

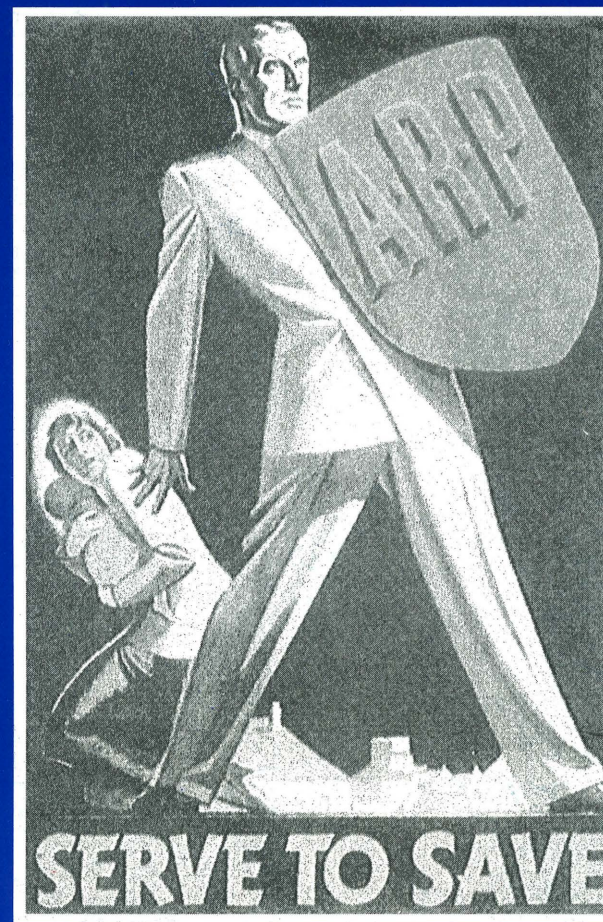
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BRISTOL'S CIVIL DEFENCE DURING WORLD WAR TWO



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Bristol's Civil Defence during World War Two is the ninety-fifth pamphlet in the series of Bristol Local History pamphlets published by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association. It concludes the trilogy of pamphlets produced by the author (Nos. 85, on the *Luftwaffe Operations over Bristol*, and 90 on *The Air Defence of the Bristol Area 1937-1944*). As with the other pamphlets, the author has used the archive on the Second World War which he assembled from original sources.

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Cover Illustration: This war-time ARP recruiting poster symbolises perfectly the whole ethos of the civilian auxiliary services. (*Author's collection*)

BRISTOL'S CIVIL DEFENCE DURING WORLD WAR TWO

The Organisation

During the dark days of the 'Night Blitz' in the winter of 1940/41 the whole of Bristol's civil defence organisation was under terrific pressure, having been thrown into the front line in the struggle against Hitler's Luftwaffe. No services, however, suffered more than the Air Raid Wardens and the fire fighters, each of which lost 29 members killed as a result of enemy action. Local Rescue Parties were also kept very busy and during the raids received 482 calls, rescued 697 people and extricated 833 bodies from demolished buildings, their courage and tenacity helping the local Civil Defence, Messenger, Fire and Medical Services to earn a total of six George Medals, three O.B.E.s, five M.B.E.s, ten B.E.M.s and 29 Commendations for Brave Conduct in Civil Defence. Today, except for a beautifully designed window in Bristol Cathedral, subscribed for by the city's Air Raid Wardens, and a small number of war graves in local cemeteries, little remains to illustrate the sacrifices made, and devotion to duty shown, by members of the auxiliary services during World War Two.

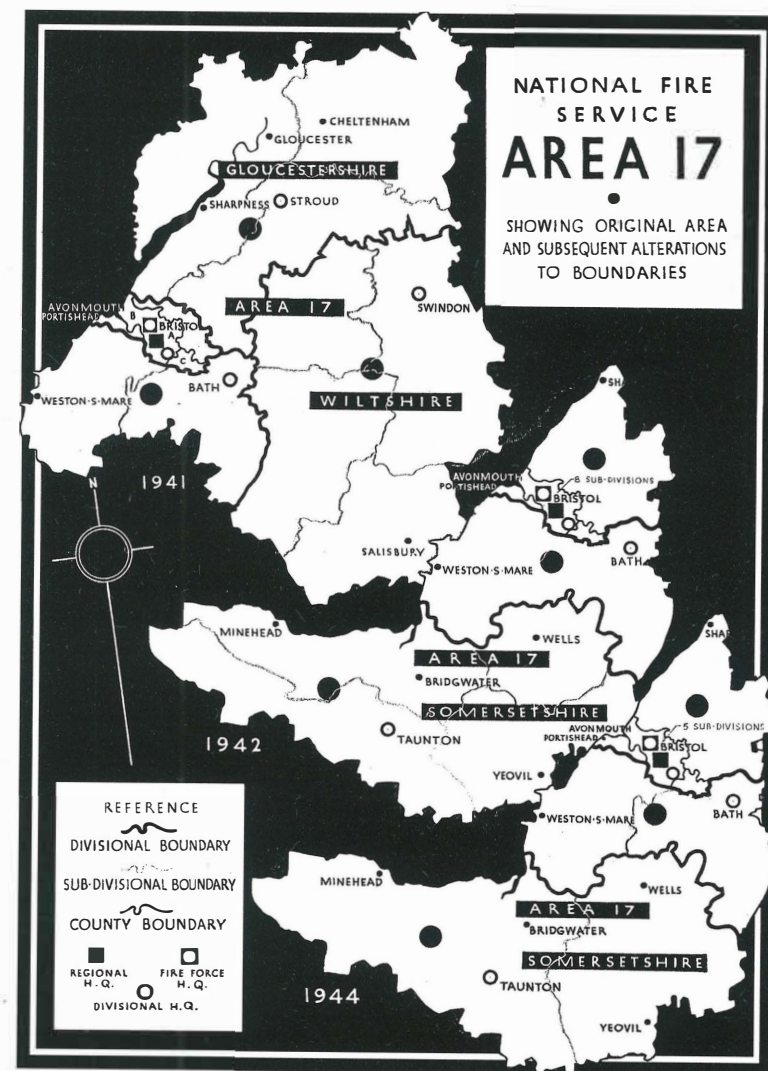
Although during war-time it was the task of the military to try to prevent enemy bombers from reaching their objectives, once a raid had commenced it was the responsibility of various civil organisations to mitigate the worst effects of the bombing by forestalling demoralisation, countering disorder and panic, limiting damage and helping people to survive. The bodies charged with this task were the police forces, fire brigades and the Air Raid Precautions services or, as they all became officially termed on September 2nd 1941, the Civil Defence General Service. At last the personnel were issued with navy blue battle dress and greatcoats, boots and a beret, having had to suffer the worst of the bombing in blue boiler suits and rubber boots!

The origins of ARP can be traced back to 1935 when Britain's National Government approved the expenditure of £100,000 to promote

planning and establish an embryo Home Office ARP Department. In Bristol the matter was first debated by the Council on May 14th of that year and on December 10th an ARP Committee was established. There was, however, much haggling between local authorities and the central government over what proportion of the cost of introducing local ARP measures should be borne by Central Government, but shortly after the passing of the ARP Act in December 1937, which compelled local authorities to undertake ARP planning, the Treasury agreed to bear at least 65% of the cost of such work. The Act set up a complex system of organisations which would be co-ordinated in each local authority area, containing wardens to control the reporting of incidents and the safety of the population, rescue teams to extricate casualties from collapsed buildings, an enhanced first aid and ambulance service, decontamination squads to deal with gas attacks and reinforcement of the peace-time fire brigades.

