

## **William Riddiford's Dagenham ARP diary**

**October 1940**

### **Tuesday October 1 1940**

**Take Cover warning 1.38pm – 1.54pm**

Off Duty. All quiet at Dagenham. Information from Ernie.

**Take Cover warning 2.6pm – 3.25pm**

Off Duty. Guns over London.

**Take Cover warning 4.20pm – 4.52pm**

Off Duty. All quiet at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 8.07pm – 11.17pm**

Off Duty. London as usual.

Bomb in Valence Park, near shelters, no casualties. Shattered the houses in Henshaw Road, broke windows in our house at 493 Becontree Ave & Valence House & the school, also the library.

**Take Cover warning 11.40pm – 5.49am**

Off Duty. London again.

D.A. bomb fell in Connor Rd on shelter. Killed man & wife, the man worked at the ARP depot.

Also an HE bomb fell in Connor Rd, shattered houses, many untenable.

### **Wednesday October 2 1940**

**Take Cover warning 9.02am – 9.30am**

Off Duty. Quiet at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 9.47am – 10.53am**

Off Duty. Guns heard in the distance at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 12.20pm -12.30pm**

Off Duty, Quiet at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 1.20pm -1.52pm**

Off Duty, Quiet at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 2.04pm – 3.26pm**

Off Duty, Quiet at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 4.36pm – 4.55pm**

Off Duty, Guns heard in the distance at Dagenham.

**Take Cover warning 7.47pm -9.15pm**

Off Duty.

Just arrived at Chadwell Heath Station from Chilton as the sirens blew.

Rushed home and got in the shelter.

**Take Cover warning 10.10am – 6.33am**

Off Duty, All night raid, the eighth warning of the day.

London as usual, no incidents here.

**Thursday October 3 1940**

**Take Cover warning 9.45am – 10.30am**

On Duty. All quiet here.

Very heavy cloud & drizzle.

**Take Cover warning 1.20pm – 1.45pm**

On Duty. All quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 2.15pm – 5.45pm**

On Duty. Interval gun fire, bombs fell at Eastbrook End School, also near the cripple school in Heathway.

5 bombs near the Sterling Works.

**Take Cover warning 8.00pm – 9.28pm**

On Duty. London as usual.

Dark, cloudy, drizzling night.

**Take Cover warning 10.05pm – 2.08am**

On Duty. Continuation of the night, but not so many hours as usual.

Heavy bombs in Surrey Rd, Dagenham.

**Friday October 4 1940**

**Take Cover warning 12.40pm – 5.35pm**

Off Duty. Very heavy cloud & drizzle.

4 hours afternoon warning interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 5.55pm – 6.33pm**

Off Duty. Interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.10pm – 1.22am**

Off Duty. Heavy gun fire at frequent intervals.

Very dark wet night.

**Saturday October 5 1940**

**Take Cover warning 2.17am – 3.40am**

Off Duty.

Heavy gun fire at intervals.

**Take Cover warning 11.25am – 11.55am**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 2.00pm – 2.30pm.**

On Duty. Slight gun fire heard drone of planes, many vapour marks in the sky made by high planes.

**Take Cover warning 4.10pm – 4.45pm**

On Duty. Fairly quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 7.30pm – 6.30am**

On Duty.

At 11.40 a very large bomb dropped in Windsor Rd, in the road shattering about 200 houses also Charlecote Rd School.

Also 25 minutes later an high explosive bomb fell in Thompson Rd on many shelters. 18 killed & 6 missing, we were called out, also all squads leaving the depot empty. Terrible job, people blown everywhere, working in the dark, shops shattered at Five Elms.

**Sunday October 6 1940**

**Take Cover warning 11.56am – 12.10pm**

Off Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 1.15pm – 4.40pm.**

Off Duty. Heavy cloud & drizzle, interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 8.18pm – 8.37pm.**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire, very heavy cloud & drizzle. Windy very quite night.

