

THE TRULY HORRIFIC HISTORY OF DUNFERMLINE ATHLETIC FOOTBALL CLUB

PART 5: HOW DUNFERMLINE ATHLETIC ADVANCED THROUGH WORLD WAR TWO

When the Second World War broke out in September 1939, it looked as if the football club, along with much of the population, would be evacuated to somewhere less likely to be attacked by enemy aircraft.

The Rosyth naval base and large air force and army headquarters nearby meant that Dunfermline found itself as a good target for large scale bombing. As a result, players' contracts were cancelled and the army took over East End Park.

In the event, it proved not to be so bad, and gradually friendly football matches returned with visiting players asked to play, but there were no leagues or cups to be played for until after the end of the war in 1945.

A visiting team from Glasgow Rangers saw a request from the management of Dunfermline Athletic "The Management request that all spectators carry their gas masks".

Six weeks into World War II, on 16 October 1939, the first air attack over Britain took place, above the Firth of Forth near North Queensferry. Nine German planes took part in the raid, which their crews soon discovered was at the extreme limit of their bombers' range.

Anti-air-raid gunners on the Forth were engaged in a gun-drill at the time, and quickly had to exchange their dummy ammunition for live as the German planes appeared overhead.



Crowds gather round one of the downed Heinkels

The Germans' target was the Royal Navy fleet and base at Rosyth. They damaged three boats: the light cruiser HMS Southampton and two cruisers, HMS Mohawk and HMS Edinburgh.

Supermarine Spitfires of 603 Squadron 'City of Edinburgh' were quickly scrambled from Turnhouse Airfield, as was 602 'City of Glasgow' Squadron based at Drem in East Lothian.

They shot down two German Heinkel planes over the Forth and a bomber off the May Island. The crew of a local fishing boat picked up two German survivors. These were the first enemy aircraft of the war to be brought down over Britain. (Old footage: <http://bit.ly/historyparsheinkel>)

Though the Forth Rail Bridge was not targeted during this raid, many passengers on a train crossing at the time thought they were the target.



A Second World War gas mask. Imagine trying to eat your bridle through that!

Want to know more? <http://bit.ly/historypars5>