

Goodison Under Attack!

Merseyside was badly hit by enemy air raids during the Second World War, which peaked during the May Blitz of 1941. However, the bombing had begun the previous summer, with attacks increasing during September 1940. On the night of 18/19 September, several bombs landed in the Everton and Walton area, including Gwladys Street, causing serious injury to nearby residents while also damaging the Gwladys Street Stand. In Bullens Road, a bomb dropped in the school yard opposite, badly damaging the exterior wall of the stand, while also perforating the roof. A third bomb hit the outside of the practice ground (to the rear of the Park End Stand) demolishing the surrounding hoarding, and blowing out windows in houses in Goodison Avenue and Walton Lane.

On Saturday, 21 September, an Emergency Meeting of the Board was convened at Goodison, where it was resolved to call in Archibald Leitch's company* to give a valuation of 'the complete renewal of damaged properties, and that a claim should be forwarded to the War Damage Claims department within the prescribed 30 Days' – thereby passing costs onto the government. They envisaged this would cover 'the demolition of a large section of the New Stand outer wall in Gwladys Street; destruction of all glass in this Stand; damage to every door, canteen, water and electricity pipe and all lead fittings; and the perforated roof in hundreds of places.' Also included was the damage to Bullens Road, the window damage to the Goodison Avenue and Walton Lane properties, plus the practice ground hoarding. The club secretary had already done his homework, and estimated the cost of this extensive damage at about £1,500.

Due to wartime restrictions, no report appeared in the local news, but a photograph of the damaged Bullens Road outer wall appeared two days later, described as 'The rear of the stand of a well-known football ground in north-western town', still keeping to war-time anonymity. Detailed news of the damage was even kept from Everton fans who were due to attend Goodison only three days after the bombing for a first team match against Chester in the newly organised war-time Northern League. The game went ahead with no reference at all to the state of the stands - the match reports later concentrating instead on Tommy Lawton's sixteen-minute hat-trick in a 4-3 victory. However, this was to be no full-to-capacity 70,000 attendance, later witnessed at several post war games, as government war-time restrictions also prevented the gathering of large crowds, which included football grounds, and many regular fans were already called up or engaged in war work. Crowds were limited to 8,000 in evacuation areas, and 15,000 elsewhere, although this was gradually relaxed as the government acknowledged the importance of the game as recreation for the working man. Attendances of around 5,000 at Goodison and Anfield became the wartime norm. No doubt modern Health & Safety measures would see the ground closed until repairs were completed. Different times indeed.

[*Archibald Leitch designed stands or full stadiums at over 20 football grounds in the UK and Ireland between 1899 and 1939, including parts of Goodison and Anfield. He lived in Formby and died in 1939].

Mike Royden, Everton Heritage Society



The rear of the stand of a well-known football ground, which was damaged during an air raid on a North-West town the same night.

Emergency meeting held at Goodison Park, Liverpool.
Saturday, September 21st 1940.

Present - Messrs W. C. Gibbins (Chairman), D. C. S. Boulter, W. R. Nicholson & Co.

War
 Damage

The Directors inspected the damage done by enemy action on the right of the 18th street, & it was agreed that the Secretary make arrangements to have necessary repairs made.

It was decided also that Messrs A. Leitch be instructed to value the cost of complete renewal of damaged properties & that a claim should be forwarded to the War Damage Claims department within the prescribed 30 Days.

The damage referred to included the demolition of a large section of the best Stand outer wall in ^{the} Gladys St; destruction of all glass in this Stand; damage to every door, canteen, water & electricity pipe & all lead fittings; perforated roofs in hundreds of places.

On Bullens Rd side, a bomb dropped in the school-yard had badly damaged the exterior wall of this stand & the roof was badly perforated here also.

A third bomb outside the practice ground had demolished the surrounding boarding & had badly damaged glass in the Goodison Ave. & Dalton Lane property.

The Secretary estimated the extent of the damage at about £1,500.

Confirmed as correct
 W. C. Gibbins
 29/1/41
 Chairman

Emergency Directors meeting 21 September 1940,

recorded in the EFC Minutes Register, Everton FC Collection Liverpool Record Office

GOODISON UNDER ATTACK!



Merseyside was badly hit by Second World War air raids, peaking during the May Blitz of 1941.

A few months earlier, on the night of 18 September 1940, several bombs landed in the Everton and Walton area. One hit Gwladys Street, causing serious injury to nearby residents, and damaging the Gwladys Street Stand.

A further bomb dropped in the school yard, badly damaging the exterior wall of the Bullens Road stand, while also perforating the roof. A third bomb hit the outside of the practice ground (to the rear of the Park End Stand), demolishing the surrounding hoarding and blowing out windows in houses on Goodison Avenue and Walton Lane.

Two days later, with Everton due to play Chester in the newly-formed Wartime League North, an emergency board meeting was convened. It resolved to call in Archibald Leitch's company (which had constructed three of Goodison's stands) to give a valuation of 'the complete renewal of damaged properties for submission to the War Damage Claims department within the prescribed 30 Days' - thereby passing costs onto the government.

They envisaged this would cover 'the demolition of a large section of the new stand outer wall in Gwladys Street; destruction of all glass in this stand; damage to every door, canteen, water and electricity pipe and all lead fittings; and the perforated roof in hundreds of places.' The claim also

included damage to the Bullens Road Stand and nearby properties. Club secretary, Theo Kelly, estimated the cost of this extensive damage to be about £1,500.

Due to wartime reporting restrictions, nothing appeared in the local news, but a photograph of the damaged Bullens Road outer wall surfaced two days later (see above), described cryptically as: 'The rear of the stand of a well-known football ground in a north-western town'. Match reports of the Chester fixture made no reference to the state of the stands - concentrating instead on Tommy Lawton's 16-minute hat-trick in a 4-3 victory.

However, this was to be no full-to-capacity attendance as government war-time restrictions prevented the gathering of large crowds. At football grounds, crowds were limited to 8,000 in evacuation areas, and 15,000 elsewhere, although this was gradually relaxed as the government acknowledged the importance of the game as recreation for the working man.

Attendances of around 5,000 at Goodison and Anfield became the wartime norm. No doubt modern health and safety measures would see the ground closed until repairs were completed. Different times indeed!



By Mike Royden
(EFC Heritage Society)