Mother & Dad arrived back from Aylesbury at 5.15 after a weeks holiday there.

**Monday October 7 1940**

**Take Cover warning 5.37am – 6.36am**

On Duty. Early morning raid, slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 9.45am – 10.14am**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 10.20am – 11.11am**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 1.15pm – 1.50pm**

On Duty. Gun fire over river direction.

**Take Cover warning 2.13pm – 3.00pm**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 3.52pm – 4.30pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 4.47pm – 5.11pm**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

Heard D.A. explode Connor Rd, killed 5 soldiers.

**Take Cover warning 7.30pm – 7.00am**

On Duty. The eighth warning of the day.

Another all night raid. London as usual.

**Tuesday October 8 1940**

**Take Cover warning 8.44am – 10.13am**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 10.40am – 11.44am**

Off Duty. Fairly quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 11.46am – 12.02pm**

Off Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 12.34pm – 12.56pm**

Off Duty. Fairly quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 2.14pm – 3.02pm**

Off Duty. Fairly quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 7.22pm – 6.40am**

Off Duty. Another all night raid over London. Heavy gun fire as usual, none brought down.

**Wednesday October 9 1940**

**Take Cover warning 11.20am-1.02pm**

On Duty. Fairly quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 2.41 pm – 4.15 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.20 pm – 7.5 am**

On Duty, another all night raid. Clear moonlight skie. Saw many bright flashes that remained in skie till they were shot out. Heavy AA gun fire at interval.

**Thursday October 10 1940**

**Take Cover warning 8.58 am – 9.15 am**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 1.52 pm – 2.6 pm**

Off Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 3.27 pm – 3.56 pm**

Off Duty. Fairly quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 7.26pm – 4.55 am**

Off Duty. Another all night raid. Clear moonlight skye. Heavy interval gun fire.

### **Friday October 11 1940**

**Take Cover warning 7.44 am – 8.9 am**

On Duty. Fairly quiet. Foggy.

**Take Cover warning 8.50 am – 9.13 am**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 10.53 am – 12.21 pm**

On Duty. Gun fire at interval.

**Take Cover warning 2.30 pm – 2.45 pm**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 4.13 pm – 4.45 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.15 pm – 2.30 am**

On Duty. Clear moon light. Night raid. Heavy interval gun fire.

### **Saturday October 12 1940**

**Take Cover warning 9.20 am – 10.50 am**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 11.15 am – 11.45 am**

Off Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 12.45 pm – 1.0 pm**

Off Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 1.20 pm – 2.20 pm**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 4.15 pm – 5.5 pm**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire. Was at West Ham. Football game stopped till all clear.

**Take Cover warning 7.20 pm – 2.15 am**

Off Duty. Clear moon light. Raiding very heavy gun fire at interval but quieter night than usual.

**Sunday October 13 1940**

**Take Cover warning 12.50 pm – 2.50 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire. Vapour marking in skie.

**Take Cover warning 3.50 pm – 4.20 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire. Saw our planes very high making vapour marks in their trails.

**Take Cover warning 7.5 pm – 6.5 am**

On Duty. Another all night raid. 11 hours. Delayed action bomb in Linkway. Clear skie until 11.00 then cloudy. Fire in Romford gas works direction.

**Monday October 14 1940**

**Take Cover warning 12.5 pm – 2.10 pm**

Off Duty. Heavy cloud. Saw planes and gun fire in Rainham direction before the warning blew. Occasional single plane over the district and interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 2.35 pm – 3.00 pm**

Off Duty. Slight distant gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.3 pm – 5.30 am**

Off Duty. Another all night raid. Clear skie. Heavy AA gun fire in London as usual.

