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Last May, Belfast City Council agreed my proposal to organise events to mark the 75th anniversary of the Blitz. These were put in train and are happening this week. The scale of the Belfast air raids on 15 April and 4 May 1941 left a huge scar on the city, physically and psychologically. But the impact was silent, not well transmitted to the next generation, and never adequately commemorated. Arrangements for a permanent memorial in City Hall grounds to the 1,000 dead are still being taken forward in association with Northern Ireland War Memorial in Talbot Street.

Like most born after the war, we have family stories of 1941. In my case, I know our house in east Belfast had an incendiary bomb on the roof, others in Earlswood Road were destroyed in the high explosive raid on Easter Tuesday, my sister was evacuated to Newcastle, my mother took, literally, to the hills in the following weeks as did thousands of others, while my father was on duty throughout in the Home Guard. But there are few now who have actual memories of those terrible two nights. By commemorating the 75th anniversary we have one last chance to hear witness accounts before the worst and most concentrated horror the city has ever experienced passes entirely into history.

In memory of the dead, I would urge as many as possible to come to St Anne's Cathedral in Donegall Street this Sunday at 3.30 p.m. for the joint civic memorial service with St Patrick's.

Jeffrey Dudgeon (Cllr)

[About 150 unidentified Protestant victims are buried in a mass grave in the City Cemetery and some 35 unidentified Catholics in Milltown Cemetery. Many hundreds of others who were identified are buried there and elsewhere. Some were vapourised and nothing was recovered.]