

Bristol Archives

The Bristol Blitz: sources for research



Bristol Archives holds numerous sources related to the air raids on Bristol in the Second World War. Selected collections and papers are described here, although this is not a comprehensive list.

Further material is listed on our online catalogue, often in the records of public services, businesses, schools and churches as well as personal papers and diaries.

To search thoroughly, try various search terms, such as 'Second World War', 'World War Two', 'World War II', 'WW2', 'WWII', 'Blitz*', 'air raid', 'home guard', 'civil defence', 'bomb damage' and 'war damage'. Searching for material dated 1939 to 1945 is also useful.

Online catalogue

archives.bristol.gov.uk

Website

www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives

Email

archives@bristol.gov.uk

Telephone

0117 922 4224

Key dates

1 September 1939	The Second World War began
7 September 1940	The Blitz began with the first air raid on London
24 November 1940	The first major air raid on Bristol
11 April 1941	The Good Friday Raid on Bristol
21 May 1941	The last air raid of the London Blitz
15 May 1944	The last air raid on Bristol
2 September 1945	The Second World War ended with the surrender of Japan

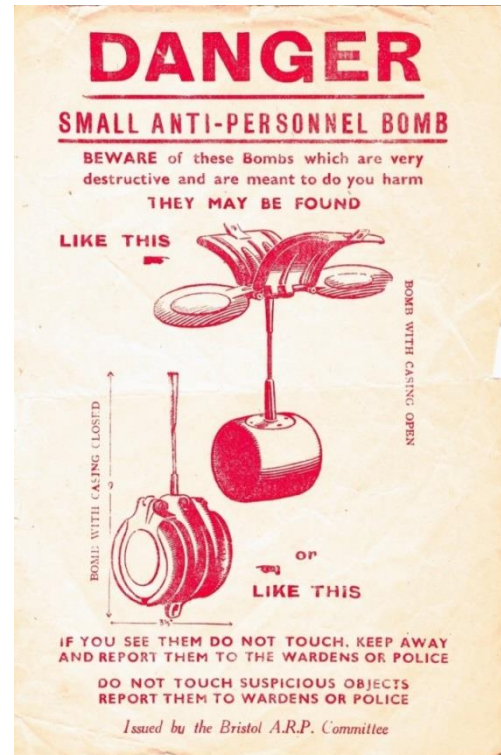
Produced Nov 2016

Catalogue links updated Sep 2020

Municipal records

During the Second World War, Bristol Corporation worked with the armed and emergency services to coordinate civil defence. The Corporation also set up committees to inform, help and rehouse civilians.

- Minutes of the Air Raid Precautions Committee, 1935-1945 (Ref. [M/BCC/ARP](#)).
- Records of the Emergency Committee (Ref. [M/BCC/EME](#)), later the Civil Defence Committee (Ref. [33779](#)). These include minutes, planning documents, maps, casualty lists and records of bombs and bomb damage, 1939-1971.
- Minutes of the Lord Mayor's War Services Committee, 1939-1952 (Ref. [M/BCC/WSC/1](#)) and related papers, 1938-1954 (Ref. [35210](#)).
- Lord Mayor's correspondence concerning war damage, fire-watching, fundraising and other matters, 1939-1945 (browse [Ref. LM/C](#)).
- Minutes of the Watch Committee and Sub-Committee, 1936-1948 (Ref. [M/BCC/WAT/2](#); see /35 to /37).
- Records of the Housing Department, 1937-1981 (Ref. [41596](#)), covering emergency housing, civil defence, war damage and evacuation.
- Minutes of the Communal Kitchens Committee, 1940-1953 (Ref. [M/BCC/CIC/1](#)).
- Minutes of the Defence Committee, 1941-1942 (Ref. [M/BCC/DEF](#)).



Emergency services

- Records of Bristol Constabulary, especially civil defence records, 1914-1974 (Ref. [Pol/CD](#)).
- Records of Bristol Fire Brigade (Ref. [FB](#)), Bristol Fire Service (Ref. [38539](#)) and Bristol Fire Brigade and National Fire Service (Ref. [41905](#)).

Casualties and fatalities

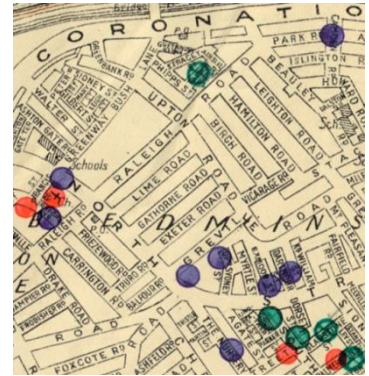
Various different sources contain details of civilian casualties, including:

- Lists of people killed or injured in air raids, within the papers of the Civil Defence Committee, 1939-1940s (Ref. [33779](#); see /11 to /19).
- *In memory of the living: the air raids on Bristol 1940-1943. A listing of the fatal casualties* by John Hook, 1996 (Ref. [Pamphlet/1672](#)).

