

WASC 1907

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Highbridge Street

V2 Explosion 7-3-1945

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Guardian 10-3-2005

and Article from  
Daily Mirror and  
Photographs incl  
Delivery of Combustion  
Chamber to Mills

## This is what one rocket did



This is what happened when a V2 rocket landed in streets of small houses at Waltham Abbey, Essex, early last month. Children were playing in the streets at the time. Without warning, death fell on them from the skies. Where there had been ordered life there was chaos. Where the houses had stood—with their neat gardens back and front—was a muddy lake. For the rocket churned out a deep crater which quickly filled with water—the water and gas mains had been smashed—adding to the difficulties of the rescue workers.









Sixty years on from the end of the Second World War it is difficult to visualise that at times the towns and villages of the Epping Forest district were right in the front line of the conflict. This week 60 years ago Highbridge Street in Waltham Abbey suffered a devastating hit by a V2 rocket which left four people dead, including two children, and injured 53 others.

The horror of this attack is captured in the diary kept by the local air raid warden Edward Carter

**Wednesday,  
March 7,  
1945**

ON the telephone to Mick Smith about 5pm this afternoon discussing the Mobile Incident Control Post, when it happened!

Without any warning a sudden awful shattering crash, that seemed to leave one stunned in a whirl of sound, and the phone went dead.

Out into the yard to get the car out, and a huge pall of black smoke was rising up just over to the westward while the air seemed thick with smell and dust. Stable doors jammed to

begin with, broken glass strewn down the yard to the side gate, but getting out into the road, people were already running towards Highbridge Street.

Just ahead, apparently alongside the Home Guard Drill Hall, a dusty cloud was beginning to settle, while just to the left of the road, a column of broken flame shot up into the air.

Wardens were already on the spot and had established a control point at the top of Powder Mill Lane, traffic was being stopped at the top of the Romeland, glass, dirt and broken wood and tiles were all over the road.

Already casualties were coming out, here was a man with a blood streaked face, over on the pavement oppo-

site a woman sat and screamed with blood streaming from a number of cuts, and first aiders rapidly putting on bandages.

Five-and-a-half years of war, and Waltham Abbey

**'Wardens Post A.2 had vanished completely, and the approximate position even could not be guessed under the piled up heap of rubble and dirt from the explosion'**

gets a real packet, right in the one spot where it had always been dreaded. Our one and only main road,

and link, was hit fair and square where it would hurt most. The crater stretched right across the road and beyond, taking into itself all the front of the Drill Hall on one side, and the fronts of the houses, on the other.

Wardens Post A.2 had vanished completely, and the approximate position even could not be guessed under the piled up heap of rubble and dirt from the explosion.

Gas mains were gone, all telephone communication through Waltham Cross Exchange, water pipes were severed, and the sewage pumping system for the western end of the town affected.

So terrific had been the flow of water from the bro-

ken mains that the crater, itself 75' in diameter, and probably at least half that in depth, was flooded to a level above that of the adjoining road.

Here and there through the piled up earth of the crater lip, the water was seeping, flowing through the bricks and the rubble to form rapid little streams in the roadway.

This was going to make a difference in Highbridge Street. The County Court looked pretty grim, as also did the Almshouses. The next little block of property, from the Ordnance Arms eastwards to the Wardens Post, was either completely wrecked or had vanished in a heap of debris. Across the water filled crater the whole front

of the Home Guard Drill Hall had collapsed in a heap of bricks and girders, while the other smaller huts in the same yard had become shapeless heaps of timber.

The two large houses which stood on either side of the Drill Hall were only open shells, with doors, ceilings, windows and frames, stairways, smashed into rubble.

● The Diary of an ARP Warden by E.J. Carter is published by the Waltham Abbey Historical Society. Copies are available from the Epping Forest District Museum, price £2.40.

This article is published with thanks to Tony O'Connor, museum officer at the Epping Forest District Museum, Sun Street, Waltham Abbey.



**AFTERMATH:** The scene in Highbridge Street, Waltham Abbey, following the V2 rocket attack 60 years ago this week

# Horror and chaos dropped in today

# The Story of a V2 Raid

Over 1100 V2 rockets were launched against Britain in the closing months of the war. Unlike the V1, there was no warning sound and nearly 3000 British civilians lost their lives in V2 attacks.



A V2 rocket landed in Highbridge Street in Waltham Abbey on Wednesday 7th March 1945, killing four people and injuring fifty-three. ARP Warden EJ Carter describes the moment of impact:

"Without any warning a sudden awful shattering crash, that seemed to leave one stunned in a whirl of sound..".

The rocket severed the water and gas main and all telephone communication through Waltham Cross Exchange was gone. The rocket left a crater 75' in diameter. A few days later another rocket fell in Sewardstone Road and Waltham Abbey was effectively closed off to the south and the west.

But the town quickly recovered. As Ray Buck recalls:

"By the Saturday, a path had been made round the crater and we were able to go across to the dance at the Imperial Hall. Life still went on, it was quite phenomenal".



1 Where were you when the V2 rocket fell on Highbridge Street? An ARP warden and a shop assistant recall the immediate aftermath, while a soldier serving in France learned that his hometown had been bombed from a newspaper.

























