



Southend Schools Festival of Remembrance



Learning Materials Short Pack



SSFR Project Summary



SSFR is a partnership project between local not for profit company Blade Education and the Leigh-on-Sea branch of the Royal British Legion and is funded by a National Lottery grant of £59,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and contributions from Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Leigh-on-Sea Town Council.

We are very grateful to everyone that has supported this project, especially National Lottery players, as it has allowed young and old to come together to find out about our past and think about what Remembrance means for our future.



SSFR poppy from Belfairs Academy

The Leigh-on-Sea branch of the Royal British Legion has been working in the area since 1937 and recognises the importance of remembering the lessons and sacrifices of the past as well as providing funds and welfare for ex-service personnel in the present. Branch Secretary Bob O’Leary said: “Our small Branch is incredibly proud to be part of a wonderful project that we hope will connect local schools and their pupils to the subject of Remembrance for many years to come. It is very important for us all to remember those men and women who have died and been injured whilst serving their Country.”

In November 2017, 25 schools came together to create a lake of beautifully individual poppies feeding down to a waterfall of more poppies hand made by the children of Southend-on-Sea. With over 5000 children from 25 local schools taking part, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA, plus Beavers and Scouts and other local organisations, SSFR bought our community together to discover and celebrate Remembrance and renew the thanks given to those who gave their lives to protect ours.



Poppy making at Hinguar Primary School



SSFR Poppy Exhibition, Nov 2017

Why The Great War Started



There were 3 main pressures that had built up in Europe during the period of peace before 1914 that made some form of conflict unavoidable. Nationalism was rife, Imperialism was seen as the norm, and Militarism made sure everyone had enough weapons to finish off their neighbours. The spark that set off the box of fireworks was the assassination by Serbian nationalists of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Duchess Sophie in June 1914.

The assassination - the basics

- Sarajevo was in Bosnia, the province that to Serbia's anger, had been annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908.
- Archduke Franz Ferdinand was heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. He was inspecting the army in Sarajevo with his wife Sophie.
- 5 young Bosnian Serbs planned to assassinate Franz Ferdinand as he drove along the main road in Sarajevo.
- The first conspirator who tried to kill Franz Ferdinand threw a bomb at his car. He missed and was arrested.
- The Archduke and his wife escaped unhurt. He decided to abandon the visit and return home via a different route to the one planned.
- No one had told the driver the route had changed. On the way back, therefore, the driver turned into Franz Josef Street, when told of his error, stopped the car to turn around.
- Unfortunately, the car stopped in front of Gavrilo Princip, one of the conspirators, who was on his way home thinking he had failed.
- Princip pulled out a gun and shot at Franz Ferdinand, hitting him in the jugular vein. There was a tussle, during which Princip shot and killed Sophie. Franz Ferdinand bled to death.



Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Duchess Sophie shortly before their assassination.

Christmas 1914 in Southend-on-Sea



In places like Southend and Rochford the first Christmas of the Great War was one of confidence and hope the fighting would be over quickly and that all of our men and women serving overseas would have come home victorious; of course, this didn't happen, but thanks to patriotic propaganda most local people thought the war won.

Apart from the conflict, and the toll it was taking on Southend families whose men



were serving their King and country. There were so many other life-changing developments to take in— the need for women in the workplace, quiet parts of the town had been transformed into part of the war machine by creating arms factories, young men who had not enlisted were being constantly harried to do so. There was also the arrival of wounded service men in the Queen Mary's Hospital, Prisoners of War at the

end of the pier and the refugees from Belgium to swell the local community.

At this stage in the war there would still have been tasty treats ready for Christmas - like plum puddings, as they would have been made months in advance and food shortages were not yet part of daily life in Southend.



For the better off families of Southend the most

popular centrepiece to Christmas dinner would have been a turkey. Made popular by the Victorians over more traditional fare such as game birds or beef.



