

SHARP RAID ON S.W. TOWN

ONE KILLED; SEVERAL INJURED

SAVED BY A MORRISON SHELTER

The pungent smell of alcohol mingled with the acrid fumes from smoke in a South-West coastal town in the early hours of Saturday morning when enemy planes delivered the heaviest attack the place has yet experienced.

The mingling of the fumes was caused by the destruction of a brewery cellar, which sustained a direct hit; the smoke came from a blazing office premises nearby.

In the course of the raid, which lasted for some time, only one person sustained fatal injuries, which seems incredible in contrast with the widespread nature of the damage.

The one death occurred at a house on a building estate, where a direct hit came on the house occupied by Miss Mary Bodilly, aged 67. It is understood that Miss Bodilly remained in bed and declined to go to her shelter.

The value of a Morrison shelter will never be more clearly shown than in the case of Mrs. L. Waters. She, with her four-years-old daughter Susan and her mother, Mrs. Seaborne, were in a house on the opposite side of the road from Miss Bodilly. Mrs. Waters' house was completely wrecked, but the three generations were in a Morrison shelter. The house collapsed like a house of cards from another direct hit, but those in the Morrison shelter were dug out suffering from nothing worse than shock.

A young lady who may be considered to have had a fortunate escape was Miss B. M. Hosking, who was standing in her window when the enemy 'plane swooped over. She saw it distinctly, as it loosed its bombs, one of these being that which demolished Miss Bodilly's residence. Miss Hosking, standing at her bedroom window, could not have been more than twenty yards from the lip of the crater. She was unhurt, all that she felt being a jerk back into the room. The blast, luckily for her, went the other way, causing severe damage to several houses in the district.

Fire broke out at Miss Bodilly's house, to complete the destruction by the bomb.

Others who live at this house are Mrs. and Miss Bunt, who provided another example of the value of a Morrison shelter, for they were in this, which tipped sideways, but proved their salvation; Miss Wilkes, who had left the house before the bomb fell; and Mrs. Chinn, who was actually in another street at the time.

Another building almost totally destroyed, was a solicitor's offices, which stand in the middle of a row of private houses. The premises were struck by an oil bomb, and were soon well ablaze. The fire-fighting services worked well to confine the blaze to narrow limits.

The centre of the town later in the morning looked rather as if a tornado had swept over the place, shaking windows from their sockets, tearing gaping holes in roofs, and wrenching doors from their hinges.

The brewery cellars, previously referred to, just disappeared into oblivion, and only yawning cavern remained to show where they had stood.

Nearby, a firewatcher, Mr. W. Penrose, was one of the many who had miraculous escape. He was standing outside the premises where he works, and which he was "watching," when the bomb crashed into the cellars and likewise demolished the commercial premises which Mr. Penrose was guarding. He escaped unscathed.

Among the injured in this district was Miss Katherine Pearce, the Misses Blanche and Millicent Pearce and Mr. E. Nicholls.

In another part of the town an evacuated school hostel had a wing destroyed by a bomb, and Gerald Evea, one of the schools' best rugger forwards, sustained a broken ankle, whilst two other boys were injured.

Nine injured persons were removed to the hospital, others being treated at the First Aid Post, where and right throughout the town the whole of the Civil Defence services worked with a will. One of their number, Leslie Stone, a member of the N.F.S., sustained slight injuries.

A furniture stores got a direct hit with an oil bomb, and here there remains little beyond a wall hanging at a perilous angle.

An adjacent garage was badly damaged, and two cars completely destroyed.

Amidst all the confusion, and despite the loss of its glass, the town clock went nobly on, chiming out the hours.

Others who had to be removed to hospital were Helen Hitchens, Mr. W. Horace Light, Mr. Harold Hitchens and a twelve-years-old boy, Glen Pappingworth.

At the First Aid Post, Mr. J. C. O'Flynn and Mr. Cecil Weekes were among those who had to receive attention.

Considerable damage was caused by flying stones and debris, which were scattered over a wide area in all directions. Hundreds of roofs lost slates or had holes in them, whilst great plate glass windows crashed into the roadways.

As stated, it was the centre of the town which suffered the worst, and shop premises, offices, and some private houses were badly damaged, a few being completely wrecked.

Among the damaged buildings is a newspaper office, where although nobody was injured, some of the machinery suffered from the effects of flying debris, whilst the interior of the building presented a sorry appearance from the same cause.

The marauding planes met with a hot reception, and had to face considerable opposition before they could get into a position to release their bombs on the town. Besides dropping various types of bombs, there was a fair amount of machine-gunning.

Later on Saturday morning, townspeople, helped by Servicemen, were engaged in clearing away the debris, with an ever-present danger of crashing glass or falling slates; not to mention walls which threatened at an acute angle from the perpendicular.

The people of this coastal town, which may well lay claim to the unenviable distinction of being one of the worst blitzed in the district, behaved with exemplary correctness, even if it might be preferable if not quite so many people dashed out immediately the Raiders Passed has sounded to see what has happened.

RAIDER BROUGHT DOWN.

The roar of a German plane was heard over a S.W. village, and then the machine zoomed out of the moonlit sky.

It skimmed the roof of a Methodist chapel, went over the urban district council offices, and landed on a house a little further away.

This was occupied by Mr. Leslie Vague, an electrician, and his wife. But by the greatest good fortune they, too, were in a Morrison shelter and escaped unscathed. With the machine, which was ablaze when it came out of the sky, burning on top of them they made a hasty escape with their house burning around them.

The local fire service immediately went into action, and were able to get the fire under control, despite the fact that the enemy 'plane was burning like an inferno. Later the brigade was reinforced by another from a fishing village.

One of the crew of the bomber was found on a piece of moorland nearby, and he was taken captive by a number of wardens. He had a broken arm and leg. The remains of two other members of the crew were found. "They were cut to ribbons," said an official.

With the exception of the injured Nazi, all the other members of the crew were killed. This plane was the one that earlier attacked the S.W. town mentioned above.

During the night ten houses were evacuated in the street in which the 'plane landed. Parts of the 'plane were strewn around the village for a great distance.

The A.R.P. service in this place acted efficiently.

Transcribed by D&I Flaxman from The Cornishman 1st October 1942