

Tuesday 7th July 2020

English Task 1: Reading

THE BLITZ AROUND BRITAIN

The 'Blitz' – from the German term [Blitzkrieg \('lightning war'\)](#) – was the sustained campaign of aerial bombing attacks on British towns and cities carried out by the Luftwaffe (German Air Force) from September 1940 until May 1941.

[The Blitz](#) began on [7 September](#), 'Black Saturday', when German bombers attacked London, leaving 430 dead and 1,600 injured. London was then bombed for 57 consecutive nights, and often during daytime too. London experienced regular attacks and on 10-11 May 1941 was hit by its biggest raid. German bombers dropped 711 tons of high explosive and 2,393 incendiaries. 1,436 civilians were killed. However, this proved to be the last major raid until January 1943.

While London was bombed more heavily and more often than anywhere else in Britain, the Blitz was an attack on the whole country. Very few areas were left untouched by air raids. In relatively small compact cities, the impact of a severe air raid could be devastating.

From mid-November 1940, major provincial cities and industrial centres were targeted. In early 1941 another wave of attacks began, primarily against ports. Respite finally came from June when much of the Luftwaffe was directed against Russia and targets in the Mediterranean.

In these nine months, over 43,500 civilians were killed. This is how the Blitz affected towns and cities across the United Kingdom.

COVENTRY

Coventry, an important engineering and armaments producing centre, was raided on 14-15 November 1940. German bombers dropped 503 tons of high explosive and 30,000 incendiary bombs on the city. 568 people were killed and 850 seriously injured. The medieval Cathedral was destroyed. Almost one third of the city's houses were made uninhabitable and 35% of its shops destroyed. In a relatively small city with a population of just over 200,000, everyone knew someone killed or injured in the raid. A new verb *coventrieren* – 'to Coventrate' was used by the Germans to describe the level of destruction.



BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham was Britain's third most-bombed city, after London and Liverpool. The first major raid took place in August 1940. More followed in September and October. In a raid on 19-20 November 1940, more than 400 tons of high explosive bombs were dropped. One of the city's most important factories, the Birmingham Small Arms (BSA) works, was hit and 53 workers were killed. In a new tactic of hitting towns and cities on consecutive nights, Birmingham was blitzed again on 21-22 and 22-23 November.



BRISTOL

By November 1940, Bristol had already endured numerous air raids. German bombers had targeted its docks at Avonmouth and its aircraft factories on the outskirts of the city. But on 24 November the city was hit by an air raid of much greater ferocity than those that had come before. German bombers dropped 1,540 tons of high explosives and 12,500 incendiaries. The raid left 207 dead and 187 seriously injured. Many of the city's historic buildings were destroyed or in flames and 175 UXBs (unexploded bombs) were left behind.





SOUTHAMPTON

Southampton was hit by two serious raids on the nights of 23 November and 30 November. During the second of these raids, which lasted six hours, 800 high explosive bombs were dropped. **The Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS)** were short of firefighters and reinforcements had to be brought in from other areas. The water, gas and electricity supplies were cut off in many areas. The city's authorities struggled to cope with the aftermath of this raid and its municipal leaders were widely criticised.

SHEFFIELD

The industrial city of Sheffield, famous for steel production, was a major centre for armaments manufacture. It was hit by two raids on 12 and 15 December 1940, which together left 750 dead. Damage to the city's industrial areas was relatively light. But the city centre was devastated in the raid and nearly 3,000 homes and shops were destroyed.



LIVERPOOL

During 1940, Liverpool and the rest of Merseyside was the most bombed area outside London. On 28-29 November it was hit by 350 tons of high explosive bombs. From 20-23 December, Merseyside was hit on consecutive nights. While the city's docks were the main target, the surrounding streets of terraced houses, which housed the dock workers and their families, were also devastated. During the first eight days of May 1941, Merseyside was bombed almost every night. 1,900 people were killed, 1,450 seriously wounded and 70,000 made homeless. In Bootle, 8,000 out of 17,000 houses were destroyed or damaged during the Blitz. This photograph, taken in 1942, shows the extent of bomb damage in the city. The Liver Building can be seen just to the right of centre, and the River Mersey is just visible to the left of the photograph.



MANCHESTER

The heaviest raids on Manchester took place on consecutive nights on 22-23 and 23-24 December. The Free Trade Hall, Smithfield Market and St Anne's Church were destroyed. Deansgate and Oxford Road were blocked with debris and unexploded bombs. More than 8,000 homes were destroyed or made uninhabitable. The Trafford Park industrial area was badly damaged by fires. Many of the city's firemen and civil defence workers had not yet returned from Liverpool which had been hit on 20 December. Fires still burning in Liverpool from that raid also helped illuminate the bombers' path to Manchester.





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PHOTOGRAPHS

CARDIFF

Cardiff in south Wales was bombed on 2 January 1941. This marked the start of a series of raids on cities targeted for their docks, vital in maintaining Britain's supply lines. While the docks and factories were hit, residential areas suffered too. The raid left 165 people dead and the same number injured. Cardiff was bombed again on consecutive nights in early March.

PORTSMOUTH

The important naval base of Portsmouth on the south coast was raided almost every four weeks during the start of 1941. It suffered its heaviest raid on 10-11 January. German aircraft dropped 140 tons of high explosive bombs and 40,000 incendiaries on the city. Fires were started in the dockyard. The city's Guildhall was also set on fire by incendiary bombs and its interior and roof destroyed.

