

## Account of the Whitby Bombardment by Harold Parkin

Harold Parkin was born in 1904 and was 10 years old at the time of the Whitby raid. The St Hilda's Roman Catholic School was a mixed school on Spring Hill and was opened in 1874 under the administration of the Sisters of Mercy (whose convent was on Chubb Hill Road).

*"I was ten years old at the time of the bombardment and still recall it vividly. I attended St Hilda's Roman Catholic School at the time. We were just beginning prayers, at about 9.00am, when we heard the noise of what we thought was thunder. No one had ever heard gunfire before, but a boy shouted, "It's Germans!"*

*The teachers ran to the door to stop us going outside, but they were knocked down and trampled on as we ran out into Windsor Terrace. At that moment a shell went through a gate and smashed through all the cocklofts in the street before emerging at the other end. All the slates were flying from the roofs and into the street. It was a miracle no one was hit. Nearby was a green meadow with cows grazing and around the field (Duck's Field) ran a stone boundary wall. We all crouched behind it and were lucky again as another salvo burst in the field on the other side. Again no one was hurt, but a piece of shell hit the school clock. After about ten minutes the shelling stopped.*

*Then all the children started to run inland. I carried my sister on my back and led my younger brother by the hand. We finished up at Sleights Institute, about four miles away. It was being used as a hospital for wounded Belgian soldiers and I remember them well. There was no khaki then, they had blue uniforms on. They gave us tea and eventually sent us home!*

*One Whitby lad finished up in Pickering, 21 miles away. He came home that night in the guard's van of the train.*

*When we arrived home our parents were frantic with joy as they didn't know what had happened to us.*

*It was a grey morning when they came up to the Rock Buoy and opened fire over open sights with their secondary armament. The next day I had a walk around and saw the damage. The cliff was hit by shells and there were landslides all over. When the tide went down there were unexploded shells laid on the beach, some in pairs. I can still recall the shell holes at Boghall, and the end house of George Street that was hit. They were white brick houses, but they had no white bricks and so patched them up in red. It was only a few yards from where we all crouched behind the wall in Duck's Field. It is the site of the War Memorial Hospital.*

*Looking back I think we were all very lucky indeed!*