

Tottenham Legion member shares memories of WW2 and service in Scotland

Developed nations have been fortunate in seeing very few attacks on their soil since the Great Wars.

It wasn't too long ago that Tottenham resident and veteran, John Milne, 87, who's originally from Edinburgh, Scotland had to carry a gas mask in his backpack to school.

He told The Times, life was much different back then, during the Second World War, under the constant threat of invasion or attack. Fortunately, the only locations that were bombed in Edinburg were whiskey distilleries and breweries.

"I have visions of seeing an old fellow there with his hat scooping up the whiskey as it was flowing down the gutters in the streets after the raids," said Milne.

He noted that the conflict they faced was "unbelievable" but nothing like what was happening just 400 miles southeast of him in England during the "London Blitz."

Two million homes were destroyed, during the German bombing campaign that went from September 1940 to May 1941, while 87,000 people were seriously injured and 32,000 civilians were killed.

Back in Edinburgh, air raid shelters were setup at Milne's school to provide them with protection if they were raided.

He grew up with ration books for food and had a vastly different way of life than what's experienced in Scotland today.

In Milne's early 20s, he served with Scotland's Royal Air Force for three years, two of which were compulsory as part of his national service.

He worked on the mechanical side of the air force, stationed just 100 miles from his home in Scotland, despite his request for a posting overseas. Milne was a member of the Boys Brigade and Air Cadets as well, which led him to his position in the air force.

Milne was involved with a conflict in Israel from 1955-1958 and just three days after he was released he moved to Canada.

He told The Times his favourite part of serving was the camaraderie with his fellow servicemen.

Milne has been a member the Tottenham Legion for the past 49 years, cooking haggis for the annual Robbie Burns Supper and canvassing for the Poppy Fund.

His father was injured in the First World War and he said it's important for Canadians to honour the sacrifices that were made, especially on Remembrance Day.

"If you come by my place, you'll see my Lest We Forget Flag flying outside," Milne noted.

By Sam Odrowski Local Journalism Initiative Reporter