**Tuesday October 15 1940**

**Take Cover warning 8.20 am – 9.40 am**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 10.00 am – 10.30 am**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 11.25 am – 11.50 am**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 12.35 pm – 1.20 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 2.30 pm – 3.15 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 4.00 pm – 5.00 pm**

On Duty. Bomb at Broad St. Dagenham two squads called out also to Vicarage Rd. [note above: Mrs Dorrington in Vicarage Rd killed]

**Take Cover warning 7.25pm – 5.00 am**

On Duty. Our squad called out to Ballards Rd Rylands Estate Dagenham. 3 houses blew to bits. 7 people buried underneath. 6 killed. One woman and 2 dogs brought out alive. Gas leaking electric wires and telephone in various parts. Helped to carry dead out. Planes over head. Guns splitting. Several fires London direction. Home 12.00.

**Wednesday October 16 1940**

**Take Cover warning 6.10am – 6.35 am**

On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 3.15 pm - 3.30 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 3.31 pm – 3.50 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 7.5 pm – 6.00 am**

Off Duty. Another all night raid. Very heavy cloud and hard rain. Land mine fell at Bennett Rd Chadwell Heath. Terrible damage, blew school to bits. ARP first aid post mine fell near Chadwell Heath station but did not explode, people were evacuated and trains stopped. Mine was successfully dismantled and was brought to Valance House in one of our lorries, about 9 feet long and as large round as a large beer barrel, then taken to old Dagenham Park to explode. 1400 lbs of TNT inside. White silk cord and green silk parachute it came down on, 5 police were asked to volunteer to help dismantle it but refused. 5 ARP men from our yard Volunteered.

**Thursday October 17 1940**

**Take Cover warning 8.20 am – 8.45 am**

On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 9.15 am – 10.00 am**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 1.30 pm – 2.15 pm**

On Duty. Quite here.

**Take Cover warning 3.15pm – 3.45 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here. Frank home for a few days, his boat bombed. Home for engine repairs.

**Take Cover warning 4.35 pm – 5.00 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here.

Take Cover warning 6.50 pm – 6.45 am

On Duty. Another all night raid. The longest yet 12 hours. London as usual.

**Friday October 18 1940**

**Take Cover warning 3.30 pm – 5.30 pm**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire. Very heavy cloud and drizzle.

**Take Cover warning 7.10 pm – 1.45 am**

Off Duty. Another all night raid. Very heavy cloud and drizzle.

**Saturday October 19 1940**

**Take Cover warning 3.50 am – 6.40 am**

Off Duty. Continuation of night raid. Interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 2.30 pm – 4.5 pm**

On Duty. Interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.15pm – 5.5 am**

On Duty. Another all night raid, almost continuous gun fire until midnight. About 10.30 two oil bombs fell near here, one at the beginning of Warrington Rd opposite park gates, set house on fire! The other fell at No. 515 Becontree Ave, not many doors from our house, burnt and killed a woman and severely burnt her husband.

**Sunday October 20 1940**

**Take Cover warning 10.5 am – 11.10 am**

Off Duty. Interval gun fire. Lovely warm day. Clear sky.

**Take Cover warning 11.30 am – 12.5 pm**

Off Duty. Gun fire in distance.

**Take Cover warning 1.25 pm - 2.10pm**

Off Duty. Interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 2.25 pm – 3.00 pm**

Off Duty. Quite here.

**Take Cover warning 3.15 pm – 4.15 pm**

Off Duty. Interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.00 pm – 3.30 am**

Off Duty. Another all night raid. Very heavy and almost continuous fire until midnight.



## **Monday October 21 1940**

### **Take Cover warning 10.30 am – 1.00 pm**

On Duty. Very heavy cloud and drizzle and interval gun fire.

### **Take Cover warning 1.40 pm – 3.45pm**

On Duty. Interval gun fire.

### **Take Cover warning 7.10 pm – 4.30 pm**

On Duty. Another all night raid. Clear skie. Interval gun fire. Quieter in this district than other nights. London as usual.

