

# TESTED BY BOMB AND FLAME

## LEICESTER VERSUS LUFTWAFFE AIR RAIDS 1939-45

Austin J Ruddy

During a series of sharp air raids on Leicester in 1940 and 1941, the Luftwaffe killed over 100 citizens and wounded almost 300 more. But against this carnage, a well-organised and planned Air Raid Precautions organisation bravely responded.

The result of fifteen years' exhaustive research, *Tested By Bomb and Flame* uses an array of local, national and international archival records, some only recently declassified, to reveal the true story of the air raids on Leicester.

Several myths and factual errors published over the last seven decades, regarding dates, locations and numbers of casualties, are corrected and enduring questions, such as whether Leicester was accidentally bombed, are definitively answered. Furthermore, important controversies, such as how Leicester was left undefended at the Luftwaffe's mercy, are also revealed. This book features:

- A blow-by-blow, detailed account of all the air raids on Leicester, charting where the bombs fell.
- The brave and altruistic work of Leicester's ARP services in the face of the Luftwaffe's bombs.
- Numerous powerful accounts by those who experienced the air raids, including those buried alive in the bombing.
- Detailed rolls of honour listing the civilians, ARP/Civil Defence and military personnel who died.
- How Leicester's ARP and fire services went to the aid of other blitzed British cities.
- Plus, many previously unpublished dramatic photographs from the Leicester Mercury archives and private sources, together with rare documents and memorabilia, that give an insight into the city's Blitz and ARP services.

*Tested By Bomb and Flame* is a moving and honest account of Leicester's battle against Hitler's Luftwaffe. It forms a worthy tribute to Leicester's civilians and ARP/CD services who endured and overcame the Luftwaffe's attacks and will provide a welcome addition to Home Front history at both local and national level.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in North London in 1973, Austin J. Ruddy was educated at Highgate School and attained his degree in Archaeology at the University of Leicester. He has studied and collected the history of the Second World War, particularly the British Home Front, for most of his life. He has appeared on television and radio talking about wartime history and researches and writes for magazines, newspapers, journals and websites. He has worked at the *Leicester Mercury* newspaper for over 15 years and currently writes and edits the Mr Leicester daily local history page. He is also a member of the Leicester Civic Society. *Tested By Bomb and Flame: Leicester Versus Luftwaffe Air Raids 1939-1945* is Austin's third book, following on from his well-received *To The Last Round: The Leicestershire and Rutland Home Guard 1940-1945* (2007) and *British Anti-Invasion Defences 1940-1945* (2004).

He is currently finishing his next book, *Beneath Hitler's Highway: Leicestershire Versus Luftwaffe Air Raids 1939-1945*, also with Halsgrove.

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A 50kg HE bomb fell behind homes on Cavendish Road, crushing an Anderson shelter against the back of a house. Fortunately, its owner was not inside it – he was asleep in bed after having been on Home Guard duty overnight. [Via Malc Tovey]



Above: The sight that greeted ARP officials the morning after Leicester's Blitz Night: sunlight streams through the dust at the corner of Highfield Street and Severn Street. [Leicester Mercury]

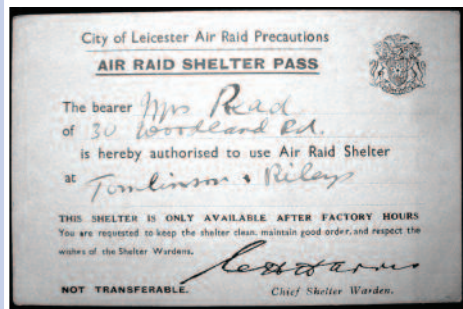


Mrs Eva Hyde, right, serving food from her AFS mobile canteen at a domestic fire at Messr Spurway, Free School Lane, c. 1940. [Via Malc Tovey]



Left: Despite their home being critically damaged by a bomb on August 21, 1940, this Cavendish Road couple still manage a defiant smile as they wave their Union flag at Hitler. [Leicester Mercury]

Below: Tired and disgruntled London evacuees fleeing Hitler's V-1 flying bombs arrive at London Road LMS station in July 1944. [Leicester Mercury]



By 1942, 50,000 shelter passes were allocated to Leicester residents. [Roger Miles]



Example of a double-page spread.