

## Anderson Shelters

In November 1938, Chamberlain placed Sir John Anderson in charge of Air Raid Precautions (ARP). He immediately commissioned the engineer, William Patterson, to design a small and cheap shelter that could be erected in people's gardens. Within a few months nearly one and a half million of what became known as Anderson shelters were distributed to people living in areas expected to be bombed by the Luftwaffe.

Made from six curved sheets bolted together at the top, with steel plates at either end, and measuring 6ft 6in by 4ft 6in (1.95m by 1.35m) the shelter could accommodate six people. These shelters were half buried in the ground with earth heaped on top. The entrance was protected by a steel shield and an earthen blast wall.

Anderson shelters were given free to poor people. Men who earned more than £5 a week could buy one for £7. Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, over 2 million families had shelters in their garden. By the time of the Blitz this had risen to two and a quarter million.

When the Luftwaffe changed from daylight to night bombing raids, the government expected people to sleep in their Anderson shelters. Each night the wailing of the air raid sirens announced the approach of the German bombers and ensured that most people had time to take cover before the raid actually started.

The outdoor Anderson shelter was very good and provided almost complete safety except from a direct hit. However, Anderson shelters were dark and damp and people were reluctant to use them at night. In low-lying areas they tended to flood and sleeping was difficult as they did not keep out the sound of the bombings. Another problem was that the majority of people living in industrial areas did not have gardens where they could erect their shelters.

### British government circular 'Air Raid Warnings' (1939)

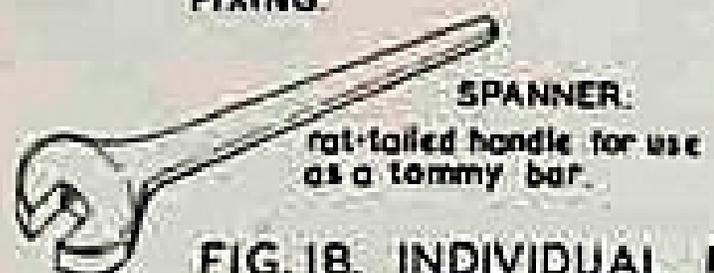
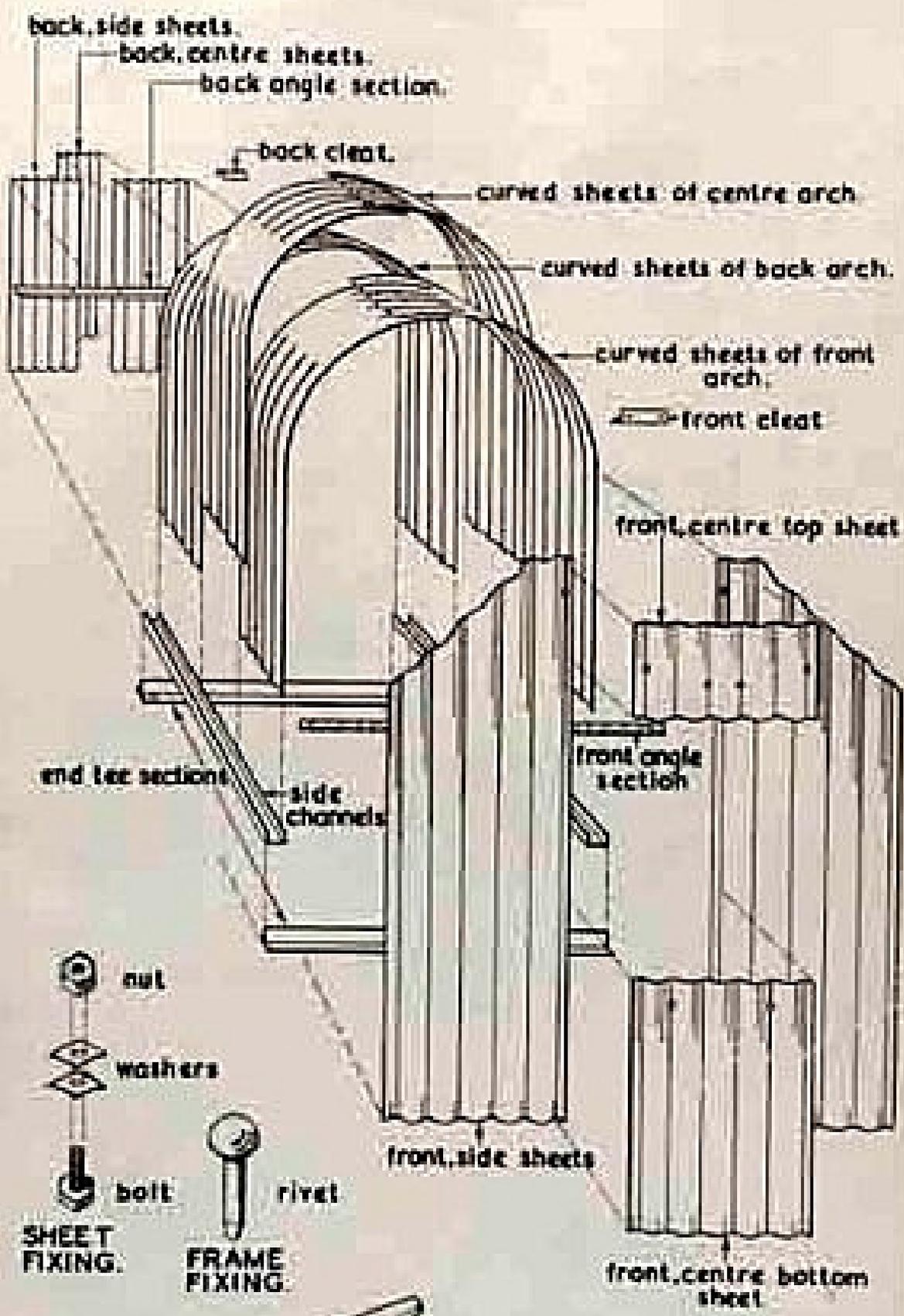
When air raids are threatened, warning will be given in towns by sirens, or hooters which will be sounded in some places by short blasts and in others by a warbling note, changing every few seconds. The warnings may be given by the police or air-raid wardens blowing short blasts on whistles.

