

Emily and Irene Thompson, blitz victims d 4 May 1941

Over 80 (numbers vary) people died in the 'Barrow Blitz' of April & May 1941, with Newland St, Hall St, Union St and Vernon St being particularly affected. Some died in the shelters built for their safety. While the bombers were aiming for the docks, steelworks and shipyard, plus the railway which served the industries and circled the town, many jettisoned bombs over the suburban parts of the town.



TO THE MEMORY OF
EMILY IRENE THOMPSON
AGED 40 YEARS
AND HER DAUGHTER
IRENE MAVIS
AGED 4 YEARS
DIED BY ENEMY ACTION 4TH MAY 1941
ALSO HER HUSBAND
JAMES WILLIAM
DIED 3RD NOVEMBER 1953
AGED 57 YEARS

Many of the news accounts of the funerals made no mention of the cause of death. Due to censorship, headlines in the local paper simply mentioned 'Bomb Damage in North-West Town'. This would certainly not fool local readers, and probably no-one else either.

The Thompson family lived at 30 Hill Road, which is where mother and daughter died on the night of 4 May 1941. Local historian Bryn Trescatheric's book *The Barrow Blitz* (Dock Museum 2009) quotes Mrs E.A. thus: *My father was G.H., owner of a drapery warehouse, and we lived at 54 Hawcoat Lane. On the night of Saturday, 3 May when the sirens sounded my father and I were on a fire watching rota and had to make contact with Mr. H. who lived at 38 Hawcoat Lane. As we were leaving the house I had to go back to get my grey firewatching tin hat, my father said he'd go on and I was to catch him up. When I returned to the front door I saw large objects hurtling through the sky. I rushed indoors and there was a terrific explosion. My father and Mr. H. were both killed. Later that night a land mine floated over our house and landed in Hill Road, killing Mrs. T. and her younger daughter. We were told it would be safer to leave our house and go to the shelter inside Vickers Sports Ground.* (p22)

From the CWGC website we can learn that G.H. was George Hemingway, while Mr. H. was Arthur Howard Heath, a wine & spirits merchant, who contrary to the above is listed as living at 34 Hawcoat Lane.

Others who died on Hill Road were Mr & Mrs Hudson, at no. 26, while 2 died at 91 Hawcoat Lane, Kathleen Barker, aged 21, and Noel Lupton, aged 42, who may have been a lodger and/or a relative.

In the **1939 Register** the Thompsons are already at 30 Hill Road, Barrow, where James W. Thompson (DoB 16 June 1896), Director, Under-Manager Brewers Wine & Spirits Merchants and Emily I. Thompson (DoB 2 July 1899) live with their child, whose record is redacted. *Apparently records are redacted for 100 years, unless it is proved the person has died. Apparently no-one checks the war death records.*

Emily Irene Pickering (28) married James William Thompson (31), Wine & Spirit Merchant, of 9 Clarence Road, Barrow-in-Furness on 8 November 1927 at St. Barnabas, Mossley Hill, Lancashire.

In the **1911 Census** the Pickerings lived at 75 Beaumont Street, Liverpool. Father George Howard Pickering (49) was a Carriage Builder and he and his wife Catherine Pickering (45) had three sons and three daughters, including the splendidly named Hildegard Muriel Pickering (13) and Emily Irene Pickering (11). The next and youngest child was son Ince Gilbert Pickering (3).

James W. Thompson was part of the Barrow Thompson firm of Brewers, Wine & Spirit Merchants who have a large vault in Barrow Cemetery (see <https://furnessstoriesbehindthestones.co.uk/stories/the-thompson-family-vault/>) and was baptised 26th July 1896 at Heapey, Lancs.