

The **Belfast Blitz**

The City in the War Years

BRIAN BARTON



The Second World War was a titanic struggle against totalitarianism where civilians suffered as never before. During the War, Belfast played an increasingly important role: the more it became vital to the war effort, the greater was the risk that it would be subjected to a blitz from the *Luftwaffe*.

In spite of that, it remained woefully unprepared for attack. When the *Luftwaffe* squadrons first struck, on Easter Tuesday night 1941, the sudden and sustained bombardments devastated the city. Equally seriously, civilian morale was shattered.

This book examines the reasons for the authorities' lack of preparation and describes the full terror of the blitz. It also details how the raids exposed extreme poverty in Belfast. It assesses the effect on sectarian relations within the city, on North/South relations and on the relationship between Stormont and Westminster.

It is the most wide-ranging, comprehensive and accurate account of the Belfast blitz yet written. Drawing on a rich range of primary and secondary sources it gets closer to the events described than any previous publication. Large numbers of people, including first-hand witnesses, were interviewed, and documentary material was assembled from some thirty archive centres.

Vividly illustrated with almost two hundred original photographs, many previously unpublished, the book also contains for the first time the full list of civilian dead – almost nine hundred names – compiled by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It will thus serve as a timely memorial, on the seventy-fifth anniversary in 2016, of one of the most devastating periods in Belfast's history.

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