

Berwick Advertiser, January 15th 1915

LIGHTS OUT

Lights Out! That's the order of the day - or rather of the night, in Berwick just now. And why? There must surely be some very substantial reason why we should abandon a precaution for the safety and convenience of the public which annually costs us somewhere about £800. That it is most desirable and necessary that the streets should be lighted everyone will agree. The £800 is not too much to pay for security against accident anyone who has any knowledge of the cost of compensation claims will admit.

Just the other evening a woman crossing the Berwick Bridge was knocked down by a foot passenger who was in a hurry. Her parcels were scattered about and happily she has now quite recovered from the shock, but it might just as easily have happened that her head might have struck the kerb and serious, if not fatal results have followed. And that is but one of several incidents which have occurred since "all lights out" has been so stringently enforced.

When the first precautions were taken of shading all lights facing the sea, most of us thought that that was all that was necessary, and were content to find our way about in the subdued light. But now the town of Berwick might well be said to be conspicuous by its blackness.

What is the purpose of it all? What are the dangers which threaten us? And can we avert these dangers and still have a little more lights on our streets?

The purpose of it all is that the enemy, who may appear either from under the sea, or over the sea, by submarine, cruiser or aeroplane, may not have the glare of lights from Berwick to guide them to their destination during the night time. Although the enemy can find their way fairly well about by charts or maps, it is obvious that they can do that more easily and swiftly if they have some visible guide such as the lights of a town, which can be seen quite a long distance off.

Cruisers, we are led to believe, will not make any appearance near our coast before morning so that we might have our lights on till midnight so far as they are concerned. But submarines may pop up at any time, and it is wise to give them no aid as to their whereabouts. The same may be said of aeroplanes.

But we do, with all our precautions so far as these have been taken, give the enemy no aid. What is it that the enemy would wish to damage did they arrive off Berwick? The Barracks, Bridges, the Railway Stations and the Gas Works may be considered the chief objectives. The railways, however, are the most brilliant places in the town. Berwick Railway Station sends a glare into the sky which can be seen a long distance away. The well-lit roof of the station would be a lovely target for the aviator's bomb. Shunting operations at Tweedmouth require plenty of light for the safety of the workmen there, and no doubt much has been done to make this plan as non-conspicuous as possible. But if everything has been done that can be done at these places, the fact remains that the extreme darkness of the remainder of the Borough makes the very places the enemy would wish to destroy all the more conspicuous. It is not suggested that the town should again be lit up as usual, but it is suggested that the lighting or darkening of the various places should be taken up in a more scientific and uniform manner. It is quite practicable to shade lights so that the rays are not reflected upward to any appreciable extent, and it would appear equally practicable to prevent all lights from being seen from the sea, at the same time giving us a little more light to guide our footsteps.

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All lights in the Borough are to be reduced to the lowest minimum. The inhabitants are to cooperate, but the Chief Constable has the powers to enforce this.

There are no lights north of the Scotsgate and commercial travellers say Berwick is the worst lit town on the East Coast. Other towns are better lit though they are military centres.

Complaints that the Old Bridge is not lit, but charabancs with bright headlights dazzle pedestrians. Golden Square totally dark as is Bankhill, but they cannot be seen from the sea. Mr Dixon writes—At the Northern Cyclists HQ in Bridge St, you will find that the top two windows, which have no blinds, are lighted by powerful lights, which throw a great light into the sky. It is a menace to the whole town.”

Berwick Advertiser, 29th January 1915

Vehicles with strong headlights are to dim them in areas where street lights are reduced or unlit.

Berwick Advertiser , 26th February 1915

Allan Ward, farm student, West Ord, drove a car with powerful lights over the Old Bridge. Pte John Dunn, Northern Cyclists, was on duty. Yellow paper was then used to dim the lights, but Pte Philip Chesterton said it was still too bright. Case dismissed as effort had been made.

