

HISTORIC HOMES



No bombing: Mottysden Manor, left, has a swimming pool constructed from a bomb crater, above; the blitz damaged or destroyed many buildings across the country and left countless people homeless, below left

# Standing firm against the Blitz

Luftwaffe bombs levelled many buildings across Great Britain, says *Christopher Middleton*, but not all

While all complain today about London property prices going through the roof but, 75 years ago, a far more frightening prospect was German bombs falling out of the sky.

The Blitz lasted from September 1940 to May 1941 and over a period of 267 days, it is estimated that Birmingham, Liverpool and Plymouth were attacked eight times, Bristol six times, Glasgow five times, Southampton four times and Portsmouth and Hull three times each. The focus of the Luftwaffe



Blaze: Whittlesey Street, above, via Foxtons (020 7893 6458)

was on London of course. The capital suffered 71 strikes.

One million houses in the capital were damaged or destroyed. Londoners spent long nights sheltering in Underground stations and would wake to find not just public buildings in ruins (St Clement Danes Church, The Old Bailey, Westminster Abbey, the debating chamber of the House of Commons), but residential roads like Kingly Street and Stratton Street in Mayfair were a mass of rubble and destroyed motor cars.

The third-floor editorial department of *The Daily Telegraph* building on Fleet Street was ravaged, as was the Oval cricket ground (though members of Surrey Cricket Club were relieved to see that while the stands were damaged, the pitch had not been harmed).

Bombing in Wimbledon saw Centre Court damaged as the German military targeted the nearby, narrow railway line that ferried servicemen from London to Portsmouth Docks.

Sometimes, just a single building in a row was left: take Whittlesey Street in Waterloo where a firestorm swept along the Victorian terrace leaving one house standing. Now on the market, the Georgian two-bedroom property, built in 1828, is conspicuous by its original brickwork.

"If you look closely, you can see the different brickwork that has been used to repair the bomb damage," says current owner Shannon Luitjens, who is moving from the capital to Hawaii. Surviving the Blitz is not the



**Surrey Cricket Club were glad to see the pitch was not harmed**

property's only claim to fame. It was also used as a set for the 2015 film about the Kray twins, *Legend*.

On the inside it is contemporary in appearance with the kitchen situated on the lower-ground floor, one en suite bedroom and a patio garden. The asking price is somewhat higher now than it was in 1939, at £2.25 million.

Elsewhere in London, developers are still bringing Blitz-hit streets back to life. In Fitzrovia, Dukelease has rebuilt the upper building of 5-7 Goudge Street which was a gaping hole in the facade for almost 70 years since suffering severe bomb damage. The Penthouse is now on the market for £4 million ([artisanlondon.co.uk](http://artisanlondon.co.uk)).

The Blitz also split over into the countryside. If German pilots headed for the coast and home, they would jettison unused bombs in a random fashion. According to the village

website, 900 bombs were dropped on Burwash in Sussex, with one hitting Mottysden Manor (where a building had stood since 1322). The rear end of the house and garden was shelled, leaving a crater which is now the swimming pool.

Today, the front of the property is listed as a Grade II historic building with a post-war addition at the back.

The current owners, Tony Wadsworth and his wife Sue, who also own a property in Dulwich, London, are selling the country retreat so they can do more travelling.

"We fell in love with Burwash and this lovely corner of East Sussex when we were looking for a weekend and holiday retreat, away from our busy lives in London, when our children were young," says Wadsworth, the former chairman of recording group EMI Music. Sue is an artist and garden designer.

"We have enjoyed great times at the house with family and friends - who have always been more than happy to join us for weekends and get-togethers in the Sussex Weald."

The property sits in 10.5 acres with an orchard, pond, landscaped gardens and stables, is certainly a more tranquil spot now than it was 75 years ago.

Mottysden Manor is on the market with Hamptons International for £2.495 million (01892 51611).