To implement the local ARP organisation, Bristol was divided into six Civil Defence Divisions. North of the River Avon there was the Shirehampton Division (Avonmouth, Shirehampton and Sea Mills); the Clifton Division (Hotwells, St. Augustine's, Clifton, Westbury-on-Trym, Henbury, Southmead, Stoke Bishop, Henleaze, Redland, Cotham and Kingsdown); the Central Division (the City, St. Paul's, St. Philip's, St. Werburgh's, Montpelier, Bishopston, Horfield, Easton, Ashley Down and Baptist Mills) and the St. George Division (Barton Hill, Redfield, St. George, Whitehall, Soundwell, Eastville, Stapleton, Fishponds and the Bristol part of Kingswood). To the south of the river were to be found the Knowle Division (St. Anne's, Totterdown, Knowle, Brislington and St. Philip's Marsh) and the Bedminster Division (Windmill Hill, Ashton Gate, Ashton Vale, Southville, Bedminster, Bedminster Down and Headley Park). During 1940, however, this arrangement was found too restricted so, for operational purposes only, the Somerset No. 1 (Clevedon) Area, covering the Long Ashton R.D., Clevedon U.D. and Portishead U.D. and the special Gloucestershire No. 16 (Filton) Area, which took in the Parish of Filton and a portion of Patchway, were added to the Bristol ARP Area in May and June respectively.

Nationwide the fire services were to be augmented by a largely volunteer Auxiliary Fire Service, but unfortunately the AFS was to be trained by the local peace-time fire brigade and under its authority, but partly equipped and regulated on a national basis by the Home Office. It therefore had two masters and being born in dispute, to some extent remained so throughout its existence. In Bristol, AFS recruiting got off to a poor start, but by the start of the war the 85 whole-time officers and men of the city's police-operated Fire Brigade had been boosted by the



Between its formation on August 18th 1941 and its disbandment on April 1st 1948 the Bristol based No.17 Fire Force Area, one of the largest in the country, underwent a number of changes as this official map shows. (Bristol Record Office)

4,215 full- and part-time men and women then enrolled in the AFS. The organisation was also quite well equipped and by the time the 'Night Blitz' began in November 1940 there were 26 Auxiliary Fire Stations in Bristol, each provided with a heavy unit on a trailer, while also available to the AFS were five fire floats, ten self propelled heavy units, 54 large trailer units and 140 light trailer units. Although the ARP Act of 1937 had required neighbouring fire brigades to work out reinforcing schemes so that mutual assistance could be given to whichever area was threatened, the arrival of more distant crews in fact created serious problems in command, control and communications due to the non-standardisation of equipment, drills, terminology, rank structures and uniforms. Nationalisation was the obvious way to resolve the problem and this was brought into effect on August 18th 1941, resulting in Bristol becoming part of No. 17 Fire Force, the HQ of which was established at 'Crete Hill', Westbury-on-Trym.

Providing emergency water supplies in Bristol was one of the many important jobs the fire service undertook during the war, and this entailed surveying all possible sources, such as rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, culverts and even swimming pools, as well as making provision for specially constructed holding tanks ranging in size from 1,000 gallon units mounted on lorries to 250,000 gallon basins constructed by the Corporation. After 1941, as the bombed sites were cleared, basements in the city were also converted into static water tanks. In some cases they were surrounded by weeds and buddleia (self sown) and one or two even had resident ducks! In addition, to help in overcoming the fracture of mains, which inevitably followed the bombing, the Home Office devised a system of 6 inch steel pipelines to cover the major risk areas and by the end of 1944, due to the diligence of the National Fire Service (NFS), some 46 pipelines totalling 24½ miles had been laid around the city and in the Avonmouth Docks area.

Although since September 1940 it had been mandatory for Fire Watchers to be present in buildings at all times, to detect fire and summon assistance, this applied only to large business premises. Consequently, in central Bristol most firms were still locked at night with keyholders many miles away and it was only after the devastating incendiary bomb attacks of November and December that, on the last day of the year, the Minister of Home Security made an appeal to the nation to form voluntary street fire parties in every locality. To this there was an immediate response and in Bristol 65,000 members were soon recruited, distributed in 2,900 street parties. Few records survive, but typical of these must have been the Avon Vale Fire Fighters, formed on February 2nd 1941 to protect properties at the western end of Avonvale

Road. Comprising 23 volunteers, their initial equipment included six stirrup pumps, nine rakes, four incendiary bomb shovels, three ladders, two spades and two 100-foot hoses. With the establishment of the NFS in August 1941 it was decided that all these Supplementary Fire Parties should form part of the general Wardens Service and should from then on be known as Fire Guards. Formed into teams of three persons, their principal task was to watch for incendiary bombs and to deal with as many as possible as soon as they fell, so that the fires did not get a hold.

As the Luftwaffe's reprisal attacks of 1942, directed against unprotected cities, revealed the urgent need to co-ordinate the efforts and resources of the Fire Guard and the NFS, the idea was born that this huge organisation could provide a formidable fire defence in conjunction with the NFS. This led, in February 1943, to the adoption of the Fire Guard Plan, under which the sole responsibility for reporting fires due to enemy action was transferred from the Wardens to the Fire Guard Service which, it was hoped, would provide a reliable and constant communication system invulnerable to air attack. Bristol threw itself wholeheartedly into the scheme, and by the middle of the summer 403 instructors were ready to train the Fire Guards in the use of NFS equipment.

1938 also saw the start of the recruitment of personnel for the Wardens Service, the backbone of civil defence which, in Bristol, was under the direction of the Chief Constable. It was based around the ARP Divisions with a Divisional Warden in charge of each, these being further sub-divided into Groups, each headed by a Group Warden, and Sectors, with approximately 500 people in each. Progress, however, was slow and by September 1938, of the 2,191 men who had volunteered and been accepted, only 1,064 were trained and 460 actually allocated to their respective sectors. Nevertheless, although still under strength, on September 3rd 1939, all 187 Wardens Posts were fully manned, each of these serving three or more Sectors from such places as church halls and schools. At a later stage specially constructed posts of steel and brick were built, six Divisional HQs were established and whole-time Wardens, both men and women, were engaged, raising the actual strength by the end of the war to 3756 men and 1,582 women. The bulk of the Wardens were unpaid volunteers and as the majority of these, unless in reserved occupations, were over forty years of age, many already possessed useful military experience, having served in World War I. By contrast full-time Wardens were relatively few, normally restricted to no more than two per post.

The Wardens Service was designed to help the general public with advice, to give them information, and, under raiding conditions to give

them warning of danger; to render assistance to those who might be injured or rendered homeless; to report air raid damage, and to allay panic. It was also the somewhat unpopular duty of the Wardens to assist the police in enforcing the blackout regulations, which for much of the war were in force every night, from 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise, and for this purpose patrols were instituted. In addition a large number of Wardens volunteered for, and were trained as, Bomb Reconnaissance Officers, a dangerous job which entailed the inspection of incidents where unexploded high-explosive bombs were suspected, while a special observation post on the tower of the Royal Fort, set up to detect and report the first fall of flares and bombs for Fighter Command, was also maintained and manned by Wardens. In spite of the varied duties and the amount of voluntary service given, the service still found time to collect a large sum of money for the purpose of purchasing two Spitfire aircraft, R7194, 'Bristol Civil Defence', and R7260, 'Bristol Air Raid Warden', both first flown in March 1941.

