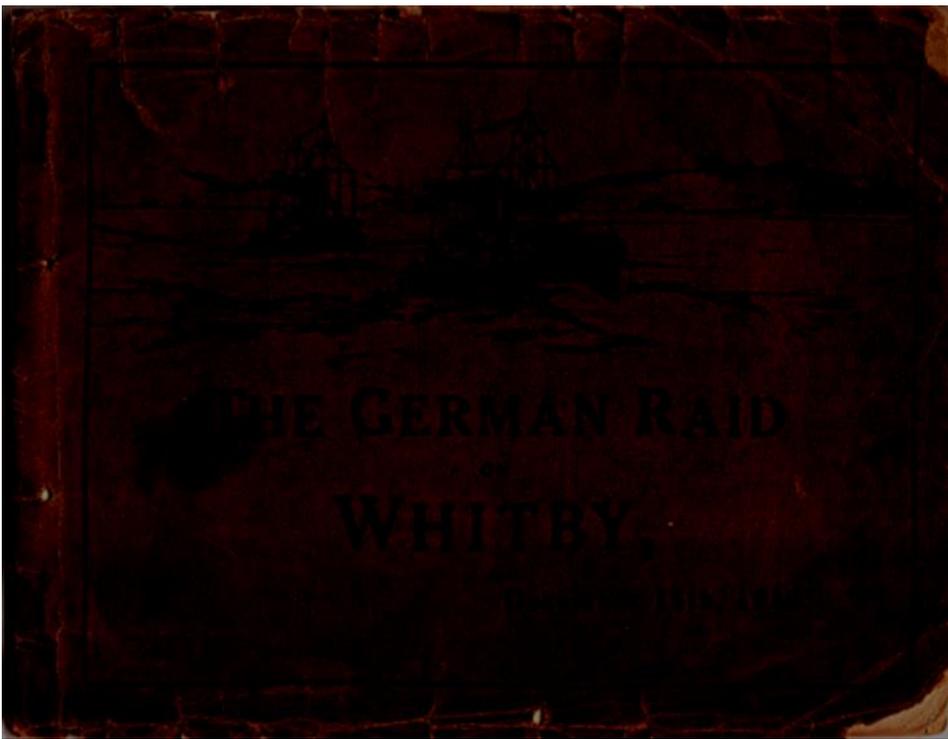




Whitby Abbey. 16th Dec.1914.

**THE WHITBY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL** produced a Pamphlet of **Photographs** showing the damage to the town and giving a lyrical account of the event. Also included was a message from **King George Vth**. *No doubt the **HibbettFamily** duly bought a copy in the summer of 1915, to help raise funds for the bereaved and those who had lost their homes.*



GERMAN RAID ON

WHITBY 16th Dec. 1914. .

**WHITBY. December 16th, 1914. Excerpts:**

‘ Another landmark in history to add to the long list of dates when **Whitby and Whitby’s sons** have played a conspicuous part in the fair pages of our island-story.

