



Southend-on-Sea in the Great War (Your towns and cities in the great war)

Frances Clamp

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'A fortified place'. This is not the way we usually think of Southend-on-Sea but it was the description used by the Germans during the Great War. Built beside the Thames Estuary and with the Shoebury Garrison to the east, Rochford Aerodrome to the north and the longest pleasure pier in the world to the south, it was regarded as a legitimate target. During the war the pier was used as an embarkation point for British soldiers about to be transported to France.??Southend-on-Sea in the Great War looks at the lives of the ordinary people of the town who coped with the new and unexpected problems that arose. A number of large hotels became hospitals for wounded military. The imposing Palace Hotel became the Queen Mary Royal Naval Hospital and it even received a visit from the Queen herself. The role of women changed. Some worked in munitions factories or cleaned trains whilst others supported the local hospitals. They coped with the constant fear of the loss of loved ones and dealt with ever increasing food shortages.??Bombs were dropped on the town, the worst raid being in August 1917 when thirty-two people were killed and forty-four injured. Learn more about this tragic event and other accounts of the impact of the Great War on Southend-on-Sea in the pages of this fascinating book.??Southend was at the sharp end of activity during the First World War. Bombed by Zeppelin and Gotha, it also received some of the first German POWs and acted as a camp for soldiers departing to the trenches across the Channel. This book explores how the experience of war impacted on this Coastal Town, from the initial enthusiasm for sorting out the German Kaiser in time for Christmas 1914, to the gradual realization of the enormity of human sacrifice the families of Southend were committed to as the war stretched out over the next four years. ??The Great War affected everyone. At home there were wounded soldiers in military hospitals, refugees from Belgium and later on German prisoners of war. There were food and fuel shortages and disruption to schooling. The role of women changed dramatically and they undertook a variety of work undreamed of in peacetime. Meanwhile, men serving in the armed forces were scattered far and wide. Extracts from contemporary letters reveal their heroism and give insights into what it was like under battle conditions.

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