

BAEDEKER RAIDS (1942)

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Baedeker raids were the name given to German air attacks on the English cathedral cities of Exeter, Bath, York, Canterbury and Norwich, carried out mainly during spring and summer 1942. They took this name from the travel guides prepared by Karl Baedeker - these were apparently used to decide which cities deserved revenge bombing following the allied bombing of Lübeck and Cologne. (Supposed German intentions to select only three star cities and buildings may be erroneous as pre-war Baedeker guide books apparently relied on a rating scheme which awarded a maximum of two stars.) The main attack on Canterbury took place on 1 June 1942, shortly after the Cologne bombing. In the early hours of this day, German planes dropped 130 high explosives and 3,600 fire bombs on the city, killing 43 and seriously injuring 40 others. The cathedral escaped with minor damage, but much of the St George's area was reduced to rubble. A further substantial raid, this time in daylight on 31 October 1942, claimed 33 lives and left 54 seriously injured.

Casualty estimates from different sources rarely agree, but the following from Rootes (1980) provide some guide to the magnitude of the death and destruction suffered by the city during the war years:

- Canterbury received some 10,000 incendiary bombs, 445 HE (high explosive) bombs, and just one flying bomb
- around 115 deaths were recorded, 140 seriously injured civilians, and 240 slightly injured civilians
- 808 properties were wrecked beyond use, 1,047 were seriously damaged, and a further 5,691 slightly damaged
- in addition to raids on 1 June and 31 October 1942 mentioned above, there was loss of life from enemy bombing on the city on 7 other days of the war: 21 August 1940 (5 killed), 9 September 1940 (9), 11 October 1940 (9), 14 October 1940 (2), 20 April 1941 (1), 3 June 1942(5), and 7 June 1942 (1).

Illustrations show:

- location of bombs dropped on the city (Image 1)
- aerial view of war damage to Burgate and the St George's area of the city (Image 2)
- protection of the cathedral nave to minimise the damage from bomb blasts (Image 3)
- detail of bomb damage in Burgate and Iron Bar Lane (Image 4)
- detail of bomb damage in St George's Street (Image 5)
- reference to Baedeker raids in plaque attached to St George's tower (Image 6)

Sources:

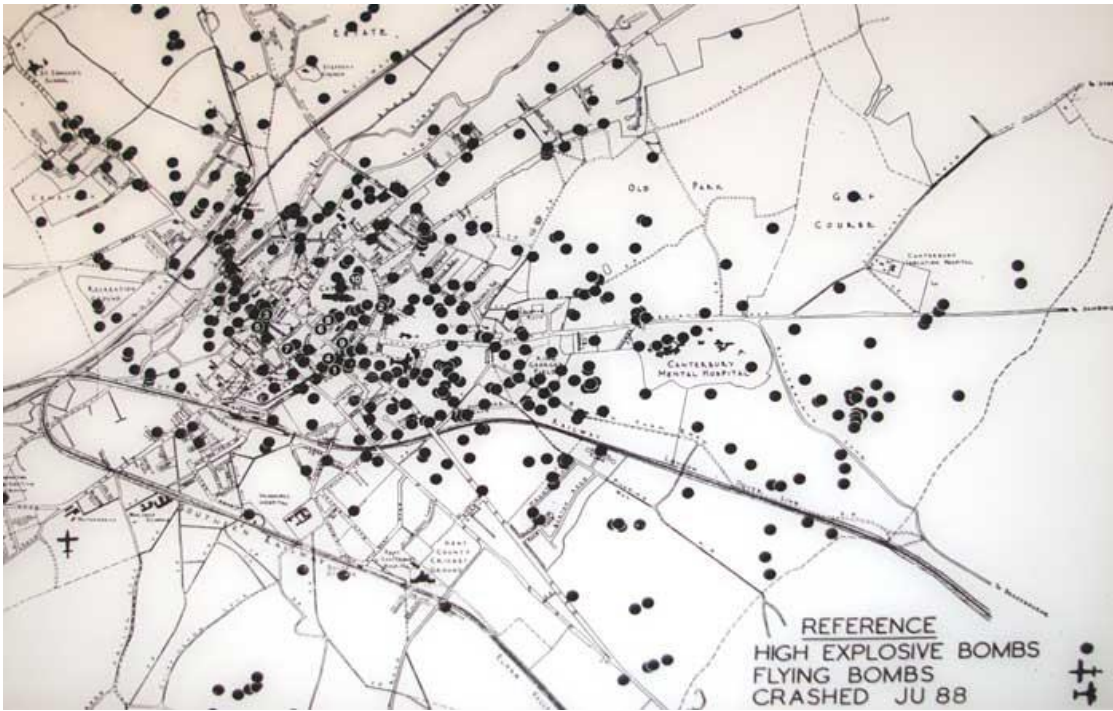
Butler, Derek (1989) *Canterbury in old photographs*, Budding Books