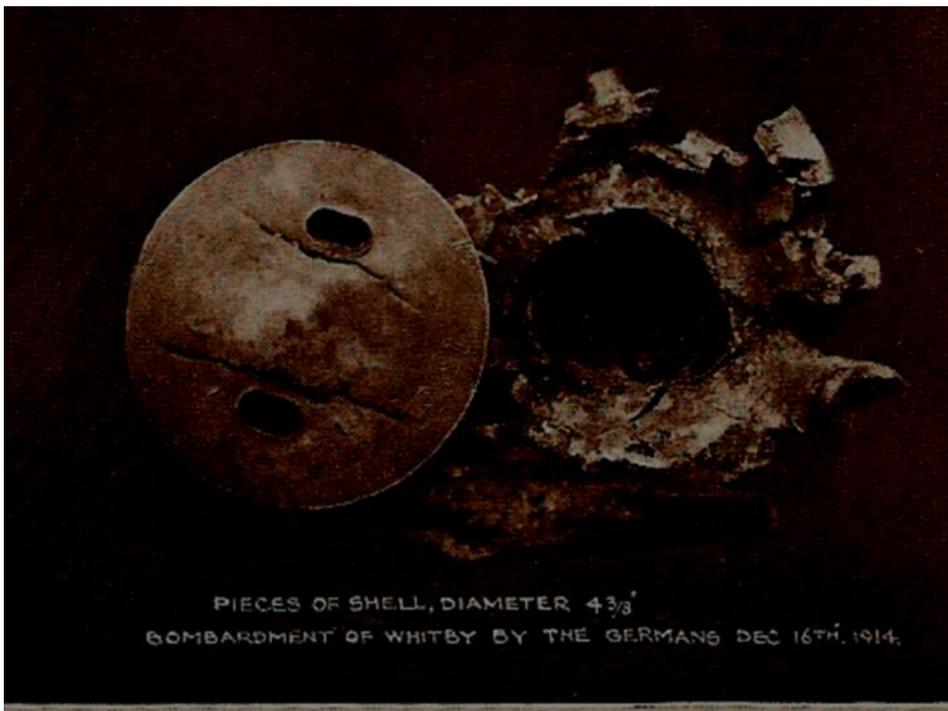
‘ The terrible conflict in the plains of Flanders and in Northern France has already taken a full toll of some of Whitby’s best and bravest; her sailor sons had faced the perils of war in the glorious victory in **Heligoland Bight**, as they had faced – and met, alas! – death in the disaster which overtook the cruisers. ‘**Aboukir**’, ‘**Hogue**’ and **Cressy**’ on the **North Sea** (1).

‘ **Poignant was the grief into which the town was plunged by these losses, but they were far away; war was a distant thing,** and the vagueness a rigid censorship imposed, which permitted us to learn of things happening ‘somewhere in France’, tended but to exaggerate this idea of the conflict as being fought on distant fields and seas, and of the ruination following in the wake of **shrapnel and lyddite** as incidental only to other lands – **certainly not to our sea-girt Britain.**

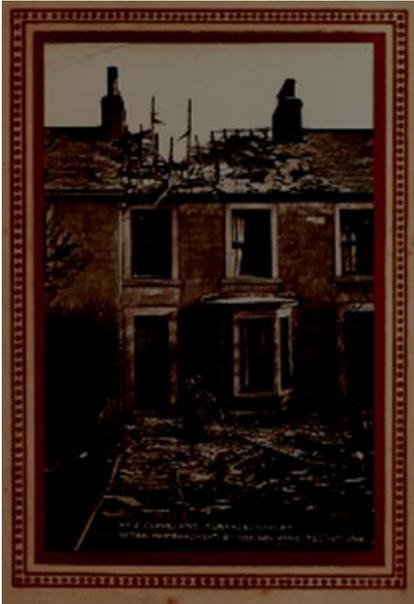
‘ **Truly and in a direct way, Whitby people had been brought vividly to realise the awfulness of the dangers contingent upon the war by the wreck of the hospital ship ‘Rohilla’ (2) at Saltwick** some seven weeks previously, with the **loss of some 90 lives;** but this again was accounted as one of those tragic happenings which must be faced calmly by people so largely concerned with business in great waters. (... it was from near the scene of the wreck of the ‘**Rohilla**’ that the German warships shelled Whitby.)