One thing that was a new feature on the Christmas table of many Southend families was a photograph of a father or brother away fighting in the war. Thousands of local young men joined the army or navy in the first year of the war and a framed photograph in their place at the dining table was all

most families had of their loved ones to celebrate Christmas with.

Southend Zeppelin Attacks



Lighter than air flying machines were successfully developed before aeroplanes. Count Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin was a German General and the developer of the dirigible airship who saw their potential for reconnaissance well before the Great War. In a diary entry dated 25 March 1874 he recorded his first ideas for large dirigibles and a 'Zeppelin' successfully flew for 24 hours in 1906. Civilian airships developed rapidly before the First World War and once it became clear that the war was not going to be over quickly, the German Imperial High Command ordered a bombing campaign of British cities. At 180 metres long, travelling at up to 85 mph and able to hold nearly 2 tonnes of bombs they were responsible for the deaths of nearly 1500 British civilians. The first attacks on the UK civilian population began on the 24th December 1914 when a German Imperial Navy Seaplane dropped 2 bombs on Dover. Over the next several months towns and cities up and down the East coast of England were targeted.



German Zeppelin LZ38



Mrs Agnes Whitwell .

The first major Zeppelin Raid on Southend happened on the 10th May 1915. Zeppelin LZ38 arrived over Southend just before 3am. According to reports of the time the first bomb dropped was aimed at one of the Prisoner of War ships moored off of Southend Pier—fortunately for the several thousand German POWs the bomb missed and LZ38 moved off to hover over Cobweb Corner (now Victoria Circus). She then dropped a string of bombs, mostly incendiaries across the town from east to west.

She continued to Canvey Island but anti-aircraft gun fire from Thames Haven and across the Thames at Cliffe prevented her continuing. LZ38 then returned to Southend and dropped the rest of her bombs. A 60-year-old woman, Mrs Agnes Whitwell, died when an incendiary crashed through the roof of her house in North Road, Prittlewell.

Changing Role of Southend Women



Before the Great War women were expected to get married, stay home and look after the children. Despite the respect held for Queen Victoria, girls were lucky to learn to read and do basic mathematics, mostly, they were taught to cook, sew and if rich enough, play an instrument. Poorer unmarried girls went into domestic service and for upper working class girls, like Ellen Daly or Nurse Bradford, nursing was considered a nobler profession but was still largely frowned upon by mainstream society. While for more academic young ladies teaching might be suitable, either as a governess for a few children in well off family or at a school.



Miss Elizabeth Sumner Bannester

In Southend there were women who challenged these ideas, like Elizabeth Bannester, Southend Council's first female councillor in 1910; 8 years before women were given the vote.

This all changed with the coming of the Great War. The country needed hundreds of thousands of soldiers to fight, usually abroad. Women were considered too weak and delicate to be expected to do this so only young men were encouraged to leave their jobs and join up.

Between 1914-18, over 5 million men marched off to war, which meant that grudgingly, women were accepted into all kinds of professions that they would have been barred from previously—such as possibly the first female tram driver in the country, Annie Overton. Women had to fight very hard in order to achieve ambitions that young people completely take for granted in the 21st century.



Annie Overton Southend's first female Tram Driver

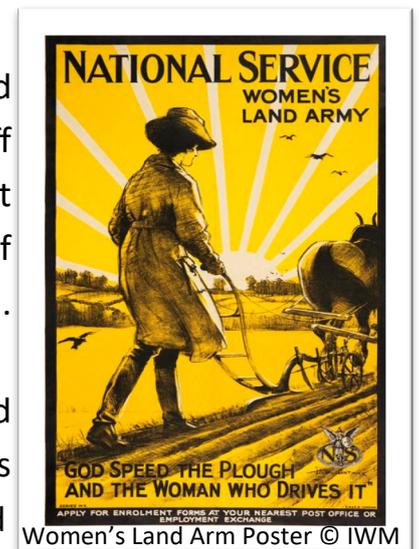
Shortages and Rationing



In Southend during the Great War both men and horses were taken away from farm work, nitrate fertilizers were redirected to munitions production and the fishing industry was hit by the call-up that took thousands of young men to war.

