint: Read the above quote from Ekpenyon to point you in the right direction.
4	Think about your background (i.e. being Nigerian) and explain how your experiences as a minority in England might influence your desire to uphold the ideals of unity, togetherness, and cooperation.
5	Think of a reason the editor might disagree with you.
6	Give a good reason why the argument put forth in (5) is not valid.

Dear Editor in Chief,
1) I think that
2) The reason I say this is because
3) Also
4) Furthermore
5) Some people will argue that
6) However, I think
Yours sincerely

Peter Daniel
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