Another important organisation, formed under Lady Reading in 1938, was the Women's Voluntary Service for Air Raid Precautions, the contribution of which during the subsequent war was truly prodigious. Blood Transfusion campaigns, the salvage of paper and other scarce materials, the relief of evacuees and canteen services were but a few of the tasks undertaken by the WVS. It also recruited and trained drivers for ambulances, assisted in the movement of patients from hospitals and collected an enormous amount of clothes which it repaired and distributed to air raid victims, whilst always being on hand with a never ending supply of tea! These are but a few samples of the work of this remarkable organisation, and in view of what its members did throughout the war it is difficult to understand how in previous crises in the nation's history the country managed to survive without the WVS.

With the realisation that war was a distinct possibility, trenches were dug in College Green and in other open spaces and by the end of September 1938 there was trench shelter accommodation for 40,000 citizens, albeit at a cost of £50,000. This, however, fell short of the provision laid down by the Home Office, which took the view that public accommodation should be provided for 10% of the population living in residential areas, and for 15% of the population in business areas, so to reach this level non-domestic shelters of a variety of types were employed. These included public surface shelters, public trench shelters, public cellar shelters, school surface shelters, school basement shelters, school trench shelters, school steel shelters, communal surface shelters, communal trench shelters, communal cellar shelters, reserved shelters and hostel shelters. The basements of buildings, church crypts, tunnels and

even caves were also used, and it was these communal and public shelters which provided the authorities with a number of special problems.

As more and more people resorted to such places each night it became evident that the rather haphazard voluntary staffing arrangements which had sufficed at first could no longer meet the need, so during the winter of 1940/41 there came into existence the Shelter Marshals' Service, attached to the City Engineer's Department and placed under the general direction of the ARP Shelter Management Committee. A Chief Marshal was appointed, and under him Divisional and Group Marshals supervised the Shelter Marshals, each of which was responsible for about 500 people. Although this service had some 3,000 units in its care at most there were never more than 50 full-time and under 800 part-time Shelter Marshals employed. As it was intended to keep this service distinct from the Wardens, Bristol preferred the term 'Marshal' but the Ministry of Home Security did not agree with this view and the term 'Warden' later became general. The Shelter Marshal was expected to discharge a wide variety of duties for not only had he to see to the cleansing of his shelter, he was required to keep discipline among the people and to disperse them from the entrance where they were invariably prone to congregate. However, as it was the official view that safety could best be secured by the dispersal of the population, the herding together of large numbers of people was actively discouraged, domestic shelters being considered a much safer alternative.

For some time before the outbreak of war, instruction in ARP had been arranged in Bristol by Dr. Parry, the Medical Officer of Health, in co-operation with the St. John Ambulance and the British Red Cross Society. Initially the two voluntary societies divided the city between them, the St. John Ambulance operating north of the river and the British Red Cross to the south, but due to differences in their First Aid methods it was soon decided that the St. John Ambulance should train men for the First Aid Parties and the Red Cross should instruct women in First Aid and home nursing. By September 1939 a total of 15,000 people in Bristol had been given elementary instruction in First Aid and anti-gas measures, while the personnel of the First Aid Service, including paid, part-time, auxiliaries and unpaid volunteers, went on to number some 1,700.

By April 1939, it had been realised that Bristol's Police Service, then some 670 strong, would not be able to carry out single-handed all the duties which would fall upon it under war-time conditions. Accordingly it was decided to augment them by enrolling an equal number of men as Police War Reserves who would be called upon to perform the duties of constables. Women were also recruited for the Women's Auxiliary Police

Corps, to assist in the administrative duties as well as undertaking some of the duties previously regarded as those of a constable. In addition, there were also available recently retired men who were members of the First Police Reserve, as well as the Special Constabulary. All these, as well as the regular officers, had to be trained in civil defence measures, and in the course of this training were closely associated with the various branches of the ARP organisation. Consequently a good foundation of efficiency and understanding was laid, aided considerably by the fact that in Bristol the Chief Constable was also in executive charge of the Wardens.

The police also had the responsibility of sounding the air raid sirens, acting upon instructions issued by RAF Fighter Command, and for this purpose the country was divided into about 100 districts, the boundaries of which were fixed in relation to the Post Office telephone organisation. The receipt of message YELLOW, the preliminary warning, gave 22 minutes notice before aircraft could be expected overhead, and although it caused all the Civil Defence services to be put on stand-by, it was never divulged to the public. However, the arrival of action warning RED, giving 12 minutes advance warning of the enemy's arrival, authorised the sounding of the audible sirens on a two-minute fluctuating or warbling note of varying pitch, while the receipt of the WHITE message would cause the sirens to sound a continuous signal for two minutes, indicating that the enemy aircraft had passed out of the district, after which all preparations could be relaxed.

Since November 1938 it had been known that for regional control Great Britain was to be divided up into twelve regions, but it was not until May 1939 that General Sir Hugh Elles, K.B.E., K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., an ex-Great War tank commander, was appointed Regional Commissioner to head the No. 7 (South Western) Region, with its HQ at Bristol, which was responsible for the counties of Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall. He held the position until February 1945, except for the period between April and September 1940, when Sir Geoffrey Peto K.B.E. filled the post, Elles having been temporarily seconded to the Ministry of Home Security. In the dark times ahead Bristolians came to have complete confidence in their Regional Commissioner, and his untimely death just after the war ended was felt as a personal loss by the thousands of men and women who had served under him. Each Regional Office held a headquarters comprising a Senior Regional Officer, a Treasury Officer, Regional Officers of the ARP Department, a Ministry of Health General Inspector, a Regional Police Staff Officer, a Regional Fire Officer, and liaison officers from the ministries and departments concerned. In Bristol the

actual War Room was located in the cellars of 19 and 20 Woodland Road, Tyndalls Park, these having been suitably equipped with steel girders, heavy metal doors, gas-filter plant, escape hatches and top priority telephone lines.

Although the Commissioner stood at the head of the ARP system of his Region, and Bristol was under him, the actual day to day business of dealing with ARP in the city was in the hands of the local authority, which in the Spring of 1939 appointed an ARP Controller to ensure the smooth co-operation of all Civil Defence services in the city. The man appointed to the position was Mr. H.M. Webb, the City Engineer, with George Gibbs, the Lord Mayor's Secretary, as Deputy Controller. Quietly spoken and unflappable, Webb managed to do the work of several men, never lost his 'cool' and remained in the post until peace returned. The Control Centre, which housed the ARP Controller and his staff, was the heart of the ARP operation, for it was here that, during a raid, messages were received from the Divisional Report Centres and from which all the information required by the Regional Commissioner was passed. Also present were the representatives of the essential services - Water, electricity, Gas, Telephones, Roads and Sewers - each of which maintained their own emergency squads to carry out emergency repairs whenever bomb damage occurred. Originally located in very cramped quarters at Bridewell, 55 Broadmead (probably on the site of the present day 'Next' shop) was specially purchased to accommodate the Control Centre in September 1938, and there it remained until September 11th 1941 when the final move was made to Badminton Junior School, in Cote Lane, Westbury-on-Trym. A Reserve Control Centre was also established in the tower basement of the University, and when the main Control Centre relocated to Westbury-on-Trym, the Reserve Control moved to 55 Broadmead with the University being retained as a second reserve.

The Report & Control Service, later known as the Communications Service was the medium through which the ARP Controller exercised his control but from the beginning the problem of personnel remained one of the most difficult, the establishment of 360 volunteers laid down by the Ministry of Home Security proving quite inadequate to staff the seven Divisional Report Centres in the Bristol area. As a result, these, at 18 Claremont Road, Bishopston (Central); East Street Library, later Bedminster Depot, St. John's Lane (Bedminster); Norton House, 273 Wells Road, (Knowle); Redland Close, Elm Lane, Redland (Clifton); Unity House, Church Road, Redfield (St. George); Penpole House, Lower High Street, (Shirehampton) and 52 Gloucester Road North (Filton), eventually had to rely entirely on the whole-time staff by day.