It took some time for shortages to become acute and rationing wasn't introduced until early 1918. Any foodstuff imported from abroad was much more likely to be in short supply due to the German Imperial Navy's campaign of submarine warfare against merchant ships coming to Britain.

Reduced agricultural output forced up prices and encouraged hoarding and in Southend some schools had to close early as they couldn't feed their pupils. The government responded by putting price controls on staple foodstuffs. Food queues became a common sight in streets across Southend.



The government introduced measures to improve the amount of food being produced in the United Kingdom. The first was to form the Women's Land Army—which drafted women from around the country to work in agricultural jobs that had been vacated by men going off to fight. Another measure was the introduction of British Summer Time in May 1916 to maximise working hours in the agricultural day. Also, it was thought that drunkenness was affecting people's work and the Borough Council introduced a closing time for pubs of 6pm—Rochford council however didn't change their closing times and the trains between the towns were said to be heaving with revellers.

In the end Britain introduced rationing in London early in 1918 and extended it nationwide by the summer. The system was supposed to ensure that the food in the country went far enough, and that everyone got a fair share.

Prisoners of War in Southend



At the outbreak of the Great War there were 3 prison ships moored off Southend Pier. The first foreign aliens arrived in Southend on Wednesday 18th November 1914 and they were taken down the pier to the waiting prison ships.

The use of Prison Ships had been raised in Parliament as early as March 1915, focusing on the expense of hiring the ships from the cruise lines for the internment of prisoners of war. Agreement was reached that the use of such ships would cease by the middle of April 1915 but those at Southend remained until after May 1915.

One of the 3 prison ships was The Royal Edward, originally named RMS Cairo and operated as a British Mail Service ship to Egypt. She had accommodation for 1,114 passengers over 3 classes. 1st, 2nd, 3rd class cabins; those interned on board were able to pay for beds in any of the 3 classes of cabin.



The Royal Edward prison ship postcard—Wiki creative commons

At the outbreak of war the ship was leased by the British Government and sailed to Southend to be used as a prison ship. The Royal Edward was almost sunk by the German Army Zeppelin LZ38 on the 10th May 1915 when Southend received its first air raid— a bomb falling just yards from the ship into the sea.



Following the sinking of the passenger liner Lusitania by a German submarine with the loss of 1,198 lives, the government introduced a policy of civilian internment on 13 May 1915, which would affect all adult male enemy aliens between the ages of 17 to 55 and would remain in force until 1919.

Interned German prisoners of war being marched to prison ships in Southend, 1915. © IWM

Queen Mary's Hospital



Originally named the Metropole, the Palace Hotel was built in 1901 and was once the only 5 star hotel on the southeast coast. It had 200 bedrooms, a billiard room and a magnificent ballroom. At the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 the Palace Hotel was seen to be the most favourable site to be used as a hospital for injured service personnel. The owner, Alfred Tolhurst generously agreed that it could be used as a hospital rent free until the end of the war, which he apparently thought would be about 3 months away.



A committee was formed to run the hospital under the presidency of Her Majesty the Queen, and sufficient money was subscribed to thoroughly equip and furnish it. A visitor from the British Journal of Nursing described it as “Close to the sea dotted with fishing craft, and with wide balconies , on which the convalescents can enjoy the invigorating breezes, it is also a centre of endless interest

to the townsfolk and visitors who congregate below, and deftly throw packets of cigarettes to the men on the balconies above them, who—slings and bandages notwithstanding—never fail to catch the gifts thus showered upon them.”



There were 7 wards—Mary, George, Albert, Elizabeth, France, Japan and Russia. The largest, Mary, was formed from the lounge, dining room and ballroom of the Palace Hotel. The dining room and ballroom were reported to have “fine sea views and indeed when the sun sets, the sea seems an expanse of molten gold.”

