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# Oral history audio transcription

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## The Vickers Factory bombing

In this clip, Helen, a participant in Elmbridge Museum's 'Memories of War' project, shares her memories of the impact of the German Luftwaffe's September 1940 bombing raid on the Vickers-Armstrong aircraft factory at Brooklands.

The interview was conducted in March 2020. To find out more about the project, visit Elmbridge Museum's [Elmbridge At War](#) online exhibition.

### Audio Transcription

**Interviewer:** Do you remember the bombing of the Vickers factory well, or were you away for it?

**Helen:** Oh I don't know, I was doing – it was summer – I was doing a course at Wimbledon Art School. I was going up by train and went to Wimbledon Art School, and my father and my sister were both, and my mother, were at home. And she said that the pine trees went down like this, and up again with the blast. But there was no warning.

**Interviewer:** Yes, because it was in the middle of the day, wasn't it?

**Helen:** Yes. And after that, they put the – I mean, the Germans knew where it was! They had photographs. I've got a book somewhere, of all the photographs they took, pre-war.

**Interviewer:** It was a huge base wasn't it, huge.

**Helen:** Yes. I mean they took photographs of the whole of the British Isles; they knew exactly where everything was.

**Interviewer:** And how did you – what was the reaction to Vickers, did you know anyone that worked there?

**Helen:** Well, there was a man down the road who was in the drawing room, was a brilliant – I was going to say scientist – but no a brilliant man. He came up to my mother once, he said, 'Mrs Rodd, they're dropping gas, they're dropping gas!' Of course, that wasn't so, I mean he'd flipped it a bit, you know – the line between madness, it's very, very small. And she said, 'Oh all right, I think we'll get the police'. Of course, if there was gas being dropped, they'd painted the tops of the pillar boxes, so that they would turn colour if there was gas, mustard.

**Interviewer:** So they could tell.

**Helen:** Yes, so you could tell mustard gas, yes. But of course, it was quite wrong, they hadn't. So, she said 'Well, come on, I'll give you a cup of tea, it's alright, we'll get the police.' She did get the police, of course, they took him, I mean he'd just – he was a, you know, brilliant man at his job, but he'd just flipped it. Can't remember what happened to him, he only lived just down the road. I think he got alright.

**Interviewer:** But no, it's really very traumatic, I can imagine for people who were there. And you know, as you say, it was the middle of the day, and I was reading that most of the workers were on their lunch break. So, you had civilians in the roads around the factory but you also had people just, you know, in the canteen, not anywhere near the shelters.

**Helen:** Yes. And it was after that they put the barrage balloon up.