

THE ALLITHWAITE BLITZ

At approximately midnight on Sunday night/Monday morning 4/5th May 1941 a bomb was dropped on the houses in the middle of Holme Lane, Allithwaite. These houses had only been built in the previous 10 years. No one was killed but one lady, Mrs Drinkall, lost the hearing in one ear and a lady in another house, Miss Byers, lost one of her eyes. Miss Byers had been a governess in Russia prior to the Russian Revolution.

One resident describes Wartbarrow Fell being lighted up with the incendiary bombs being dropped around the village. Below is a witness account of the bombing.

The witness was a 16 year old male living in the Square at the bottom of Holme Lane, who was also a member of the Home Guard.

He was woken up by the shattering of the windows in his house. The rest of the family rushed under the stairs, seen to be a relative place of safety. The sky was bright as though it was daylight, lit by the great number of incendiary bombs that were falling. The witness ran outside to call on other Home Guard members and for a while it was difficult to see what had happened. Three of the Home Guard members including the witness made their way up Holme Lane and came across the devastation caused by the bomb which had landed in the road in front of the houses. There was a huge crater with water fountains created by the burst water mains.

The houses close to where the bomb had landed were shattered as the picture shows and the three Home Guard members went into the houses to help people injured by the explosion. Fortunately no-one was killed but one couple were found buried under the rubble and another elderly lady who lived on her own lost an eye. The blast had also caused deafness in one ear of another lady living further up the road.

One of the Home Guard members ran over the field to the telephone to call the emergency services and through the shouts of his friends was able to avoid an oil bomb coming down on a parachute which went off in the field close by to him.

Not long after help arrived from the military camp at Cark Airfield and the Home Guard members were then told to leave it all to them and go home. The three Home Guard members were disciplined by their captain for going headlong into the bombed area and not following the normal procedures but the residents who they helped thanked them for what they did.

Incendiary bombs dropped throughout the area and it was fortunate that no more damage was done, although a bungalow down Risedale was set on fire by one.

Bombs also fell in Grange, damaging houses and Colonel Porritts' home. But probably the most devastating bomb on that night killed 11 people in a farm at Selside, near Kendal. 6 members of the Wood family who lived at Cooper House were killed there that night, they were relatives of the Wood family at the Wyke farm. The others killed were 4 evacuees and a domestic servant, 2 farm servants escaped with their lives.

It is interesting to note that The Westmorland Gazette published the details of the bomb damage the following week but did not state where the bombs fell so the headline described a North-West Coastal Town and there was no mention of the tragedy at Selside to be found.



Holme Lane, Allithwaite, after the bomb blast of 4/5 May 1941.

(permission by Barbara Copeland)

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