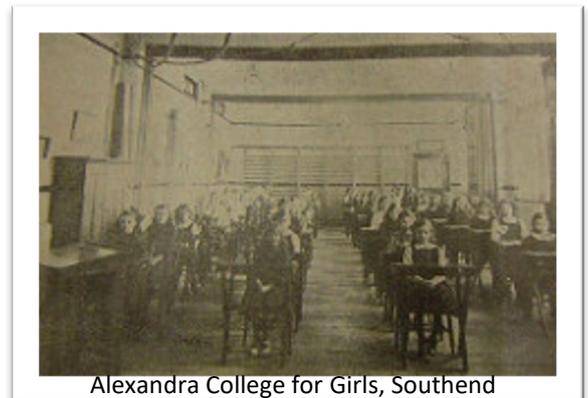


At School in Southend



Schools were very different in 1914. Most schools were divided into same sex classes with the girls only being taught by female teachers and the boys by male. At the start of the war the school leaving age was just 12 years old but by 1918 that was raised to 14. Lessons for both boys and girls were mainly in reading, writing and arithmetic but other subjects such as the history of the British Empire were often taught to children if their teacher had an interest.

There were many small private schools around the country, including Alexandra College in Westcliff (pictured right and below) that mainly taught girls aged between 11 and 18, who were from families that lived abroad but wanted their children to be educated in Britain. The Head of the school was Miss Elizabeth Bannester who in 1910 became the first female councillor in Southend—despite women not being able to vote.



Alexandra College for Girls, Southend



The first class of children to attend West Leigh School in 1914.

During the Great War, the school day would have started with prayers and the class singing the national anthem—God Save the King. Younger children would have written on slate boards with chalk or charcoal, while older children would have used paper and pen with ink being kept in an ink well on the front of their desks. One big difference was that if children

misbehaved the school teacher was allowed to use corporal punishment by hitting them on the hand or back of the legs with a cane or a leather strap or a wooden ruler or paddle.

Later in the war, schools in Southend-on-Sea had to close for half of the day because they did not have enough food or fuel to feed and keep the children warm.

The End of the Great War



In the minds of most people, the Great War ended on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, but in fact the war itself did not end until 28 June 1919, when, after months of tortuous negotiations, the peace treaty was signed at Versailles, France.

Of course, for most people in Southend at the time, the news that the fighting had stopped would have been an enormous relief. Church bells were rung and the town celebrated. However on the 11th November 1918 an estimated 11,000 allied soldiers were killed—more than died on D-Day in 1944.

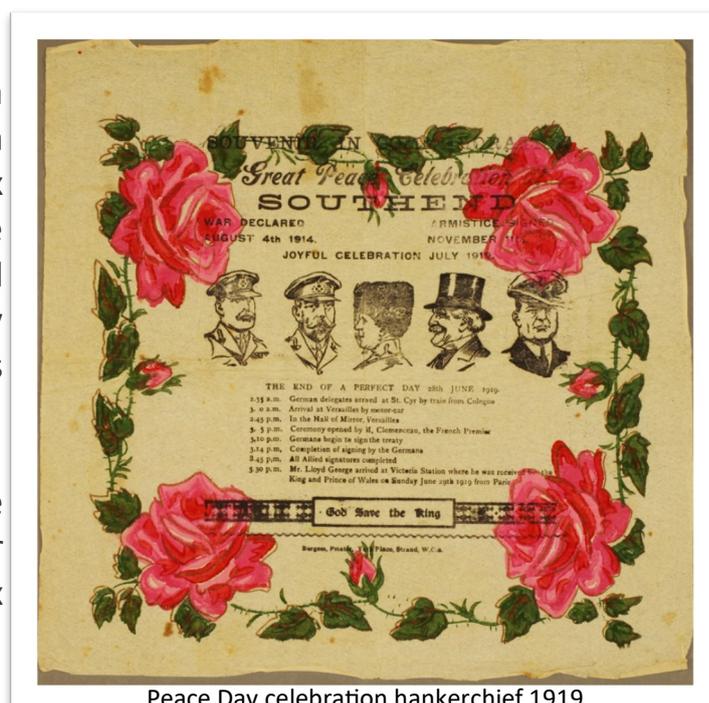
On the 12th of November all of the Southend newspapers—and of course everywhere else proclaimed Peace and that Germany had surrendered.