Crampton, Paul (1992) *Canterbury before the Blitz*, Meresborough

Crampton, Paul (1993) *Canterbury after the Blitz*, Meresborough

Rootes, Andrew (1980) *Front line county*, R Hale

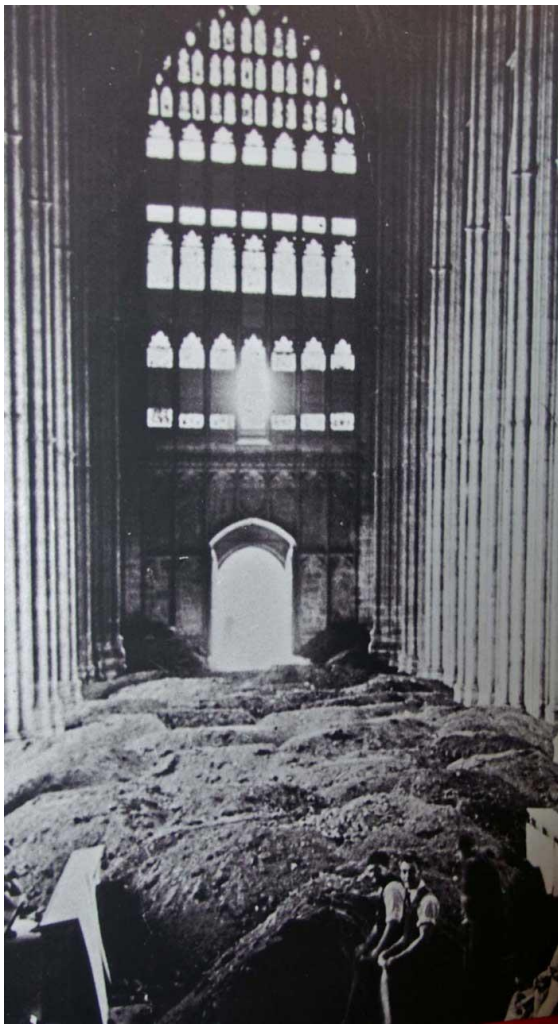
Whiting, Charles (1987) *The Three Star Blitz*, Leo Cooper



1 Map of World War II enemy bombing (Museum of Canterbury)



2 Aerial view of the results of enemy bombing (Derek Butler 'Canterbury in old photographs')



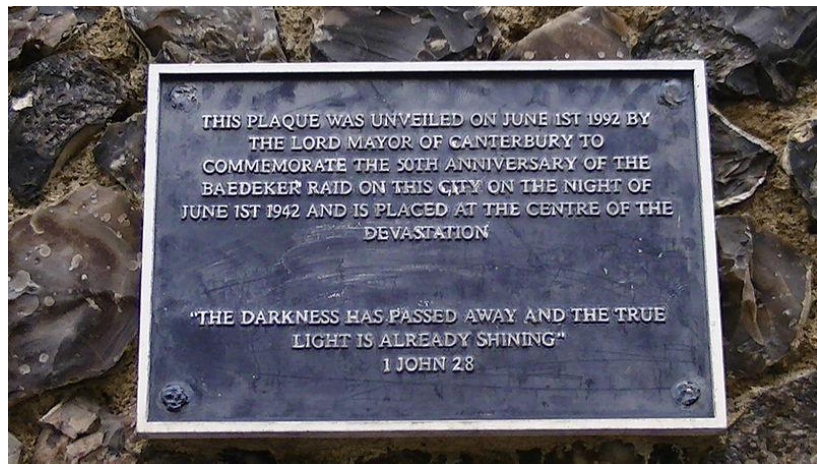
3 Cathedral nave (Museum of Canterbury)



4 Burgate Street



5 St George's Street (Museum of Canterbury)



6 St George's church tower