The 'nerve centre'. This poor quality but rare photograph shows Bristol's ARP Control at 55 Broadmead during September 1940 together with the all important wall maps. (via Nick Fear)



Typical members of Bristol's Civil Defence Service - the Officers and Drivers of C Shift at St. George Action Depot, Summerhill School, 1942/43. (Peter Harris)

Nevertheless, during the years 1939 to 1945 some 1,851 persons gave valued and faithful service to an organisation which had been on watch for 24 hours a day until 'Stand Down' on May 2nd 1945.

Information concerning an air raid incident was initially given by Police and Wardens to the appropriate Divisional Report Centre which collated the various messages received and passed essential information to its attached Action Depot to arrange the dispatch of First Aid and Rescue Parties, the representatives of the Police and Fire Service who were also housed there, and to the Control Centre so that the city's ARP Controller could be conversant with the general situation and in a position to deal with demands for assistance. With the outbreak of war there began a period of intense activity in the organisation and administration of the Report & Control Service. A Report Centre Supervisor, or Communications Officer as he came to be known, was appointed, and the scope of the appointment was widened to include every activity connected with communications and control, including the Messenger Service. Bristol was unusual in thus making communications a unified service, and the step undoubtedly had excellent results in securing co-operation and uniformity throughout the whole operational area.

In the early days the backbone of the Messenger Service was without question the Bristol Boy Scouts Association which, at the outbreak of war, was entrusted with the responsibility of organising cycle messengers, recruiting some 690 boys by September 1940, a figure later increased to about 1,000. Chief Messenger Officers were appointed in each of the ARP Divisions, under which were Senior Messengers in charge of groups of 20 to 25 lads who were attached for duty to Report Centres, Action Depots, First Aid Posts and Wardens Posts. Likewise, motor cycle Despatch Riders were divided into groups and attached to Report and Control Centres for duty under Group Leaders. From the first raid there was never any doubt of the value of the Messenger Service, or of the courage and devotion to duty of its members, generally boys between the ages of sixteen and seventeen, for wherever the telephones failed the Messengers carried on maintaining communications between Wardens Posts, at each of which six boys were provided, and the Divisional Report Centres and ARP Control. Although not paid, Messengers received a small sum of money each month to cover the wear and tear of their bicycles and free batteries for their lamps since much of their work was done during the 'Blackout' period.

In Bristol, attached to each of the Divisional Report Centres was an Action Depot from which was sent out the Rescue Parties, First Aid Parties, often accompanied by ambulances, and if required, the Gas Decontamination Squads. These Depots were located at Penpole House

(Shirehampton); Ashley Down Road, Horfield (Central); St. John's Lane (Bedminster); Castle Belle Vue, Grove Road, Redland (Clifton); Summerhill School (St. George); and Filwood Community Centre, later St. Martin's Hall, St. Martin's Road (Knowle). At the three 24 hour Action Depots, Central, always known as 'Mullers', as that was where it was situated, Bedminster and Shirehampton there were a number of full-time staff while the other depots, which were only opened when the city was threatened, had only two or three paid staff, the rest being volunteers.

The duty of organising and directing the Rescue Service and the Gas Decontamination Squads in Bristol was undertaken by the City Engineer and Surveyor, and of the 1,050 men who initially volunteered a total of 748 were mobilised between September 2nd and 4th 1939, divided into Heavy Rescue Parties of nine men and Light Rescue Parties and Gas Decontamination Squads of seven men each. These were made up mainly of men from the City Engineer's Department who already possessed the necessary skills. As the war progressed, it was decided to make the Rescue Parties, First Aid Parties and Decontamination Squads more closely interlocking and capable of mutual support by an interchange of training. Under this scheme Gas Decontamination Squads disappeared as such from each Action Depot, and although not standing by at the Depots, could be summoned immediately should their services be required. At the same time the number of men per party was increased to ten and all classified as Light Rescue Parties. During the raiding period of 1940/41 there were, on average, some 22 Rescue Parties on duty during the day and 30 at night but in 1943, as the threat to the city was much reduced and labour in such short supply, the official ten to a party was reduced to one leader and six men.

The idea of forming First Aid Parties originated some months before war broke out and between March and September 1939 everyone trained and ready for First Aid duties was allocated to units near their homes. First Aid Parties thus formed cohesive units which were able to take their places *en bloc* at the Action Depots when the Luftwaffe started its attacks. At three of these, Central, Bedminster and Shirehampton, which were manned by full-time personnel, First Aid Parties and Ambulance Parties were standing by throughout the 24 hours, while the other three, St. George, Knowle and Clifton, would be opened up by part-time volunteers in the event of an air raid.

First Aid Parties, which were part of the Casualty Services, each consisted of four men including a driver, and were stationed ready for duty at the Action Depots. The function of the First Aid Parties was to render assistance at the site of the raid, and to clear the area of wounded

persons in the shortest possible time. It was essential therefore, that the First Aid Parties worked in close co-operation with the Rescue Parties in the liberation of persons trapped under the wreckage. Further, in Bristol when First Aid Parties were sent to an incident they were usually accompanied by an Ambulance fitted with four stretcher racks in the canvas covered rear, while the Parties themselves often used sixteen to twenty horsepower saloon cars with two additional steel stretchers on the roof! As well as the First Aid Parties and ambulances, by October 1940 the Casualty Services, headed by Dr. Parry, had responsibility for the three Casualty Receiving Hospitals, seven Fixed First Aid Posts, ten Mobile Units, six Cleansing Stations and six Mortuaries, while by mid-1942 some fourteen First Aid Points had also been set up and a further six Gas Cleansing Stations provided. Parry, based at the Central Health Clinic at Tower Hill, acted as Medical Officer of Health throughout the war and many Bristolians subsequently owed their lives to the effective manner in which the medical services were organised and operated under the most difficult of conditions.

The Casualty Receiving Hospitals for the seriously wounded of Bristol were Southmead, the Bristol Royal Infirmary and the Bristol General Hospital, while the Cossham Memorial Hospital also received casualties from part of East Bristol and the South Gloucestershire area. During the period of heavy raiding in which there were a large number of seriously wounded cases, many much needed beds in these establishments were quickly freed by the evacuation, to out-lying Base Hospitals, of all patients who could be safely moved. For this purpose use was made of a number of institutions and hospitals in adjoining counties, including the Royal West of England Sanatorium at Weston-super-Mare, the Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund Home at Kewstoke and Eastern House School. Distributions of fracture and other patients were also made to St. Martin's Hospital at Bath and Winford Orthopaedic Hospital in Somerset, while St. Monica's Home gave up half their number of beds to replace those lost by the Bristol Royal Infirmary. In anticipation of the German bombers returning the following winter, in 1941 Bristol Corporation extended the existing sanatorium at Frenchay Park to act as an Emergency Hospital to take air raid casualties. However, due to problems on the Eastern Front the massed Luftwaffe formations never returned, enabling Frenchay to be taken over by the American Army in 1942, not returning to Local Authority control until August 1945.

