

Memorials to the Blitz



War Memorials Trust

Introduction

While many of the UK's memorials were designed by communities to remember military personnel killed as a result of conflict or to commemorate the service of those that fought and survived, there are also many memorials that remember civilians who died in or were affected by the wars. Some of these were civilian victims of the Blitz and other bombing incidents. The examples detailed below can be used to examine the impact of these events on your local area and its residents, if applicable, or to gain a wider understanding of this key part of World War II. Other war memorials can be searched for, or added to, War Memorials Online (www.warmemorials.org.uk).

London

London was the worst affected city during the Blitz, with many consecutive nights of bombing. The raids killed thousands of civilians, some in their homes or while going about normal life, others in disasters such as the collapsed shelters at Kennington and Balham. There are many memorials to the Blitz, some of which are described here. Others can be searched for, and added to, War Memorials Online (www.warmemorials.org.uk).

Kennington Park, in London, is the site of a memorial to more than 100 civilians who died in a disaster there during World War II. The memorial was unveiled in 2006 (www.warmemorials.org.uk/node/142847).

Kennington Park's shelter was constructed by digging trenches with reinforced walls and a roof. They were generally very basically equipped and vulnerable to damage. On 15th October 1940, at about 8pm, a 50lb bomb fell in the park causing a section of the trench air raid shelter to collapse and killing 104 people. Most of those who died were women and children, the youngest just three months old. Only around half the victims were recovered and buried in a nearby cemetery. The area was later filled in and re-turfed. The memorial was commissioned by the Friends of Kennington Park and designed by sculptor Richard Kindersley. It consists of a tall and narrow rectangular stone on which is inscribed, 'History despite its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived but if faced with courage need not be lived again.'



Kennington Park civilians memorial, London © Martin Shorthouse, 2015

Tottenham Cemetery (www.warmemorials.org.uk/node/77144) in London has a memorial to victims killed during the Blitz. It consists of a brick wall with three sections arranged in a semi-circular shape around a paved area. On the central section is a stone plaque which bears the inscription, '1939 1945 In memory of the civilians who lost their lives during enemy action in the Second World War many of whom rest here.' The memorial commemorates 94 local people.

Balham underground station is the site of another memorial to civilians and could provide a useful introduction to looking at the use of shelters during the Blitz. Balham was one of the deep underground stations that Londoners used as shelters during air raids. On 14th October 1940 a bomb was dropped on the road above the station, causing a partial collapse of the tunnel. Reports on the number of casualties vary; the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records state that 66 people died. Many more were injured. There was a memorial



Memorial plaque to Balham civilians, London © Wandsworth BC, 2015

plaque placed at the station 60 years later in October 2000 (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/65209).

Coventry

Coventry sustained serious damage during the 1940 Blitz and this is commemorated in various ways. In a church on Kingsland Avenue a stained glass window depicts a figure of Christ above scenes of bomb damage and searchlights (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/220822; see photo to the right). The inscription running along the bottom of the window under this scene reads 'This church was damaged in the blitz on Coventry, Nov. 1940, and restored in 1962.'



Coventry Blitz memorial window
© Sarah James, 2015

Coventry also pays specific tribute to its **firefighters** who lost their lives during the Blitz. A plaque in St Mary's Guild Hall (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/205533) lists the names of those men and includes the words 'Grim determination of the siren wailing - tension as the first bombs fell - exhilaration as he left cover to attend the first call - exaltation as the raids proceeded and hell was let loose around him. Then exhaustion, and, finally, much later, satisfaction - satisfaction at having done a useful night's work. (Sir Aylmer Firebrace).' This memorial could be especially helpful in researching some of the volunteer roles that civilians took on during the Blitz.