Over the course of the next few months soldiers would return home and the rationing that had been necessary when allied shipping was being sunk was slowly relaxed. With around 880,000 people killed over the course of the 4 year war many families struggled to make ends meet and with nearly 2 million people injured the sight of disabled ex-servicemen on the streets of Southend became common.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on the 28th June 1919—Peace Day— after long negotiations and it is a recognised fact the treatment of Germany after the Great War led to the conditions that were directly responsible for the 2nd World War 20 years later.

In London, Peace Day was marked by a huge military parade, followed by a firework display in Hyde Park. Essex saw many local celebrations but the most spectacular was a huge naval review off Southend, accompanied by yacht races, swimming competitions and a pageant.

The festivities at Southend were commemorated by this paper handkerchief (courtesy of the Essex Records Office)



Peace Day celebration hankerchief 1919

Southend After the War



Although the Great War was over its effects would last for decades. The role of women had changed and would continue to evolve over the next 100 years. The returning soldiers had seen and lived through things that no one should have to experience and families and children had lost fathers, brothers, uncles and cousins.

Southend had been a tourist destination for many years before the Great War and civil leaders and local businesses hoped to revive the trade. The roads leading into Southend were upgraded to cater for more tourists arriving by bus and new attractions such as the open air swimming pool were provided .



The troops returned slowly to their homes in Southend between 1918 and 1919 with most of the conscripted service personnel home before the end of 1919. Not all of the returning soldiers, sailors and airmen were able to get jobs and although the Southend economy was recovering, the cost of the Great War had nearly bankrupt the country. In 1914 Britain was considered a military and economic superpower but by the end of the decade our international trade had been so badly damaged by the war that 1920/1921 would see the deepest recession in our history.



A postcard photograph of Southend-on-Sea beach in 1919.

However people still wanted holidays and Southend was very well placed to attract the tourism trade from London. Several new cinemas were opened in the town as well as Belfairs Park and its new 18 hole golf course.

The Kursaal was again a popular attraction and Southend Football Club relocated to a pitch inside the grounds of the Kursaal in 1919.

Southend was on the up and there was a feeling of hope for the future.

Southend Stories—Eva Forsdick



Eva Sarah Harriet Guy was born on the 9th June 1900 on the Isle of Wight to parents Austin and Alice Guy. The family lived at Billingham Manor where Austin Guy was a gardener and carpenter. Alice Guy was born and raised in Pagelsham to the North East of Southend-on-Sea, where her family were oyster dredgers.

Alice worked as a Housemaid for a family that took their holidays on the Isle of Wight, where she met Austin and they eventually married and had 3 children—Edward who died in infancy, George and Eva. Before the outbreak of war in 1914 the family moved back to Southend-on-Sea where Eva lived until she was 104 in 2005.



Eva would have left school aged 12 years old and worked in domestic service but when the Great War broke out there were many more opportunities for young women to take on different jobs. From photographs taken at the time and memories from Eva's family we understand that she worked in a Parachute Factory in Essex for the duration of the war.

As children, Eva and her brother George were very close. George was described as a quiet and serious boy and it must have come as a shock when he decided to enlist for the Isle of Wight Regiment shortly after the outbreak of the Great War. At the tragically young age of 18, George was killed in the Gallipoli Campaign on the 12th August 1915. Alice and Eva grieved for the rest of their lives.