Berwick Advertiser , 16th April 1915

Cyclists are to have a red rear light from now on, all lights in houses and shops are to be invisible from the sea.

Berwick Advertiser , 23rd April 1915

LESS LIGHTS AND ITS DANGER

It is abundantly evident that the Chief Constable is rigorously enforcing the policy of reduced lights in the evenings wherever the illuminant is more pronounced than is consistent with the exigencies of the circumstances. The constable on duty in the principal thoroughfares is conspicuous by the warning visits he pays to the shopkeeper who fails to obscure his lights, and very politely informs him either to extinguish or effectively screen it. The streets of the ancient Borough certainly present a novel if not dangerous aspect as soon as darkness sets in and requires the shrewd experience of a born native to navigate the nooks and lanes of the town. To leave the beaten track recognised by foot passengers or to emerge on to it from the street requires care and circumspection and the writer has already heard of a few dangerous slips in the dark. In such circumstances the responsible authorities might very judiciously consider the laudable idea of following in the footsteps of London, and whitewash the line of kerbstone. A long white line such as this would form a safe and sure mark to the unwary pedestrian using the streets of Berwick after midnight.

Berwick Advertiser , 4th June 1915

A china merchant from Manchester, had his stall light too bright at the market. He had placed an extra black cover on top and a green curtain round the sides. It still shone, even though he put out two lights. He said other towns were happy with this, and because he had done ghis best, only fined 5/-.

Berwick Advertiser , 23rd July 1915

James Cuthbert(son?), butcher of Berwick, did not obscure lights. When called on to do so, said, "You only want something to talk about". Refused to put out lights. Fined 5/-.

Berwick Advertiser , 20th August 1915

William Skelly, failing to obscure lights, door of shop opened. 10/- fine because warned before.

Comment that chapels and churches need to be darkened.

Six other cases including Miss Isa D Skelly at her shop in Church St.

Col Peterkin, of 2/10th RS (Royal Scots), found with lights on in his house. He was going to pull the curtains when he was called to the phone, fined 5/-.

Rev H Henderson of St Mary's Vicarage showing lights, and 3 more cases.

2/Lt Athol A Stuart RS (Royal Scots), not obscuring lights on car in Castle Terr, which was standing at the roadside for at least 45 minutes,. He had tried to stop people running into his car in the dark. Fined 10/-.

Berwick churches are considering changing the times of evening services to meet the demands for obscuring their lights.

Berwick Advertiser , 27th August 1915

Athol Stewart, 2/10 RS, having too powerful lights in his car at Hide Hill. Case dismissed with 5/- costs, but an attempt is made of setting a standard for this offence.

Castle Hotel, lights showing in the dining room, 5/-.

Berwick Advertiser , 3rd September 1915

Laurence Sutherland, transport driver of 2/10 RS for too powerful lights. Case dismissed because of the excellent standing of the RS in residence here.

Berwick Advertiser , 24th September 1915

Dr P Maclagan of Ayton, lights on car too bright. The doctor said the the 7th Welsh Cyclists had allowed his lights in Ayton, and now the RS did too. He had passed three sets of sentries on his way to Berwick and had not been stopped. No verdict, court undecided.

John Macalpine of Duns, lights on car. The 2/10th RS stopped him, but he claimed his lights were painted over and nearly hit a flock of sheep because of this. (Some suggestion lights painted afterwards).

Berwick Advertiser , 3rd December 1915

Letters—A Shopkeeper's Complaint Regarding Lighting—Sir, The local administration of the regulations for the lighting of shops has at last become intolerable. Since the end of the summer we have been worried and bullied and threatened by the police. Some have even been fined. Even a faint glimmer of light gets a policeman's visit.

Complaint from a shopkeeper that one shop in High St is brightly lit and as it is a member of a national chain and pays no rates locally, it seems undisturbed by police.

Berwick Advertiser , 31st December 1915

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New Lighting Orders.