‘ **Whitby people on the morning of the bombardment, were commencing the day’s routine, and the children** who had but for a few minutes before been thronging the streets, **had assembled in the schools.**

‘ **A few who had leisure were taking their customary walk along the West Pier and the Extension, when from out the haze which overspread the sea there emerged the towering grey forms of two battle cruisers.** The love of the sea, which is inherent in Whitby folk, found natural expression in a word of admiration for the vessels, in the belief they were part of the British North Sea Fleet, **when bang! – shriek!- bang!–** and in an instant it was revealed that they were **enemy ships bent upon the work of destruction and death.**



‘ **German reports of the bombardment gave Whitby as a ‘fortified town’** but the best answer to such preposterous statement is to be found in the fact that, as at Scarborough, **not a single weapon was available to turn upon the Kaiser’s warships.**



‘ **For one moment**, and one moment only, the townspeople were aghast at the **wanton and cowardly attack**, but these feelings

quickly gave way to **fierce indignation at the unwarrantable outrage**.

‘ **Wonderful calmness, considering the circumstances, prevailed**, though on the east side of the town **the poorer folk were naturally very apprehensive of the dangers which threatened their homes**.

‘ **The Coastguard Station on the East Cliff** was soon wrecked, and the telegraph operator stationed there had a narrow escape. Less fortunate was **Coastguard Randall**, a typical product of the British Navy, who was decapitated whilst standing outside his house. . . whilst **Roy Miller, one of the Whitby troop of Boy Scouts**, was struck on the leg by a piece of shell, and so injured that on the following day the limb had to be amputated, the unfortunate sufferer having the honour of being **the first Boy Scout to be wounded in his country’s cause**.

‘ **Directly in the line of fire behind the Coastguard Station stood Whitby’s venerable ruin, the beautiful Abbey of St Hilda, the pride of north-east Yorkshire**, and a joy to the lover of the beautiful architecture of which it remains such a magnificent example. **The German ships could not have left a more lasting reminder of their visit than that caused by the shell which struck the ruined pile**, and destroyed the arch of the beautiful west doorway and the masonry above it, leaving a gap in the west wall. **The Abbey Lodge** also suffered severely from the bursting shells . . . ‘

‘ . . . **Windsor Terrace suffered badly**, and it is remarkable that the **St John’s Church of England School and the Roman Catholic School**, immediately behind, were practically untouched. **The teachers had a nerve-racking experience in dealing with the frightened children**, but they responded nobly to the calls made upon them. . . . ‘

‘ . . . **The fear of the British warships**, rushing with frantic speed to exact vengeance for the destruction wrought also that morning at the Hartlepoons and Scarborough, **caused the raiders to turn with all haste for the shelter of the German Coast after seven minutes firing on an undefended Whitby**, but it is remarkable to realise what **a tremendous amount of damage was done in those few and fateful minutes** . . . ‘

‘ **Death overtook a highly respected townsman, Mr. W.E. Tunmore, a railway rulleymen (3)**, who was struck by a piece of shell as he was, with characteristic devotion to duty, **endeavouring to secure the safety of his horse**. His bravery was brought to the notice of the *National Society for*

*the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, and to his representatives, and to **James Thomas Mitchell**, a youth of sixteen, who exhibited great courage in controlling his frightened horse as it bolted from Wellington Road to Esk Terrace, the silver medal "For Bravery" was awarded by the Society.

‘ The general demeanour of the people of Whitby was characteristically British. . . ‘

*The Pamphlet ended with the following Message from the King:-*

*‘ The people of Scarborough and Whitby have been much in my thoughts during the past week, and I deeply sympathise with the bereaved families in their distress. Please let me know the condition of the wounded. I trust they may have a speedy recovery – GEORGE, R.I.*

‘To this gracious message Councillor **J. Harmston** of the Whitby Urban District Council, sent the following response :

*May it please your Majesty. Lord Lieutenant Sir Hugh Bell (4) yesterday communicated to me your Majesty’s gracious message of sympathy with the people of Whitby in the trying ordeal through which they passed during the bombardment pf the town by the enemy’s fleet. Your Majesty’s gracious considerations for the bereaved and injured is gratefully appreciated by my fellow townsmen.*

*I have the honour to remain your Majesty’s most humble and obedient servant, – J. EGAN HARMSTON, Chairman of the Whitby Urban District Council. ‘*