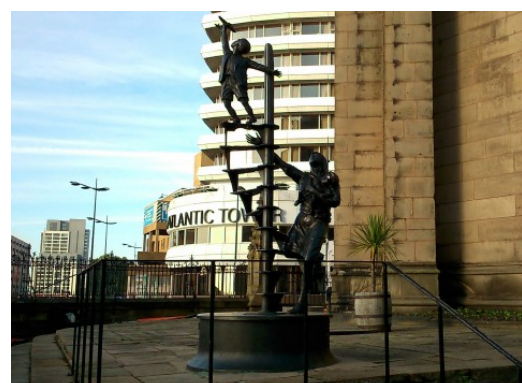
Liverpool

Liverpool was one of the worst hit cities during the Blitz and it is therefore unsurprising that there are a number of war memorials commemorating those events and the victims. A simple brass plaque in the **Town Hall** is dedicated to the men, women and children who died in the Blitz (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/72269) while a large memorial stone in **Anfield Cemetery** marks a communal grave where 554 civilian victims of the Blitz are buried (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/120161; see photo to the right). There are also two memorials of a more modern design, commemorating residents of Liverpool and Bootle. One (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/181330) stands on the site of a former chapel in **Bootle Cemetery** and the other is an unusual sculpture outside **Our Lady and St Nicholas Church** (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/156230; see photo to the right).



Anfield Cemetery civilian memorial © David Hearn, 2016

Finally, there is a particularly interesting memorial in **Hamilton Square** (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/161356). The main memorial is a fairly traditional monument commemorating the fallen of the World Wars, but nearby is a plaque marking a time capsule. Within this is a handwritten note commemorating the writer's family who were killed in the Blitz in October 1940. This is a good example of the poignancy of many memorials and the fact that they were often a focal point for grieving relatives, not simply an impersonal



Our Lady and St Nicholas Church memorial sculpture. Liverpool © War Memorials Trust, 2013.

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monument that has become part of our landscape.

Clydebank

There are a number of war memorials to the bombing of Clydebank on 13th and 14th March 1941, during which more than 500 civilians died. Several memorials can be found in **St Andrew's Parish Church, Kilbowie**, including a stained glass window (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/140375) and a memorial book containing the names of those killed (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/187808). A remembrance service was held in the church on the 70th anniversary of the bombings in 2011.

Elsewhere in Clydebank there are further memorials to these events. One of these is a memorial stone set within a garden on **Graham Avenue**, on the site of some of the destroyed houses (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/182202). This was unveiled when the rebuilding of houses was completed in 1961 and it was decided to include a memorial in the new development. The stone itself is in the form of a tapered cairn with two dedicatory plaques set into it.

There is also the Blitz memorial in Old Dalnottar Cemetery (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/182299), which bears the names of all those who lost their lives in the attack, which was unveiled in 2009.

It is clear from these memorials, unveiled in some cases very recently, that the bombing of Clydebank is still very much part of local memory and left a significant impact on the town. The availability of the names of those who died and of information surrounding the events means that you could find out more about the lasting effects and ensure remembrance of these events continues.

Portsmouth

There is a memorial to the civilian victims of bombing raids on Portsmouth located in **Kingston Cemetery** (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/200419). This consists of a small stone wall with a slate plaque listing the names of those who died. The page linked to on War Memorials Online contains information about the victims which may be useful if you choose to research the impact of the Blitz on this area.

Plymouth

The Plymouth Blitz war memorial (right) is a freestanding octagonal monument. It is constructed of limestone and has six bronze plaques on the upper level bearing names. It is located within **Efford Cemetery** in the sunken section of a roundabout (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/98376).



Plymouth Blitz memorial, Efford Cemetery © Plymouth City Council, 2011

The memorial commemorates the 1,174 civilians who lost their lives during the Second World War air attacks on Plymouth. The worst of these attacks took place over 7 nights through March and April 1941 and became known as the Plymouth Blitz. The memorial within Efford cemetery is the only memorial within the city to be dedicated to the civilian dead and within 10 metres of the war memorial is a mass grave for those victims. The main dedication reads: 'This memorial was erected to the sacred memory of the 1174 civilians who lost their lives by enemy air attacks on the City of Plymouth during the Second World War 1939-1945 of whom 397 are interred in the nearby communal grave and whose names are inscribed on this memorial.'

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