

# 20th Century Sparks!

## World War One

### The outbreak of War

**Zeppelin raids, the move to safety and suspicion of foreigners characterised the start of the First World War.**

**On this page and in Brighton and Hove Herald 8th August 1914 and Brighton and Hove Herald 15th August 1914 you can explore memories of how local people responded to the outbreak of War.**



Territorial soldiers at Patcham, accompanied by the company runner with bicycle. Photo taken before the outbreak of the First World War.  
*Brighton and Hove in Pictures*

The war was on. One day in the early evening, we heard a lot of thumping, thudding and bumping. We went out into the street and there in the sky was a huge silver sausage-like thing, going along in the sky and a lot of thuds and bangs with people shouting and screaming. That Zeppelin was brought down by Lt.Sgt. Robertson, who was the first airman to receive the V.C.

*Bert Healy - Hard Times and Easy Terms*

My family lived in a house in Ilford during the early stages of the First World War, and it was not long before my father was called up to serve in the Army. When the Zeppelin air raids started nearby, and one bomb fell on Wanstead Flats Recreation Ground, my mother moved me, my younger brother Ted, and two sisters, Ruby and Doris, to Brighton for safety, to share a rented house in Upper Russell Street with my Aunt Flo and her two daughters.

*Lillie Morgan - At the Pawnbrokers*

The war started at the beginning of the second week of the Sussex Fortnight when the holiday season was in full swing. The Brighton and Hove Gazette announced, "Brighton has resolved to keep smiling."

On the 22nd of August the paper reported that Brussels had been captured by the Germans and also that "Brighton is itself again."

It was hoped that Brighton would attract new fashionable visitors who would be unable to journey abroad in 1915. The shelling of East Coast resorts by German warships made people shift their holidays to the SouthCoast, and Zeppelin raids on London meant that Brighton was a safe haven.

There were fewer day trippers, but Brighton became a fashionable resort for those trying to forget the rigours of war. It had "escaped the terrors existing only a few miles away and its comparative peace and security were the secret of the remarkable influx of people."

*Brighton & Hove Gazette in Blighty Brighton*



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But there were others whose situation in Brighton was not so rosy. The town had always had a large community of foreigners, many Germans and Austrians who were employed in the hotel and catering trades suddenly found themselves to be "enemy aliens", liable to arrest or deportation; their place was taken by French and Belgian refugees. The service industry was disrupted by the outbreak of war causing unemployment; above all the families of men who decided to volunteer who suddenly found themselves without a breadwinner.

The town was filled with members of the royal families and the aristocracy of Britain and Europe, the wives of wealthy industrialists and financiers, with actors, actresses and popular journalists; fashionable Sunday morning parades on the sea front continued... The Brighton Gazette reported, "the tripper element was eliminated" and their commentator confessed he was almost inclined to ask "Is there a war on?"

In fact the name of Brighton became somewhat of a by-word in the popular press as a resort especially frequented by 'profiteers', munition millionaires and other vulgar 'nouveau riche' who rubbed shoulders with the aristocracy in the grand hotels of the town.

*Life in Brighton by Clifford Musgrave in Blighty Brighton*



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### **Brighton & Hove Herald 8 August 1914**

#### LOCAL PRECAUTIONS AGAINST ALIENS

... All aliens have to report themselves at the police station and be registered. The obligation is also placed on all householders to give notice to the police of the presence of aliens in their houses. Such aliens must not travel more than five miles from their place of residence without permission, and must notify any change of address. Except with written permission, aliens must not have in their possession any firearms, ammunition, or explosives. They are prohibited from having more than three gallons of petrol or inflammable substance, from possessing signal apparatus, carrier or homing pigeons, or any motor car, motor cycle, or aircraft. Cipher or secret correspondence is also forbidden. The police have full authority to search any suspected place.

We learn that as many as 600 registrations are expected in Brighton. Aliens were freely registering at the police office yesterday. The German Club in Clarence-square is under strict police supervision, and special note has been taken of all who use it. Brighton & Hove Herald 8 August 1914 in *Blighty Brighton*



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### **Brighton & Hove Herald 15 August 1914**

#### THE BOMB MYTH

One of the most widespread and at the same time one of the most mischievous of the many wild rumours that have been flying about is that bombs have been discovered at the houses of Germans or other aliens in Brighton.

This is a lie that should be nailed to the counter at once. We have the express authority of the Chief Constable for saying that no bombs or explosive material of any kind have been found in any house in Brighton.

The police have been deluged with communications about supposed spies, bombs, illicit wireless telegraph apparatus, and so on. They have investigated every complaint, and they are able to state positively that all are the product of excited imaginations.

A supposed spy has been arrested, as is shown elsewhere; and certain men whose movements were not readily explained have been put to rigorous inspection. The result is that nothing of an alarming character has been found. The public can be absolutely assured on the point. If you have suspicions of any one, tell the police by all means. But do not announce your suspicions to the world at large as facts.

..we are not at war with the individuals of the German colony in Brighton - harmless, respectable men and women finding themselves, by no fault of their own, at war with the country of their adoption, and torn with grief and anxiety knowing not what the morrow may bring forth. Do not let us libel them.

Brighton & Hove Herald 15 August 1914 in *Blighty Brighton*