

NUCLEUS Caithness at War: 1st July 1940

THE NUCLEAR AND CAITHNESS ARCHIVES



On 1 July Wick suffered the first daytime bombing raid of the war on mainland Britain. The weather had been fine all day, dry but with low cloud and, because of the school holidays, children were out playing in the streets. It was about 4.30 p.m., nearly teatime, when a lone German aircraft emerged from the cloud and dropped two 100lb bombs on Bank Row in Pulteneytown down by the harbour before flying off. The bombs fell so close together that some people thought only one had fallen.

Coming as it did out of the cloud the plane had not been sighted, and no air raid siren had sounded to warn people off the streets. As a result, fifteen people lost their lives in the explosion, eight of them children.



The full roll call of the dead is as follows: Frederick Blackstock, aged 5; Isobel Bruce, aged 7; James Bruce Flett, aged 7; Kenneth MacGregor, aged 8; Amelia Miller, aged 9; Elizabeth Miller, aged 5; Donald Thomson, aged 16; John Wares, aged 5; Isobel Mackenzie, aged 25; Robert Mackenzie, aged 71; Pte. Robert Mackenzie, aged 30; Mary MacTavish, aged 44; William Smith, aged 63; Mary Steven, aged 45; Donald Waters, aged 50



The German plane had probably dropped its bombs intending to hit the nearby harbour and its defences. The police situation report stated that one shop had been completely demolished, and five others very seriously damaged. Everyone within a vicinity of 200 yards was evacuated and a police guard posted

The site of the bombing is now a memorial garden, with the names of the victims, and those of a later raid in October 1940, inscribed on a stone wall.

In 1989 Hillhead Primary School did an oral history project, collecting memories of survivors of the event. Their stories can be found here: <http://www.caithness.org/history/bankrowbombing/bankrowbombing.htm>



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NUCLEUS Question Sheet

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After you have read the passage, answer the following questions:

Q1. On what date was Wick bombed?

A.

Q2. How many bombs were dropped that day?

A.

Q3. What was the name of the street that was bombed?

A.

Q4. How many people died in the explosion?

A.

Q5. How many of them were children?

A.

Q6. Write down the names and ages of two people that died that day.

A.

Q7. What was the bomb's likely target?

A.

Q8. What occupies the site of the bombing now?

A.