At the start of war women volunteers trained in anti-gas work, First Aid and home nursing, together with older men recruited for First Aid duties, were allocated to the Fixed First Aid Posts located in health centres and hospitals. Their function was to receive lightly wounded

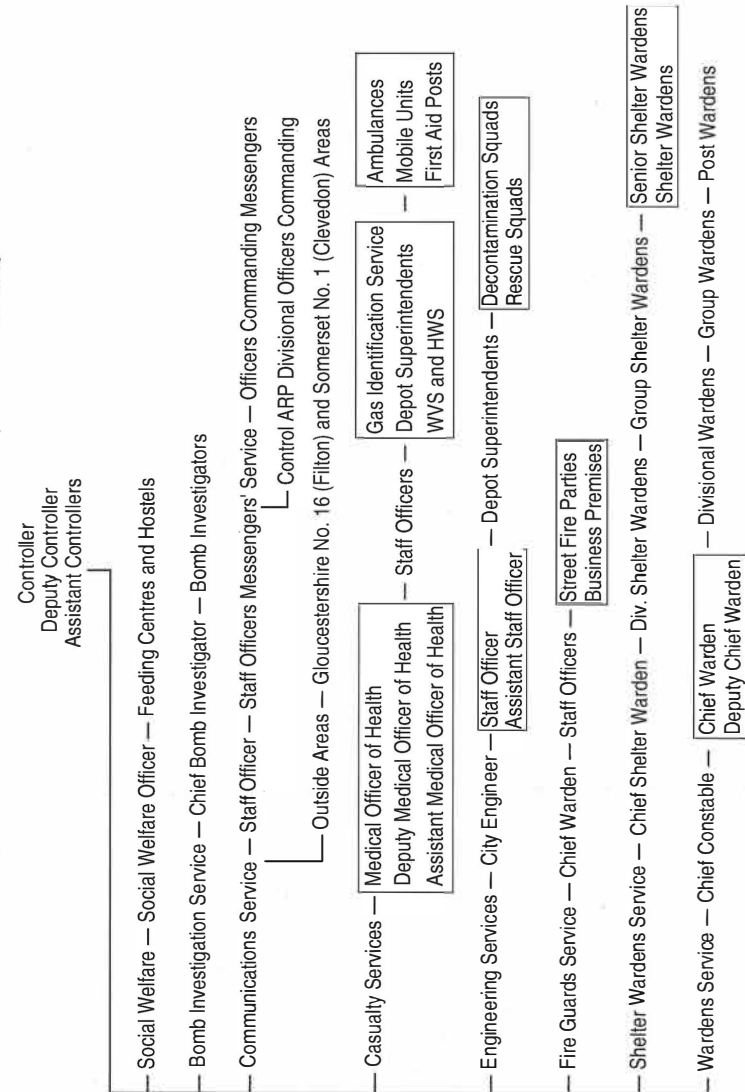
cases immediately after a raid and to continue their treatment in the following days, thereby relieving congestion at the Receiving Hospitals. By the end of the war there were eight such Posts, and it was here that the Mobile Units were also housed, each of which, staffed by a doctor, trained nurse and six auxiliary nurses, consisted of a large van containing surgical and medical equipment which could be sent to the site of a serious incident, making it possible to set up a dressing station with a minimum of delay. To augment the Fixed First Aid Posts by June 1942 First Aid Points had been established across the city equipped and supplied by local volunteers, who also undertook the work of rendering first aid, supervised by a trained nurse. Although they dealt only with minor injuries the scheme had a positive effect upon the morale of the public who could be treated for their injuries expeditiously.

During 1939 one of Bristol's most serious needs was for ambulances and, although commercial vehicles which could be converted easily into ambulances had been earmarked, authority to purchase them did not come from the government until after war had broken out. To meet this need a few second-hand cars were purchased, some trailers ordered and the building of ambulance bodies in Bristol put in hand. In addition the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company gave up 22 single-decker buses, to be used mainly used for evacuating the Receiving Hospitals when they were swamped with casualties, and at Bristol the fifteen allocated to the city were converted by the company in one night! However, as the raiding got under way, a fleet of ambulances was also provided by the American Ambulance Association, these being based at the Central Health Clinic, while another ambulance, the gift of employees of the Royal Insurance Group of New York, was donated for use by Bristol's Casualty and Emergency Hospitals.

An attack with such blistering agents as Mustard Gas would have presented its own problems and, although never used by the Germans, precautions had to be made to combat the effects. To accomplish this the presence of the substance first had to be confirmed by the local Gas Identification Officer, after which persons who might have been in touch with Mustard Gas, but were not seriously injured, would have been sent to the Public Cleansing Stations which had been established in six of the city's public baths. Later, due largely to official concerns that the Germans might resort to the use of gas during any Allied landings on the Continent, Bristol's Decontamination Service was extended by the construction of additional Gas Cleansing Stations, concrete cast, in areas of dense population or special vulnerability.

As severe problems would exist in the aftermath of an air raid, in 1939 the City Council had asked religious organisations and voluntary

BRISTOL CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATION (Late 1941 - 1945)



helpers to collaborate and to undertake the care of people rendered destitute or homeless as a result of bombing. Under the inspiring leadership of the Dean of Bristol, the Very Rev. H.W. Blackburne, the Voluntary Hostel Committee, composed of clergy and members of all religious denominations, was set up and established some 77 hostels in such places as church halls and schools, these subsequently being equipped by the city's Social Welfare Committee.

For those who sadly lost their lives during an attack there were six Divisional Mortuaries in Bristol which came into action after each raid, that in the Central Division also being ear-marked as a Gas Decontamination Centre for the dead. To transport the victims, four mortuary vans would report at each of the three full-time Action Depots and then proceed to the bombed areas to remove the bodies and return them for identification. After major attacks, during which whole families might perish together, the provision of burial became a problem and so many were laid to rest in large communal graves in Greenbank Cemetery, where both civilians and Civil Defence workers who had fallen victim to the Luftwaffe's bombers were placed to rest side by side amidst the expressions of silent sympathy, more expressive than the spoken word.

This then was the basic framework within which the whole Civil Defence system was supposed to operate, but in the stress of the 'Night Blitz' the organisation sometimes became overstressed in which case the ordinary ARP workers had to make on the spot decisions and often extemporise. During that time many members of the city's uniformed services performed with outstanding bravery, but sadly space allows only a relatively small number of these selfless acts to be described. Luckily for Bristol, enemy activity started in a fairly subdued manner and the small nuisance raids of the summer of 1940 were exactly what the Civil Defence services required to hone the organisation to a high level of efficiency enabling it to perform with great professionalism when the bombing started in earnest in the winter of 1940/41.

Under Fire

Although German bombers first targeted Bristol during the night of June 19th 1940 the first heavy attack on the area took place a little after 11 a.m. on the morning of September 25th 1940 when some 58 enemy aircraft caused considerable damage and 131 fatalities during a raid on the Bristol Aeroplane Company's works at Filton. Not only was the attack very concentrated, some 168 high explosives falling on the company's property, but for the first time delayed action and unexploded

bombs were encountered in such large numbers that help was requested from Bristol. Although no proper procedure existed to deal with this situation, Mr. C.D. Bruce, an ARP Plotting Officer at Bristol, volunteered to undertake the dangerous work of examining and reporting all of these with a view to furnishing his headquarters with accurate information on their condition. Initially all went well, but shortly after leaving one device to be dealt with by the disposal party it exploded, and although Bruce was far enough away to escape injury, fragments of the exploding bomb and debris flew all around him. Undaunted, he subsequently visited and reported on many more bombs, both then and during the later attacks, and for the courage he displayed in voluntarily undertaking such highly dangerous work, and especially for his efforts at Filton, Clifford Dunning Bruce was awarded the George Cross on March 14th 1941.

