



Whitehaven in the Great War (Your Towns and Cities in the Great War)

Ruth Mansergh

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Whitehaven in the Great War covers Whitehaven's immense contribution to the Great War effort; it is thought that 625 Whitehaven men – from a town that, in 1901, had a population of around 21,000 – lost their lives fighting in the war. Meanwhile, on the home front, military service deprived many businesses of their established male workers, and women went to work in what had previously been exclusively male areas of employment.

Notable people written about include recipient of the Victoria Cross Abraham Acton, an Orangeman in Whitehaven; local hero Robert Curwen Richmond Blair DSO, EM; and close friend to Kaiser Wilhelm II, Lord Lonsdale, the famous Yellow Earl who formed his own Pals battalion, the Lonsdales (11th Battalion, Border Regiment), to fight the Germans.

It was often said, 'No bombing Zeppelin or Gothe ever attacked our peaceful backwater during hostilities.' However, on 16 August 1915 a U-boat, U-24, shelled the Harrington Coke works at nearby Lowca. This unexpected attack caught the community off-guard, and during the hour-long bombardment fifty-five shells rained down on the factory and the surrounding area – not one single shot was fired in return.

War memorials to those killed in the Great War have been moved following church closures, however this book acts an practical reference guide to where these memorials stand today. Interesting stories come to light, like that of Baden Powell Thornthwaite, whose name was inscribed on a local grammar school war memorial, who had not died after all, but most likely deserted.

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