To find further records, search our online catalogue for 'war dead' or 'casualties'.

Maps and plans

- Maps of Bristol produced by the German army, showing sites of strategic interest, 1936 ([Ref. 38005](#)) and 1939-1943 ([Ref. BristolPlans/arranged/194](#)).
- Plan of bombs dropped from 1939 to 1945, ranging in size from 50kg to 1,000kg ([Ref. 33779/8](#)).
- Plans of bombs dropped in the Good Friday air-raid, 11-12 April 1941 ([Ref. 33779/7](#)).
- Plan of unexploded bombs ([Ref. 33779/9](#)).
- Planning maps, showing bomb damage and post-war reconstruction ([Ref. 40267](#)).



Personal papers

We hold many collections donated by individuals or families, often containing ration books, service papers, identity cards, photos and letters. Some key collections are:

- Letters by the schoolteacher Margaret Cane, c1939-1947, describing her experiences of the Blitz ([Ref. 38528](#)).
- Air raid diary of George England, senior air raid warden, Ashton area, 1940-1944, noting the duration of raids and some details of damage caused ([Ref. 40123](#)).
- Diary and photographs of Eric Painter of the Auxiliary Fire Service and National Fire Service, 1940-1945 ([Ref. 41849](#)).
- Diary of Reginald Goldby, 1942: he worked for the British Aeroplane Company and he was a fire-watcher and member of the Home Guard ([Ref. 43190/1](#)).

Photographs

Two key collections of images are available on our online catalogue:

- Photographs of bomb damage, deposited by the Bristol Fire Brigade, 1940-1944 ([Ref. PicBox/3/Blitz](#)).
- Photographs of bomb damage, taken by the press photographer Jim Facey, 1940-1944 ([Ref. 41969](#)).

Films

- *Operational Control at Air Raid Incidents*, c1942 ([Ref. BROFA/0004](#)).
- *Control Room*, 1942 ([Ref. BROFA/0031](#)).
- *The Blitzed City of Bristol*, 1942 ([Ref. BROFA/0096](#)) (colour footage).
- *The Blitzed City of Bath*, 1942 ([Ref. BROFA/0143](#)) (colour footage).
- *The Citizens of Bristol at War*, part 1, 1943 ([Ref. BROFA/0097](#)) (colour footage).
- *The Citizens of Bristol at War*, part 2, 1943 ([Ref. BROFA/0098](#)) (colour footage).
- *The Citizens of Bristol at War*, part 3, 1964 ([Ref. BROFA/0099](#)) (colour footage).

Audio material

- In *Old tales of St Philip's* by Vernon Gay, the narrator describes aspects of the war in Bristol, including the bombing of a sweet shop ([Ref. 44094/2/10](#)).

Published histories

- *The forgotten front: Bristol at war* by James Belsey, 1986 ([Ref. Bk/173](#)).
- *Bristol under siege: surviving the wartime blitz* by Helen Reid, 2005 ([Ref. Bk/2338](#)).
- *Bristol at war* by C M MacInnes, 1962 ([Ref. Bk/174](#)).
- *The diary of a Bristol woman 1938-1945* by V A Maund, 1950 ([Ref. Bk/619](#)).
- *Bristol at war* by John Penny, 2002 ([Ref. Bk/2268](#)).



Other sources

Bristol Central Library

The local studies library holds relevant books, local newspapers, cuttings and several national wartime magazines. Other available material includes:

- *Siren: Magazine for Bristol Air Wardens*, published January to May 1940.
- Humorous cartoons about the 7th Battalion of the Somerset Home Guard.
- A set of Luftwaffe bombing documents: flying instructions (in German) and target areas superimposed on maps and aerial photographs, 1938-1942.

M Shed

- An Anderson air raid shelter and a Consul raid shelter are on display at M Shed, along with a scorched post removed from the Dutch House, which was demolished after bomb damage in 1940.

Images shown

- Bomb damage on West Street, Bedminster, Jan 1941 ([Ref. PicBox/3/Blitz/32](#))
 - Bomb safety leaflet produced by Bristol ARP Committee, c1940 ([Ref. 12631/2](#))
 - Plans of bombs dropped in the Good Friday raid, 11-12 Apr 1941 ([Ref. 33779/7](#))
 - Bomb damage on Park Street, 1940s ([Ref. 41969/1/34](#))
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