While working at the parachute factory Eva met and eventually married Walter Forsdick. Most Saturday nights they would walk from Pagelsham to Southend even though this would take about 4 hours. They were known to be very happy together but they never had any children. Walter died from a burst appendix in his forties.

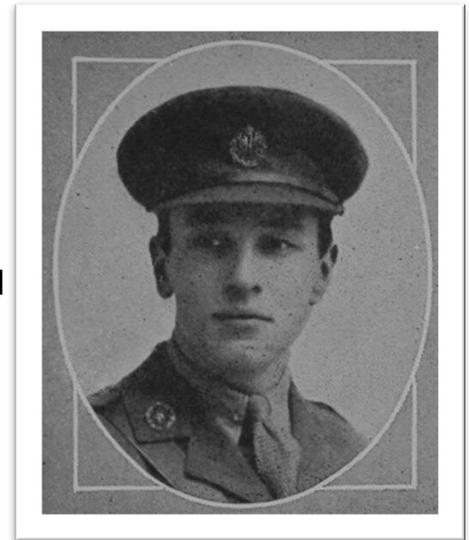
Eva lived in the Roots Hall area of Southend for most of her life. She was devoutly religious, a marvellous vegetable grower and even until she was quite elderly loved to cycle around the town.

Southend Stories—John Young



John Edward Royston Young was the 4th of 7 children born to Mr William Young and Mrs Edith Young. John was born in Streatham and attended Streatham Grammar School before joining the British Bank of Northern Commerce as a Clerk.

John joined the Artists' Rifles ranks in June 1916 and was commissioned as an officer in the Royal Flying Corps in February 1917. On gaining his wings, John was posted to 37 Home Defence Squadron and was guarding the northern approaches of the Thames Estuary and was based at Rochford Aerodrome, now the site of London Southend Airport.



On the 7th July 1917 a flight of 22 Gotha bombers attacked the East End of London in 2 waves causing 57 deaths. This was the first day time attack by the Gothas and the battle is described in several books. 95 British aircraft were sent up to intercept the Gotha formation. The aircraft and the anti-aircraft guns together had little impact, only managing to bring down one of the enemy before they escaped over the Channel.

Among those British airmen were JER Young and CC Taylor, who together chased the Gothas out to sea but were brought down either by the combined fire of the Gothas' gunners or by British anti-aircraft gunfire, depending whose reports you believe.

A rescue ship reached the downed aircraft before it sank and they managed to rescue John's navigator and gunner, Cyril Taylor, but he died of his injuries later in hospital in Southend. By the time the rescue boat arrived JER Young had died of his wounds and the rescuers were unable to recover John's body before the Sopwith Strutter 1 and 1/2 went down into the sea.

John's mother had died some years before and John's Father, William Young asked that a Commonwealth War Grave memorial be erected at the North Road Burial Ground in Westcliff to honour and remember his son.

Southend Stories—Elizabeth Bannester



Elizabeth Sumner Bannester was born in the village of Barling, Essex in 1864.

From census records her family were farmers who lived at 'The Cottage', Barling. Elizabeth lived with her parents and grandparents at The Cottage.

Some years later, Miss Bannester gained a place at London University where she studied the Arts and in 1892 was awarded a Bachelor of Arts Degree. This was an amazing achievement at this time.

The 1901 census has Elizabeth Bannester listed as the head of household at 5 Avenue Road, Prittlewell and her occupation as Private School Mistress.



In 1910 Elizabeth was elected to Southend Council for the Westborough Ward - the first time a lady had been elected for the council.

By 1911 Miss Bannester is listed as the Principal of Private School at Alexandra College, Westcliff-on-Sea. The college was a private school for young ladies.

Alexandra College for Girls was in Crowstone Road, Westcliff-on-Sea and the building that housed the school is still there today.

The college educated the daughters of well off families who were serving abroad in positions for the British Empire or British Military. On the 1911 census her pupils are listed as having been born in Paris, Turkey, Asia Minor, India and Guinea.

