AN EPISODE OF WAR

An account of the German naval bombardment of Scarborough, 16th December 1914
On December 16th, 1914 at 8:00 am the town of Scarborough was shelled by two German destroyers in the South Bay, killing 17 people and wounding 80.

Mrs George Rowntree, a Quaker woman who lived with her husband in 'Riseborough' near to Oliver's Mount, wrote an account in her journal of the attack when over 500 shells fell on the town.

This booklet tells her story in pictures, of that frightening twenty minutes.

The full story is available on-line at http://www.guise.me.uk/rowntree/george/reminiscences/chapter13.htm
AN EPISODE
OF WAR

TAKEN FROM
MRS ROWNTREE'S DIARY
WEDNESDAY, 16TH DECEMBER 1914

7:50 AM, A DARK FOGGY MORNING IN OUR DEAR OLD TOWN OF SCARBOROUGH

BREAKFAST, THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, LETTERS TO READ WITH NEWS OF THE WAR

A READING AND A PRAYER TO BEGIN THE DAY

I LOOKED THROUGH THE CURTAINS AND SAW OUR NEIGHBOUR MR TURNER’S HOUSE ‘DUNOLLIE’ HIT BY A SHELL

A MASS OF SMOKE AND DEBRIS ROSE INTO THE AIR
YET MORE FIRING. THE NOISE WAS TERRIFIC.

HILDA LOOKED OUT AND SAW NEXT DOOR’S MAID WASHING THE FRONT STEP. WE LAUGHED, AND THE TENSION BROKE.

THE MAIDS RAN IN, AND NEWHAM FROM THE GARDEN. WE WATCHED THE SHIP’S FIRING IN THE BAY.

THREE MINUTES LATER THEY TURNED AROUND. I POURED THE TEA.

BUT MORE FIRING AND WE MOVED TO THE PORCH FOR FEAR OF FLYING GLASS.

SWISH, SWISH, SWISH AS THE SHELLS FLEW OVER.
OUR DEAR NEIGHBOURS' HOMES HIT AND BADLY DAMAGED

WE STAYED IN THE PORCH FOR A LONG TIME WHILE SHELLS EXPLODED ALL AROUND

AT 8:25 AM THE SHIPS LEFT THE BAY

AT 10 O'CLOCK THE SUN BROKE THROUGH. THOSE 20 MINUTES SEEMED LIKE HOURS
IN THE TOWN, FEARING INVASION, MANY LEFT. THEY FLED ALONG THE YORK ROAD

THE TRAINS WERE FULL OF RICH AND POOR

TWO LADIES RAN OUT, THEIR LONG HAIR DOWN THEIR BACKS

THEIR FALSE TEETH LEFT ON THE BREAKFAST TABLE
A LADY WORE HER BEST SILK DRESS NOT TO LEAVE IT FOR THE GERMANS

ONE MAN CARRIED HIS CHRISTMAS CAKE UNDER HIS ARM

ONE MAN RAN DOWNSTAIRS WITHOUT HIS TROUSERS...

...AND SENT HIS WIFE BACK FOR THEM

A LITTLE DOG RAN IN...

...AND HID IN A DARK CORNER OF SCALBY LOW HALL
QUEEN MARGARET’S SCHOOL MARCHED THREE MILES TO SEAMER CARRYING A SICK TEACHER WITH THEM AND A SUPPLY OF BISCUITS

THEY SAT ON A BANK AND WERE BROUGHT BREAD AND A HOT DRINK BY THE VICAR

SO MANY PEOPLE LEFT THEIR HOMES. AS I WRITE, IT IS CHRISTMAS DAY, AND THE TOWN IS DESERTED, HOUSES SHUT UP

MANY PEOPLE WILL RETURN, BUT MAYBE NOT UNTIL WE CAN SAY ‘THE WAR IS OVER’
NOTHING CAN REPLACE THE LIVES THAT WERE LOST

BUT WE WHO STAND FOR PEACE CANNOT RUN AWAY, BUT MUST BE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS AND TRUST GOD TO CARE FOR US
THE ILLUSTRATOR

Judith Dobie, who illustrated this account, works for the Visualisation Team in English Heritage drawing archaeological and historical subjects. Judith’s work features in many English Heritage academic publications and guidebooks where her reconstruction drawings in particular help bring the past to life. The story that Judith followed to create this series of images is that of Mrs George Rowntree who lived at Riseborough, a large house on Scarborough’s South Cliff. Her diary account of the bombardment of Scarborough in December 1914 is preserved in the reminiscences that her husband wrote during the winter of 1935-36 for their grandchildren, Elizabeth, Catherine, and Ann Priscilla.