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The bombardment of Scarborough 1914

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By Mark Marsay
Scarborough author



Scarborough was completely unprepared for the attack in 1914

Under the cover of darkness a powerful German naval battle group negotiated the hazardous minefields of the North Sea, its target was the still slumbering north-east coastal towns of Scarborough and Hartlepool.

By early morning the battle group had divided; three battlecruisers steaming north, two battlecruisers and a light cruiser steaming south.

Sheltered from prying eyes by the darkness and a bank of early morning mist they steamed to meet fate.

As the bow of the leading ship pierced the mist, her captain raised his field glasses and surveyed the tranquil beauty of Scarborough's twin bays.

High on the cliffs, north of the town, the attention of three workmen renovating a cottage was caught by the movement out at sea.

Giant naval guns

steaming southward turned northwards and commenced firing again.

The attack lasted some 30 minutes, and the folk of Scarborough suffered greatly, being left to try and save what and who they could as the ships sailed off.

German broadsides

At around nine 'o' clock, Whitby felt the weight of the German broadsides as they steamed past the quiet fishing port heading for a rendezvous with the rest of their battle group who had attacked Hartlepool.

Seven people in Whitby died (although only three were ever officially recorded as having died as a direct result of the bombardment).

This was the first attack on British soil since the start of the Great War and would not be the last. Young men in their droves rushed to their local recruitment offices to 'avenge' Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool.

As Britain mourned her dead and questions were asked in Parliament about the whereabouts of the mighty Royal Navy, Germany struck a commemorative medal of the raids.

In just 30 minutes on that cold December morning in 1914, the Great War had finally become a harsh and bitter reality for the people of Scarborough and Whitby.

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