Sadly her story comes to an end shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914 as Miss Elizabeth Bannester died on the 2nd December 1914. She was just 50 years old.

We know that she left £521 6 shillings as a notice for probate was posted naming Rose Brown as her executor - Rose seems to have been a long time colleague as she was listed on both 1901 and 1911 census records as living at the same address with the same occupation.

Southend Stories—George Guy



George was born on the Isle of Wight in 1897 and his family lived at 37 Elm Grove, Newport, IoW. George volunteered to join the Isle of Wight Rifles in 1915 when he was only 18 years old.

In April and May 1915 George's unit was stationed in Suffolk and then in the Watford area and on 30 July 1915 the Isle of Wight Rifles sailed from Liverpool aboard the RMS Aquitania to join the fighting at Gallipoli.

The 163rd Brigade, consisting of the 1/5th Suffolk 4th & 5th Norfolk, & George's 1/8 Hampshires (I.W.Rifles) were landed on 10 August 1915 in order to attack the Turkish positions on Anafurta Ridge.

Lieutenant General Frederick Stopford was commanding the Suvla Bay operation. The beach that the Isle of Wight Rifles landed on led to a plain overlooked by a range of hills. Lt Gen. Stopford - who set up his command post in a sloop – HMS Jonquil – anchored offshore - took the beaches but waited whilst stores were landed before occupying the empty hills.



By the time he decided to move his troops into the hills the Turks had filled them full of artillery and infantry.

On 12 August 1915 the attack was ordered across terrain varying from thick scrub to abandoned fields, all cut with dried watercourses.

The Allies suffered approximately 18,000 casualties at Suvla Bay and Lt General Stopford was sent home in disgrace.

George Guy died in the attack on Thursday the 12th August 1915, he was 18 years old.

George is commemorated on the Helles Memorial which is found outside the village of Sedd el Bahr on the Gallipoli Peninsular in Turkey.

George is also remembered on the Guy family memorial at the North Road Burial Ground in Westcliff-on-Sea.

Southend Stories—Agnes Whitwell



Agnes Morley was born in Tollesbury on the River Blackwater in Essex in 1857 and in the 1871 census she is listed as being a Servant, so in common with many girls of the age Agnes went into Domestic Service with a well off family.

Agnes married George Whitwell in 1879 in the Rochford district and they had their first of many children the next year, their son George in 1880. In 1881 the family lived in Barling and George Snr was a Carpenter by trade. The couple had lots of children – Alice in 1881, Charles in 1884, Amy in 1885, Frances in 1887, May in 1891, Crispin in 1897 and Ivy in 1901. In 1891 the family lived at 9 High St, Sutton and in 1911 the Whitwell's lived at 120 North Road, Southend-on-Sea.



Agnes Whitwell photo from local newspaper

Early in the Great War, the East coast of England suffered from bombing raids by German Zeppelin Airships. Southend-on-Sea was raided particularly badly several times as the anti aircraft batteries on Canvey and Thames Gateway were able to mass their fire at Zeppelins heading for London and turn them back – towards Southend.

On the 10th May 1915, Zeppelin LZ38 was turned back from an attack on London and proceeded to drop nearly 100 incendiary bombs on Southend.

The attack happened at just before 3am and was witnessed by many people who, after hearing the first explosions, rushed out of their houses to see what was going on.

George and Agnes Whitwell were asleep in their bed at 120 North Road, when an incendiary bomb from LZ38 dropped through the roof of their house and landed on their bed. Agnes was killed instantly but George was able to save himself and his (reportedly disabled) daughter Ivy by jumping out of the first floor window into the garden below – although both were hospitalised by the jump.

Agnes was buried in Sutton Road Cemetery and huge crowds watched the funeral procession. Shortly afterwards enraged by her dead local people attacked the homes and businesses of German or Austrian nationals.



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