

## Chances

It's still common enough to come across a line of Victorian urban terraces cut off by a much newer block; rectangular, anonymous, such as here. Yet it may give pause for thought while walking to work, to the shops or studying a phone screen - an alternative to the easier comforts of mind muzak on a freezing cold morning.

This east London backstreet offers further scope for reflection, where the original row stops so abruptly. The shiny plaque on the wall marks the 8th December 1940 when Luftwaffe bombs fell, destroying houses and killing two residents, you read.

It's up to you where curiosity might lead next. Maybe you'll go back to scrolling. It says the memorial was unveiled by current residents on the 8th June 2018. You were expecting, well, a neater anniversary. And there's that '47-65' for the bombed homes, only odd numbers. On now un-mittened fingers ... ten of them, obliterated.

You feel a remote sort of relief that only two people died. It could have been many times more. You're picturing a night raid, huddling families, or alone, in a blackout, shaken and deafened by the terrible thunder of endless squadrons right overhead. With the docklands, surely their target, some miles off, they'd have prayed, cursed, bitten tongues to keep safe.

Why drop bombs here? For height to get back safely to their own homes. War's inaccuracies. Terror. Collateral. You turn around, towards where the aircraft were headed, or coming back from. Marshlands then; as they've remained since; as they were before for the busy, stovepipe-hatted builders.

One mystery seems resolved once you've taken in the broad verge opposite. It runs the road's length with a large, open culvert beyond. It's an answer to why there aren't even-numbered houses. You don't use your phone to google but tell yourself you'll do thorough research later. Something else has caught your eye.

Somebody's hung a feeder, newly-filled with nuts and fat, above a brambly hawthorn hedge bordering the big ditch. Swooping over the wetlands, a shrieking, acid-green gaggle of ring-necked parakeets descends hungrily upon it.