## **Tuesday October 22 1940**

### **Take Cover warning 1.50 am – 3.20 am**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

### **Take Cover warning 4.55 am – 5.10 am**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

### **Take Cover warning 7.00 pm – 11.30 am**

Off Duty. Night raid. Dark inclined to be foggy. Fairly quiet. Gun fire at intervals.

## **Wednesday October 23 1940**

### **Take Cover warning 3-50 am – 5.40 am**

Off Duty. Continuation of night raid. Slight gun fire.

### **Take Cover warning 12.30 pm – 1.00 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here.

### **Take Cover warning 1.30 pm – 2.00 pm**

On Duty. Very quiet here.

### **Take Cover warning 6.30 pm – 2.30 am**

On Duty. Night raid. Very dark night cloudy. Several bombs dropped at Merry Fiddlers, Becontree HT. Also an oil bomb.

## **Thursday October 24 1940**

### **Take Cover warning 5.10 am – 6.55 am**

On Duty. Fairly Heavy gun fire.

### **Take Cover warning 12.30 pm – 12.45 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

### **Take Cover warning 2.30 pm – 3.20 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 7.15 pm – 12.55 am**  
Off Duty. Another all night raid. London as usual.

### **Friday October 25 1940**

**Take Cover warning 1.31 am – 4.13 am**  
On Duty. Continuation of the night interval gun fire. Fire in Barking direction.

**Take Cover warning 8.53 am – 10.38 am**  
On Duty. Slight gun fire

**Take Cover warning 12.00 pm – 3.48 pm**  
On Duty. Very heavy cloud. Interval gun fire

**Take Cover warning 6.48 pm – 7.00 am**  
On Duty. Another all night raid. Interval gun fire. Fire in Woolwich direction.

### **Saturday October 26 1940**

**Take Cover warning 7.23 am – 7.35 am**  
On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 10.16 am – 11.00 am**  
Off Duty. Planes heard. Quiet.

**Take Cover warning 11.57 am – 12.30 pm**  
Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 1.51 pm – 2.21 pm**  
Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 3.10 pm – 3.30 pm**  
Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 4.15 pm – 4.33 pm**  
Off Duty. Planes in distance.

**Take Cover warning 6.35 pm – 7.10 pm**  
Off Duty. Another all night raid. Interval gun fire.

### **Sunday October 27 1940**

**Take Cover warning 7.54 am 9.59 am**  
On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 11.26 am – 12.18 am**  
On Duty. Slight gun fire

**Take Cover warning 12.45 pm – 1.2 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 1.46 pm – 2.21 pm**

On Duty. Planes heard. Quiet.

**Take Cover warning 4.42 pm – 5.37 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 6.48 pm – 6.34 am**

On Duty. Another all night raid. Interval gun fire.

### **Monday October 28 1940**

**Take Cover warning 6.42 am – 7.2 am**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 1.7 pm - 1.25 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 2.40 pm -3.30 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 4.30 pm – 5.27 pm**

Off Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 6.48 pm – 7.16 pm**

Off Duty. Another all night raid. Interval gun fire.

### **Tuesday October 29 1940**

**Take Cover warning 11.15 pm – 12.00 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 12.30 pm – 1.10 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 1.20 pm – 2.00 pm**

On Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 4.5 pm – 5.20 pm**

On Duty. Quiet here.

**Take Cover warning 6.50 pm – 5.05 am**

On Duty. another all night raid, interval gun fire. Very dark night

### **Wednesday October 30 1940**

**Take Cover warning 11.30 am – 12.40 pm**

Off Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 3.55 pm – 5.00 pm**  
Off Duty. Slight gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 7.5 pm – 4.00 am**  
Off Duty. Another all night raid. Interval gun fire.

**Thursday October 31 1940**

**Take Cover warning 2.45 am – 4.45 am**  
On Duty. Interval gun fire.

**Take Cover warning 6.35 pm – 9.00 pm**  
On Duty. Very windy night and very dark.

**Note:**

This is a transcript of the original diary, which is currently on loan to:

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