

## Morrison Shelters

A census held in November 1940 discovered that the majority of people in London did not use specially created shelters. The survey revealed that of those interviewed, 27 per cent used Anderson shelters, 9 per cent slept in public shelters whereas 4 per cent used underground railway stations. The rest of those interviewed were either on duty at night or slept in their own homes.

Ellen Wilkinson was made responsible for air raid shelters and was instrumental in the introduction of the Morrison Shelter in March 1941. Named after the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, the shelters were made of very heavy steel and could be put in the living room and used as a table. One wire side lifted up for people to crawl underneath and get inside. Morrison shelters were fairly large and provided sleeping space for two or three people.

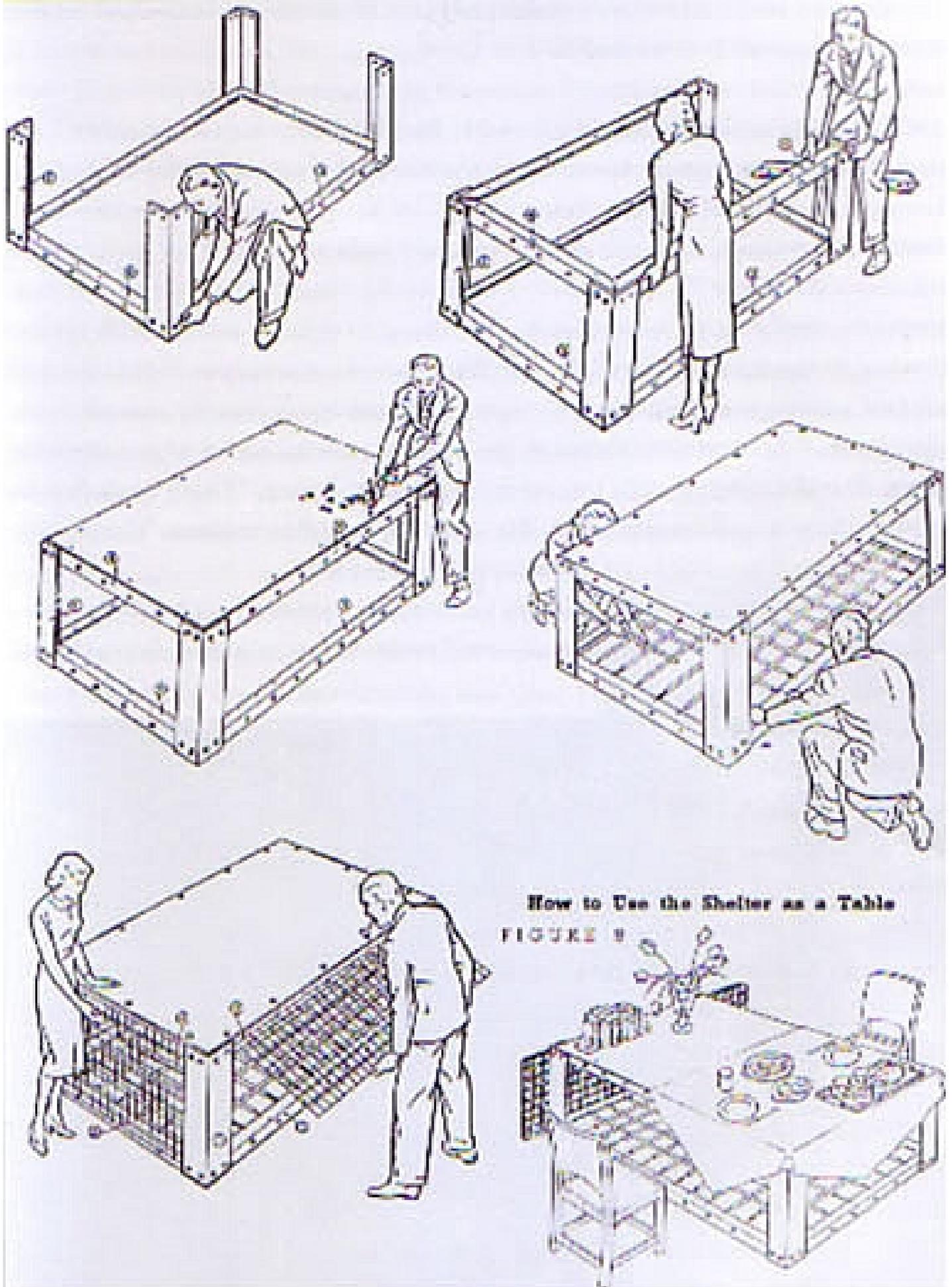
### Herbert Morrison. An Autobiography (1960)

There was also much argument about the advantages and defects of indoor versus outdoor shelters. The outdoor Anderson shelter was very good and provided almost complete safety except from a direct hit. However, the fact that it would have to be sunk into the ground meant that in many urban areas it could not be put up because of the lack of any garden and in other districts the shelter was liable to flood during the winter months.

The wide desire for an indoor shelter which provided some degree of comfort and also assisted people to get a night's rest in warmth and dryness did not take into account the fact that there was some fire risk involved. I decided that the risk was worth taking. Experience proved me justified. Next the experts began to argue about the best design.

The experts - engineers and scientists - would have argued for weeks. However, I told them that I intended to lock them up in a room until they agreed, promising to arrange to send food into them. I reported to Churchill that I had taken this attitude and he was delighted, saying that he would back me to the limit. The experts had their designs agreed upon and completed within twenty-four hours. So was born what became known as the Morrison table shelter.





How to Use the Shelter as a Table  
 FIGURE 8

*Illustrations from the booklet 'How to Put up Your Morrison Shelter', issued by the Ministry of Home Security in 1941.*