The 'Blitz on Bristol' started in earnest on the evening of November 24th 1940 when 135 German bombers killed 200 people in the city. The attack, which commenced at 18.21 hrs, was concentrated on the centre of the city and the adjoining parts of the Clifton, Bedminster, Knowle and St. George Divisions, with the greatest destruction occurring in an area bounded by Broad Quay, Old Market, St. James Barton and St. Philip's. For the greater part of the night the central shopping area was blazing furiously, and across Bristol some 307 incidents were logged before the 'All Clear' sounded just after midnight. The AFS got off to a very good start and within 30 minutes of the warning some 897 part-time personnel had reported for duty, seven of whom subsequently lost their lives. In total, 194 calls of fire were received, and as this completely overwhelmed the 224 available pumping appliances, at 19.38 hrs reinforcements were requested under the Regional Reinforcement Scheme, resulting in some 81 brigades being sent into the city from Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, London, Kent and South Wales, while 20,000 feet of hose was also obtained from Cardiff, Newport, Bournemouth and Plymouth. To compound the misery, at 23.10 hrs the main water supply failed completely owing to damaged trunk mains and water subsequently had to be obtained from the Floating Harbour, River Frome, and other supplementary supplies through direct and relay pumping. Operations continued throughout the night and although shortly after daybreak the fires had been brought under control, 26 were still smouldering and being attended to some 36 hours later.

ARP Wardens and Fire Watchers, both men and women, also battled with the 12,500 incendiaries dropped by the raiders, but the attack resulted in the death of a Fire Watcher, as well as nineteen men, three

women and two messengers from the Wardens Service. It is regrettable that much of the serious damage caused by incendiary bombs which had lodged on high roofs and then burnt through to ignite the interiors could have been prevented, but at this time no proper Fire Guard organisation existed and this resulted in the loss of so much of Bristol's historic buildings including St. Peter's Hospital, the Dutch House, a number of churches, the Great Hall of the University and the Princes Theatre.

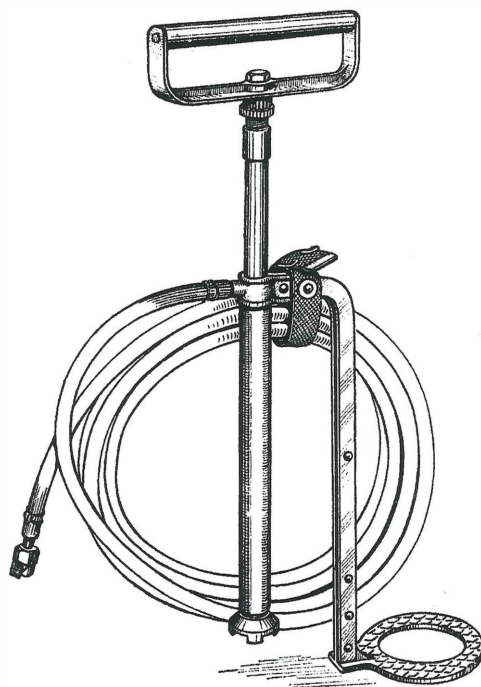
Many people were also trapped in wrecked buildings and Rescue Parties were called to 86 occurrences from which 137 persons were subsequently rescued alive and 107 bodies recovered. In spite of the falling bombs, the medical, hospital and nursing staffs and those in charge of first aid posts still managed to render speedy and efficient aid to the 187 severe casualties and the 703 who reported slightly injured, but lost two ambulance drivers in the process. Mercifully, the casualties, though heavy, were far below the number anticipated, and this was largely due to the centre of the city being less frequented on a Sunday than on business days. Nevertheless, large scale disruption was caused to people's lives and in the following twelve days the voluntary workers at the hostels served some 70,294 meals to those deprived of cooking facilities or rendered homeless.

One of the most difficult situations of the night occurred near Redcliff Hill, where numbers 16 to 18 Bryant Street were completely demolished by a high explosive bomb which also caused a fire. Here, the residents of adjoining houses were being evacuated when cries were heard coming from beneath the burning debris. Herbert Stanford, a Group Warden, immediately took charge of the situation and, while a fire pump was still playing water on the blaze, he worked his way through to the victims on his stomach and was soon able to give them a little water, along with much needed words of encouragement. As it was found impossible to get the trapped people out alive by removing the debris on top, it was decided to make a hole in the wall which divided the shattered building from the next house. Unfortunately, however, when this had been done the rescuers were still unable to get through as there was an obstruction by debris inside. A temporary hold-up ensued, but Stanford was not to be beaten and decided a way could be cleared by knocking out a fire grate. This was an awkward task and it was three hours before it was possible to rescue a little boy alive and uninjured, followed half an hour later by a slightly older girl. The remainder of the six shelterers, however, were pinned down by debris and a doctor had to be lowered to give injections to one woman who was held down by a heavy load of earth on her legs. During the hours it took to free them the building was still burning, coal gas was escaping and the raid was still going on above.

As a result of his outstanding bravery, initiative and perseverance and having set such a fine example, on February 28th 1941, Herbert Stanford was awarded the George Medal and his portrait was painted for the Nation's War Records.

In spite of the horror of the raid the emergency services still managed to retain their sense of humour, a good example being the case of a policeman in Temple Way who stopped a man he saw running in a state of great excitement clutching a stirrup pump. 'Where is it? Where is it?' shouted the man. 'Where's what?' calmly asked the PC. 'That incendiary bomb I saw falling', he explained breathlessly. The officer smiled. 'Just step along with me,' he said, and led him to Victoria Street. 'Look down there, my man,' he chuckled, 'There's a thousand just fallen along that street. Take your pump, and chose which one you like!'

Bristol's second 'Blitz' took place on the night of December 2nd 1940 when 121 aircraft attacked the city killing 156 people and injuring a further 270. The attack was of a more widespread nature than on November 24th, the main concentration being astride a line running about due east and west from Fishponds through Redfield, St. Paul's, Redland, Clifton to Shirehampton, in addition to Knowle and Bedminster. The total number of incidents reported between 18.16 and 04.00 hrs were 340, and although all Bristol's ARP Services became fully extended, it was not necessary to call in Region for outside reinforcements. Once again it was the Fire Services which bore the brunt of the attack and of the 197 reported fires, six were categorised serious and 76 medium, these being fought by a total of 409 pumps and 1,518 firemen, of which two, both AFS men, lost their lives. For the second time Bristol's unfortunate firemen were completely overwhelmed and at 18.52 hrs reinforcements were requested, some 63 brigades from Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon, Dorset, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Monmouthshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Buckinghamshire, and South Wales subsequently despatching 94 pumps, 470 personnel and nearly 10,000 feet of additional hose to Bristol, ensuring that shortly before daybreak the fires were all under control. Rescue Parties were called to 66 occurrences from which they brought out 135 persons alive and recovered 117 bodies, the most serious incident being at Dean Street, St. Paul's, where a large calibre bomb had fallen. On arrival the Rescue Party found the street to be completely blocked by large heaps of debris, a very large crater, and the collapse of several three-storey Georgian houses, one of which housed a Wardens Post. Although twelve people were eventually rescued alive from the wreckage it was to take 27 days to remove the bodies of all 40 of those who had been killed, including fifteen personnel of the Wardens Post.



The weapon most widely used by the Street Fire Parties in their battle against the incendiary bomb was the stirrup hand-pump designed to be used in conjunction with domestic buckets filled with water, some five to six gallons of which were normally required to control the bomb. Manufactured to BS/ARP 33 these appliances were provided with 30 feet of hose allowing the member undertaking the pumping to stay well away from the heat and smoke, while the person at the nozzle advanced to tackle the fire at close quarters. Designed to deliver 1.75 gallons of water a minute, the special dual-purpose nozzle fitted was to provide either a jet carrying 30 feet or a spray spreading out some 15 feet.