When you hear the warning take cover at once. Remember that most of the injuries in an air raid are caused not by direct hits by bombs but by flying fragments of debris or by bits of shells. Stay under cover until you hear the sirens sounding continuously for two minutes on the same note which is the signal "Raiders Passed".

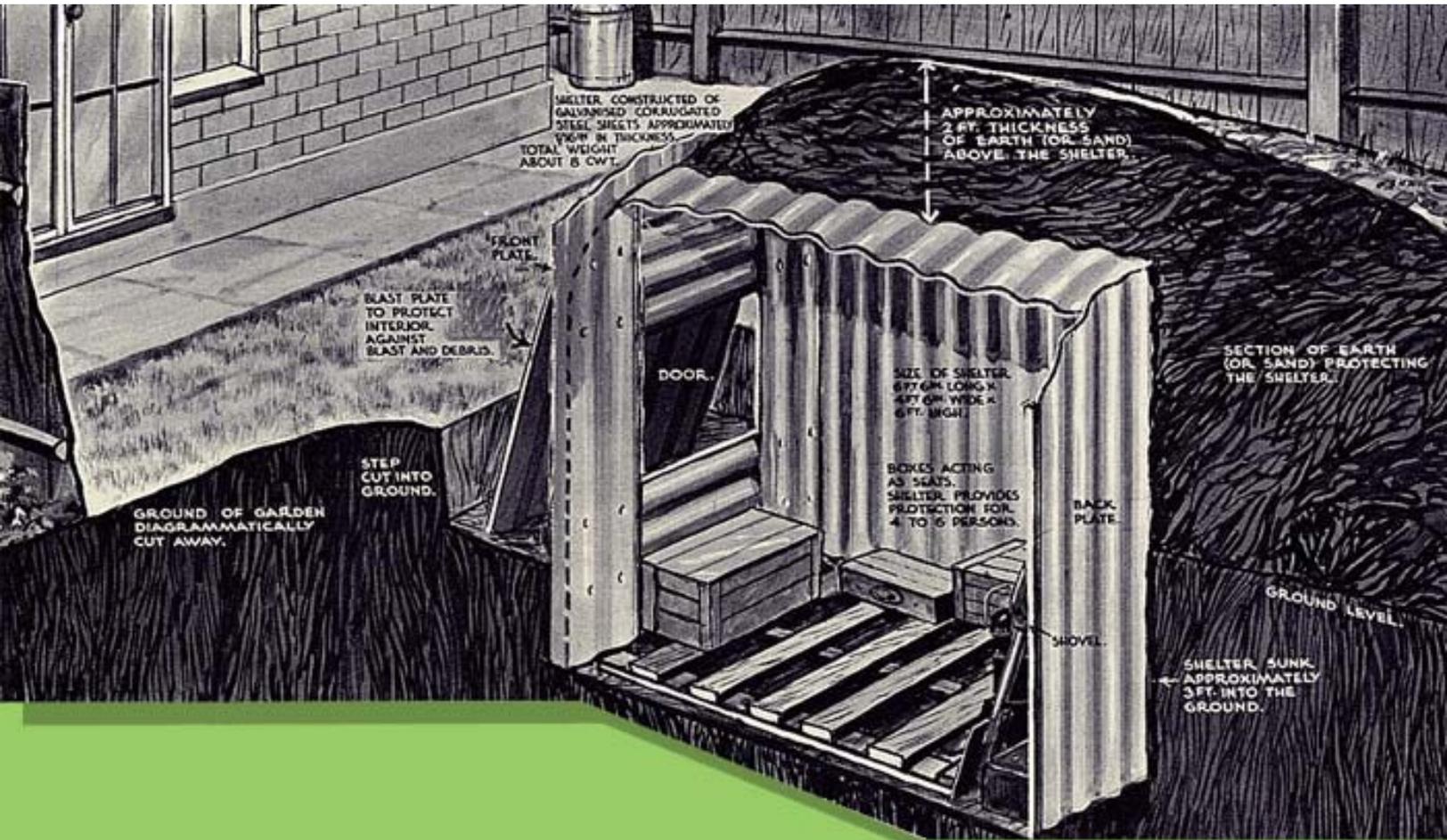
Kingsley Martin was the editor of the New Statesman during the Second World War. He wrote about his experiences in his autobiography, Editor, in 1968.

