



A NARROW ESCAPE

The tale of PC Harry Hunter
at the
Bombardment of Scarborough,
December 1914

by

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The time is 8.00am on Wednesday 16 December 1914, and the unsuspecting residents of Scarborough are breakfasting, but not one of them has any notion of what is about to happen. Henry Crossland, of Queen's Parade, Scarborough, is looking out to sea from his window, when he sees three ships. He thought they were British ships, but in fact they were ships of the Imperial German Navy, SMS *Van der Tann*, SMS *Derfflinger* and SMS *Kolberg*, which were part of the Cruiser Squadron commanded by Admiral Franz Hipper. He was under the impression that the spits of fire he could see coming from *Van der Tann* and *Derfflinger* were signals. In fact it was the start of the bombardment of Scarborough. He recalled later that 'a shell came hurtling through the roof of the house. The room was left in intolerable confusion and holes were torn in walls and articles in all directions.'

The bombardment lasted until 9.30am, leaving eighteen people dead, and 200 injured. The first target of the German ships, was the signal station on Castle Hill. Guarding the signal station was a detachment consisting of seven men of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve; a Trooper of the Yorkshire Yeomanry - and PC 27 Harry William Hunter of the Scarborough Borough Police.

As soon as the signal station came under fire, PC Hunter dived into the vaults of the Lady's Well, leaving his cape on the railings. Not a moment too soon, as a near miss from a shell immediately exploded nearby, showering the railings with shrapnel. After the bombardment had stopped, PC Hunter went to retrieve his cape, but found it total unserviceable. However, had he been wearing it, the consequences would have been far more serious.



PC Hunter (with long service chevrons denoting over twenty years service) displaying his cape. A narrow escape indeed. PC Hunter continued on to pension, and died in 1946 in Scarborough, at the grand old age of 78