The bravery of Derrick Belfall, a young Messenger who was fatally injured while carrying a message from his post should never be forgotten. This lad, who was only fourteen years old but had given his age as sixteen to join the service, was on his way to the Central Police Station when he passed by a house from which flames were beginning to issue. Thrusting open the front door, he stumbled over a stirrup pump which he picked up and turned on the fire, soon bringing it under control. Relieved presently by the householder, he went on his way, but soon afterwards, hearing cries, rushed into another burning building and brought out from it an injured and badly frightened baby. He again continued on his way, but as he neared his destination he was struck by a bomb fragment and was found gravely wounded in Nelson Street. Before he died in the Bristol Royal Infirmary he murmured, 'Messenger Belfall reporting. I have delivered my message.'

The night of December 6th saw Bristol suffer its third 'Blitz' when 67 aircraft attacked the city between 18.34 and 23.28 hrs causing damage in the Central, Knowle and St. George Divisions, most of it due to fire. Casualties totalled 100 killed and 188 seriously injured, and Rescue Parties were sent to 34 occurrences from which 38 persons were rescued alive and 61 bodies recovered. In all 104 fires were started, of which eleven were minor, 43 small, 45 medium and five serious, forcing the city to request reinforcements at 19.59 hrs, some 32 brigades subsequently arriving from Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire and Devon. The overall situation was, however, not as serious as in the previous two large scale attacks, and by 04.30 hrs all fires were under control; nevertheless, during the night three AFS men had lost their lives and another been detained in hospital suffering from severe lacerations. Although the Civil Defence Services lost only one member that night, the unfortunate lady, Dorothy Cook of the WVS, lost her life after a week of continual duty when her Mobile Canteen crashed over the dockside, trapping her in the vehicle.

It was nearly a month before the Luftwaffe returned in strength to Bristol, but when they did, on the night of January 3rd 1941 it was with a force of 178 aircraft, the largest number ever deployed against the city. The attack, which lasted from 18.21 until 06.21 hrs, principally affected the Central, Clifton, Bedminster and Knowle Divisions, and had so many buildings in the centre of the city not been previously demolished, this would probably have proved more destructive than any of the previous raids. Some 150 incidents were subsequently plotted at ARP Control, but the actual number was greatly in excess of this number as, owing to a modification in routine as a result of the experience of former raids, minor incidents causing neither damage or casualties were no longer reported.

Although casualties were also less than on November 24th, nevertheless, in Bristol 149 people were killed and 315 injured. The night was one of the winter's bitterest and the lot of the fire-fighters was perhaps the worst for, as water streamed from their jets, huge icicles formed on the buildings, while great sheets of ice on the roadways added to their misery. To assist Bristol, appliances from some 60 brigades were drafted in from Gloucestershire, Somerset, Devon, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Surrey, and although much property was saved, the night saw eight local firemen and two Fire Watchers, as well as a Police War Reserve Constable and an Ambulance Driver, lose their lives.

All eight firemen and the Police Constable in fact died in High Street, where for some time the Fire Service had been fighting to save the Posada Restaurant. At first they seemed to be winning the battle, but towards midnight the bombers came over again. Nevertheless, despite the falling high explosive bombs four firemen and two soldiers continued to pour water onto the building which was well alight. It was then that a heavy bomb fell at the back of Oliver's shop opposite sending burning debris in all directions, and bringing down a number of nearby buildings. As a result, both Oliver's and the Posada were blown flat and the firemen on the roof were blown off, while those standing in the road were buried under tons of fallen masonry. Just before noon the following day rescue workers digging amid the ruins found the bodies of two Auxiliary Firemen and a soldier, but it took many more hours to shift the rest of the debris and recover the remaining bodies. The Rescue Parties were also busy elsewhere, the other major occurrence being in Berkeley Square where several days were spent recovering trapped persons and fifteen bodies from the YWCA Hostel.

Not all the incidents in Bristol that night were as tragic and one, somewhat more light hearted, involved a lady Warden who was standing near to a house when an incendiary bomb fell through the roof. She immediately ran to assist and found it in an upstairs room, where it had gone clean through a bed and was in the process of burning itself through the floor. As nothing was available to extinguish the unwelcome visitor the Warden ran outside and started scratching up some earth from the frozen ground with her finger nails! Returning upstairs she crawled underneath the bed and was just going to throw the earth onto the bomb when a bucket of icy water landed right in her face, immediately freezing on her hands and face. A man, it appears, had heard cries for water and had filled a bucket and flung its contents in the direction of the fire without realising that the Warden was also under the bed!

Although 126 German bombers flew against the harbour installations at Avonmouth on the night of January 16th, only eighteen people were killed and 109 injured, none of whom were Civil Defence personnel. Nevertheless, the Police and Fire Stations at Avonmouth were both set alight and 45 fire brigades sent into Avonmouth from Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon, Dorset and Worcestershire. The area then had something of respite due to unfavourable weather on the continent and it was not until the night of March 16th 1941 that the Luftwaffe returned in force to Bristol. That night the crews of 164 bombers claimed to have attacked Bristol and Avonmouth in a raid which started about 20.30 hrs, and with one brief lull during which the 'All Clear' was sounded, lasted until 04.12 hrs the next morning, a period of nearly eight hours. Bombing was heavy and persistent and much of the city centre which had escaped damage in previous raids suffered severely, and although incidents were reported in all Bristol's Divisions, the main attack was roughly east to west on a line from Stapleton Road Station to the Centre, and on to Clifton Down Station. Due to poor visibility in the target area the bombing drifted north into heavily populated areas causing heavy casualties, the 257 killed being the highest number of fatalities suffered in Bristol during any raid. In addition 391 people were injured and ARP reinforcements had to be moved into the city from Clevedon, Warmley, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Bath and Wiltshire, while some 35 Fire Brigades from Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Devon also came to assist Bristol. With such a high casualty figure, not surprisingly the Civil Defence and Police Services were badly mauled with some 40 personnel losing their lives - twenty Fire Watchers, six Fire Guards, four Shelter Wardens, three ARP Wardens, two Rescue Service members, two War Reserve Constables, a Decontamination Party member, a Casualty Service Auxiliary Nurse and a Report & Control Service Liaison Officer.

Shortly after the 'Alert' sounded a bomb partially demolished No. 1 Alfred Place, close to the Bristol Royal Infirmary, leaving it in a very dangerous state, with gas escaping from a fractured pipe. Frank Braund, his wife Lilian, their three children Jean, Shirley and Valery, as well as Mrs. Braund's sister and her mother were all in the basement when the bomb landed, and although Mr. Braund and the baby Valery were killed, all the others were alive and trapped under a great deal of wreckage. To add to the problems Mrs. Braund, who was trapped by the legs, was also in an advanced state of pregnancy. When the call for assistance was received at the Bristol Maternity Hospital, Assistant Matron Stevens and Sister Frampton immediately volunteered to attend the incident even though the raid was at its height with bombs falling all around the area.

Although conditions were so bad that it was practically impossible to continue with the rescue operation, Assistant Matron Stevens insisted on being lowered through a narrow opening, and by lying flat was able to reach one of the victims. Although her difficulties were further compounded by the fact that the only light available was that given by a torch, with the assistance of Sister Frampton and the Rescue Party, the old lady and two children were released and passed through a grating to safety.

As the pregnant Mrs. Braund was found to be completely buried under debris, Sister Frampton went back to the hospital to obtain morphia and when she returned, Assistant Matron Stevens was again lowered into the cellar in order to give the patient an injection. By that time conditions were so dangerous that rescue work overhead had to be suspended as there was the grave risk of the whole building collapsing owing to blast and the shaking of the debris. Despite this, and in an atmosphere made poisonous by the escaping gas, the two courageous ladies went down again to their patient, and by three o'clock in the morning had managed to release her head. They were then able to make her more comfortable, sustaining her with sips of warm tea, and although still pinned down by the legs she managed to stay cheerful throughout her ordeal. All through the night they remained with her while the Rescue Party worked to clear a way out, but at about eight o'clock in the morning it was thought necessary to call in a doctor who immediately went down into the cellar to join Stevens and Frampton. All three then did what they could for the patient in the very awkward and dangerous circumstances until they were finally released in the early afternoon, when Mrs. Braund was taken to hospital, where both mother and child were subsequently reported 'to be doing well'. For their outstanding bravery and devotion to duty on May 30th 1941, Assistant Matron Elsie Lilian Stevens, and Sister Violet Eva Alice Frampton, of Bristol Maternity Hospital, were each awarded the George Medal.

