

Sound Mirrors

During the First World War, German Zeppelin airships crossed over the North Sea and dropped bombs on British towns and cities. They often arrived without warning, causing great fear and giving the people below little time to shelter.

The sound mirror was invented to help detect and give an early warning of the zeppelins and other enemy aircraft as they crossed the coast. The mirror was like a big concrete dish, standing upright, shaped a bit like a satellite dish. The mirror projected the incoming sound waves, given out by the engine of the aircraft, onto one focal point in front of the dish. The operator's job was to use a microphone or stethoscope to detect the direction that noise was coming from and where it was likely to be going to. This was a highly skilled job as the operator had to know what the sound of the aircraft was like and be able to distinguish it from other sounds. The sound of an incoming aircraft could be detected up to fifteen miles away.

Some of these sound mirrors can still be seen today. The best examples from the First World War are at Namey Hill near Sunderland and Fan Bay in Kent.

They continued to be used after the war, but as aircraft became faster, sound mirrors were no longer useful as they could not give sufficient warning of an air raid.



THE FIRST WORLD WAR HOME FRONT 1914-18

Belgian Refugees

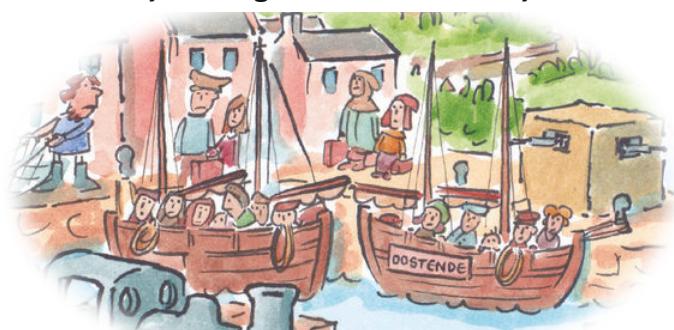
In August 1914, the German Army invaded Belgium. Terrified families became refugees as they fled from their homes to escape the War. Many families travelled on small boats to England.

They were especially welcomed because The United Kingdom was friendly with Belgium. Thousands of people offered homes and jobs to the refugees to help them settle.

Some of the Belgian children went to local schools, and their names can still be found in the school records from that time.

In a few places Belgians opened new shops on the high street, introducing British people to new types of food and other goods.

There was even one new village built called Elizabethville. The village had its own Belgian laws, shops, school and church. The people worked nearby in a huge armaments factory.



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