Buzz-bombs, with a lateral blast, were a confounded nuisance because it was your own fault if you, or your friends near you, were cut to bits by flying splinters of glass. In the day I would work in the kneehole under my desk to avoid the danger of shattered glass from the windows. I remember that children in one of the great hospitals had their faces so penetrated by glass splinters that the doctors questioned whether their lives would be worth saving. Glass, unlike metal, will not respond to magnets and there was no alternative but to cut away their faces. If you were sensible, you led the way to a shelter.

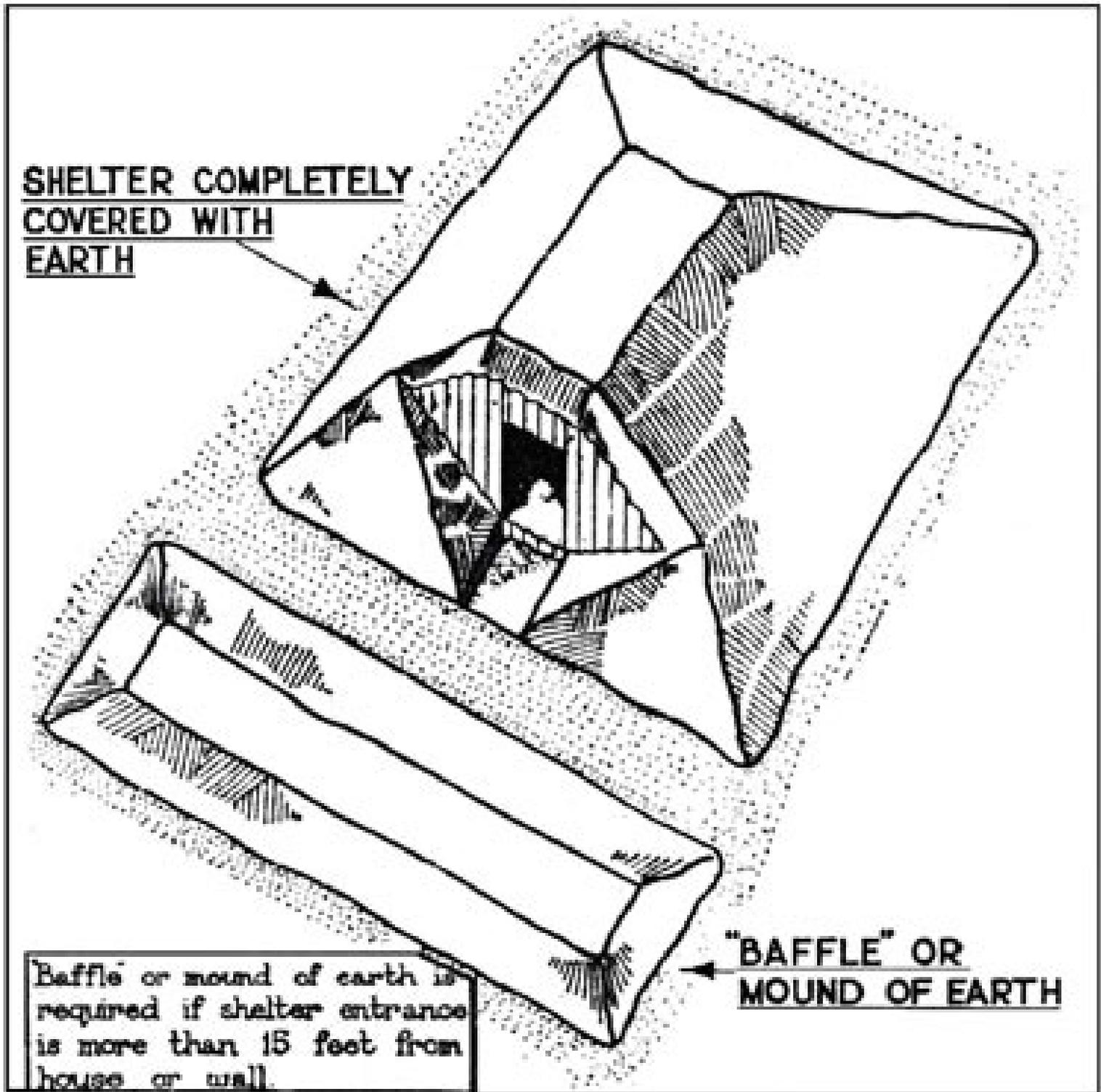




**FIG. 18. INDIVIDUAL PARTS OF THE ANDERSON SHELTER.**



# PROPERLY-PROTECTED ANDERSON SHELTER



This a drawing of an Anderson shelter, covered and protected as it ought to be.

The Walsall Observer - 29 June 1940