At the end of March the Germans returned to the offensive, albeit on a reduced scale, with the harbour installations at Avonmouth being bombed by 36 aircraft on the night of the 29th. Although not a major effort, three large oil tanks were set alight requiring personnel from twenty fire brigades in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, a number of them with foam tenders, to be drafted in to assist. Avonmouth was again the target on the night of April 3rd, but of the 76 aircraft which reported over the area, 27 claimed to have bombed Bristol as an alternative. As a result incidents were reported in the Clifton, Central and Shirehampton Divisions, but in all cases the fire fighting was so prompt and effective that only 37 minor fires were recorded, all being extinguished by 00.48 hrs, the 48 Fire

Brigades sent in from outside having been of great value in controlling the situation. The following night the Germans returned to Avonmouth for the third time in a week, some 85 aircraft subsequently reporting over the Bristol area, and although Avonmouth bore the brunt of the attack, bombs also fell in the Clifton and Knowle districts. The promptitude of the Fire Fighting Parties and the actions of the local firemen and those from the 24 reinforcing brigades once again largely contributed to the prevention of significant damage in the city, with only one serious and 21 minor fires being started, all of which were well under control by 02.00 hrs. In spite of the fact that the raids on Avonmouth had been sharp, casualties had mercifully been relatively small, only 31 people being killed and 94 injured during the course of three raids.

Although unknown at the time, the 'Blitz on Bristol' was now drawing to a close, the enemy's last large scale effort against the area being carried out on the night of April 11th 1941 by 153 aircraft, which made for the harbour installations at Bristol, Avonmouth and Portishead. This, known in Bristol as the 'Good Friday' raid, was a two phase attack, the first beginning at 21.45 hrs and continuing until 23.53 hrs, during which time the majority of incidents were reported straddling a north and south line from Bristol Bridge to Horfield. During this period a large numbers of fires were also started, but most were speedily extinguished. The second phase commenced at 00.06 hrs and lasted until 03.52 hrs, during which entirely different districts of the city were affected, high explosives being scattered over the southern part of the City and St. Augustine's, Bedminster and Knowle, and to a lesser extent, Avonmouth and Fishponds. Casualties were heavy, 180 killed and 382 injured, the Civil Defence Services suffering badly with fourteen Fire Guards, twelve Fire Watchers, four ARP Wardens and two members of the Casualty Service all losing their lives.

Considerably more damage occurred in the second phase; the AFS Station in Jacob's Wells Road received a direct hit and several large fires broke out, the Fire Liaison Officer subsequently reporting 174 incidents (28 small, 144 medium and two serious fires) in the Bristol area. To assist the city reinforcements of fire and ARP services were moved in from surrounding areas, and during the night about 262 fire pumps were in use ensuring that all fires were under control by 07.00 hrs. The night, however, proved very costly for the Fire Services with two Messengers and eight Firemen killed, including four who were working at Wright's on Colston Avenue when a large high explosive landed nearby, blowing their bodies a considerable distance away. Canon J.S. Smith, an Ambulance Driver, later found three of them lying in the road opposite the public conveniences, all badly burned, and had the unpleasant job of

releasing them from the melted tarmac, in which the grisly marks remained for many years after.

Although quite early on in the raid all the telephones in the Bedminster Division were put out of action, throughout the night the Civil Defence services continued to function without dislocation, due largely to the way in which Messengers and Despatch Riders maintained contact between Wardens Posts and the Report Centre and with Control. As a result of these actions, eight Messengers - Edwin G. Blinman Harris, Eric John Thrush, Edwin George Williams, Ronald Duggen, Raymond Charles Henry Martin, Ronald George Miller, Roy Lawrence Miller, and Maxwell Raffell - received King's Commendations for Brave Conduct in Civil Defence. In addition the Scouts amongst them were also awarded Boy Scouts Association Commendations, Harris, Thrush and Williams receiving Silver Crosses and Duggen and Martin, Gilt Crosses.

The Fire Parties were also busy that night and in Smyth Road, Ashton Gate one such group discovered they had not just the Germans with which to contend. Here an incendiary bomb had dropped on one of a pair of unoccupied houses and caused a fire which sent flames ten to fifteen feet up into the air. Their efforts with a stirrup pump, however, proved fruitless so they decided to break into the adjacent house, put on the lights, and salvage whatever furniture they could before the flames crossed the roof space. At first all went according to plan, but in the midst of the operation, and whilst bombs were still falling all around, they were amazed to hear the stentorian voice of a nearby Warden shouting 'Put those bloody lights out!'

For Bristol the worst was now over as the majority of the German bombers prepared to move eastwards to begin the campaign against Russia. Nevertheless, on the night of May 30th a member of the AFS was killed when a bomb scored a direct hit on the Auxiliary Fire Station in Westbury Lane, Shirehampton, during an attack by fifteen bombers. Although by mid-June the threat to Bristol was all but over, the city did suffer from a small amount of sporadic bombing and at 9.20 a.m. on August 28th 1942 suffered its worst single incident when just one bomb which fell on three buses at Broad Weir killed 45 people, many of whom were burnt to death, and injured a further 45. No attacks took place during 1943, but the Germans made three attempts against Bristol during 1944, with the last bombs falling in the vicinity of Kings Weston and Headley Park early on the morning of May 15th 1944. However, throughout 1943 and 1944 the Civil Defence services continued to carry out regular exercises in order to maintain their skills as the possibility remained that the Germans might still attack the area in force, especially as Avonmouth Docks had become one of the main ports of entry for the

American forces and their equipment. This was a particular worry in the period immediately after D-Day at which time, unknown to most people in Britain, the Germans had actually planned to deploy V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets against Bristol.

In the four short years since the end of the 'Phony War' the civil defence organisation in Britain had changed out of all recognition. There is no doubt the low point in the popularity of the ARP and AFS had been reached in the early spring of 1940 when none of the anticipated air raids had materialised. By this time many people had come to regard its members as draft dodgers and grown men playing games and using up valuable petrol whilst escaping their obligation to participate in 'real' war work. The Air Raid Wardens in particular came in for criticism, and there was a real chance of having someone's boot come flying out of the window in response to a zealous encouragement to extinguish the lights! This situation, however, changed dramatically once the bombs began to fall and from that moment on that gallant band of auxiliary workers, the ARP members, firemen, fire-watchers, policemen, ambulance units, reception committees, doctors, nurses and hospital staff, many of whom were volunteers, both paid and unpaid, worked excessively long hours in the most difficult and dangerous conditions, on the selfless task of assisting their fellow citizens in distress. Bristol's debt to them is enormous for without their efforts so much more of the city would have been destroyed and many more graves would be seen today in Greenbank Cemetery. Their untiring work on behalf of their fellow citizens will, hopefully, never be forgotten and their proud record should provide a fine example to Bristolians for many years to come.

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- 66 *Bristol's 'Railway Mania', 1862-1864* by Peter Harris. £1.00
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- 1 *The Bristol Hotwell* by Vincent Waite. £1.25
- 8 *The Steamship Great Western* by Grahame Farr. £1.00
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