Peter Kurton first contacted JH (via Carolyn Clark) 21/11/17

Hi,

What can you tell me about the 90 Nissen huts in Bentham Road South Hackney please . I lived there in one in 1949. The area had previously been destroyed by a land mine in 1941.

We were at 141, Bentham Rd. E9. Where is the myseum situated also?

Regards,

Peter Kurton

Hi Jane,

They were all Nissen huts, no prefabs. I have an aerial view taken by the RAF in 1946. They did the whole of London to assess bomb damage. Our hut would never have taken two families. They were distinct from other, more military huts. I have never seen any pictures anywhere resembling our huts. They consisted of a brick built front and back curved from the base upward. A two foot six brick plinth stretched the length of the hut on either side. With iron window frames at the back. One for each of the two bedrooms. The whole front half of the hut was one big room. There were two metal window frames on either side of a porch with a side front door and sloping roof. Inside in front of one of the windows was a sink and cooker area. The walls and ceiling inside were obviously curved and clad in a sort of thick plaster board type sheet of a softish porous material a bit like fibreboard. In the centre of the hut facing the open living area was a brick fireplace with mantelpiece quite high up.

The wall separating the two rear bedrooms from the front living space stretched the width of the house and must have helped support the corrugated asbestos roof. Obviously there was a bedroom door on either side of the fireplace. The toilet was outside in a little building split into two with a sloping corrugated asbestos roof. The other half was a coalshed. Both had wooden doors. There was a generous garden area front and back with a concrete path leading to the wooden front gate. On the chimney pot was an aluminium cowl which turned in the wind. Not bad little places actually and better than the tower block which replaced them in about 1955. Although it was cold in the Winter, hot in the Summer.

Look on Flickr under my name and I think there is a picture of me and my mum outside ours.

I think that a local builder was given the rough parameters of what was required and then allowed licence when constructing. When looking at the few residential Nissen huts in photographs one can see a difference in design.

As far as I can see ours were the most comprehensive and aesthetically pleasing versions. And there were about 80 or so on that site. All exactly the same.

Peter

27/11/16

Pat and Kathy Whitelock in their front garden but showing the back

bedrooms of one of the huts nearby. These were directly opposite No

141 where I lived.

As you can see they were quite well built. c1951.