

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

April 11, 1942.

TO Art Editors
City Editors
Photography Editors

Dear Sirs:

You are invited to come or send a representative to a

Press Preview of
TWO YEARS OF WAR IN ENGLAND--
Photographs by William Vandivert

Tuesday, April 14,
2 to 6 P. M.

in the auditorium gallery of
The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 St., New York.

The exhibition will open to the public Wednesday, April
15, and will remain on view through May 10.

For further information please telephone me at Circle 5-8900.

Sincerely,



Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART EXHIBITS WAR PHOTOGRAPHS OF ENGLAND

TAKEN BY AMERICAN

Two Years of War in England, an exhibition of photographs by William Vandivert, staff photographer for LIFE Magazine, opens at the Museum of Modern Art Wednesday, April 15. The exhibition has been arranged by the Museum's Photography Department, under the direction of Beaumont Newhall, and will be on view through May 10.

These seventy-one photographs by Mr. Vandivert include sequences on the opening day of London's Big Blitz, September 7, 1940. They show a series of pictures taken of a convoy off the east coast of England when Mr. Vandivert spent three days on a corvette in the convoy. Another sequence was taken at a night fighter station on May 10, 1941 when the R.A.F. rolled up its biggest score: thirty-three German raiders brought down that night. But the most striking picture in the entire exhibition is a single photograph of a little old woman warming her hands over a dying incendiary bomb in the pale morning hour after a London night of terror by bombs and flames.

Mr. Vandivert, who was born and has lived in or near Chicago most of his life, has been a staff photographer on LIFE for five years. In December 1938 he was sent by LIFE on his first trip to Europe. He crossed on the Queen Mary. In December 1941, accompanied by the English wife he had married over there, he returned to this country on a Norwegian tanker sailing in convoy and escorted most of the way by American destroyers. He arrived home just one week before Pearl Harbor and is now covering LIFE assignments on American war work.

Some of the picture stories Mr. Vandivert took while he was in Europe and England were the Windsors in Paris; Easter Sunday (1939) Occupation of Albania by Mussolini; Last Air Pictures of Holland Defenses, June 1939; Paris in Color, August 1939; Evacuation of London Children, September 1, 1939; Minesweeping with the Grimsby Trawlers.

From the photographer's point of view his most spectacular exploit in getting a pict^{ure} story was in the spring of 1940 when he spent thirteen hours on coastal convoy with the R.A.F. five hundred miles out over the Atlantic. While taking this story one of his

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devices was to fly in the rear turret of a Blenheim bomber. He swung the turret as a gunner would but used his camera instead of a gun to shoot at three R.A.F. Spitfires as they made mock dive attacks on him at five hundred and six hundred miles an hour.

But it is the story behind the pictures which Mr. Vandivert sees when he looks over his photographs: the behind-the-scene stories of what the people said to him, or the little incidents that wove their way in and around the scene while the photographs were being taken. For example, a picture of a cockney air-raid warden leading a ding-dong (sing-song) in a packed air shelter, reminds Mr. Vandivert of the bomb that crashed so near above during that song that it rippled the street which was their roof. The warden and photographer dashed out as the people in the shelter continued singing. Two blocks away in the dim moonlight was a gray blur of dust covering a ragged heap of timber and a huge crater. They dug seven living persons out of that shambles. No photographs, but the photograph of the warden singing brings the other scene most vividly to mind.

Most of the photographs in the exhibition were taken with either Contax or Leica cameras. In addition, Mr. Vandivert's equipment included Rolleiflex, a 3/4-4 1/4 Speed-Graphic with a battery of lenses which also fit a Linhof View Camera of the same film size. These with synchronized flash and a couple of extension lamps comprise his camera outfit. Since mobility was somewhat of a necessity in present-day war photography, Mr. Vandivert hastens to add he never used many of these at once.

In getting out these pictures to send to America to tell the story of London during the daylight bombings, the darkroom staff who had to handle Mr. Vandivert's negatives often worked while bombs were falling in the neighborhood. The darkroom head, a tall, sparse Englishman with a grim determination, would simply clap on his tin helmet and growl, "They can't beat me," and go on working after every blitz bomb dust filled the air and covered everything. Water and electricity were usually cut off until next day or sometimes even for a week. Then they carried water in buckets from where they could find it, but negatives were developed and prints caught Clipper deadlines.