

## "ZEPPELIN MEMORIES"

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My first experience of a Zepp raid takes me back to my native city of Norwich, England, where I was spending a holiday in June/July 1916. I had been to see a well known Concert Party known as "The Scamps" that was appearing at the Spring Gardens Theatre, situated in close proximity to Prince of Wales Road and Norwich (Thorpe) Railway Station. At about 10 p.m. on this Autumn evening, one of the artists, Cecily James, who, I believe joined later the famous "Co-optomists" which ran for a long time at the Palace Theatre, London, was singing a very popular song of the period known as "The Broken Doll"; at this juncture, the Stage Manager, appeared and announced that the Zepps had crossed the Norfolk Coast at Bacton and were approaching Norwich, so therefore the show should be discontinued. We were thrown into complete darkness as the lights were extinguished. I wended my way quickly home, passing through the forecourt of Norwich Thorpe Station, and was amused to hear one of the porters singing gaily "In the Evening by the Moonlight" as he rolled the conical milk cans along the platform for the mid-night mail. It was at this moment I saw my first Zeppelin picked up by the searchlights at about 8000 feet, and held for a short time, but no bombs were dropped.

The second experience I had was on the night of the 25/26th September 1916 when nine Zeppelins took part. The older ships were ordered to attack England's "middle and industrial area" while only L30 and L31 - the newest ships were directed to "attack in the South, the main target London with the limitation that caution is ordered in case of clear weather."

The cautious orders were, of course, due to the recent losses of SL11 (3rd September) and L32 and L33 (24th September) the first two in flames with all on board.

The Naval Zeppelin L21 commanded by Oberleutnant Zur See Kurt Frankenberg with Leutnant Zur See Hans-Werner Salzbrunn operating out of the "Nobel" shed at Nordholz made a flight of 970 miles. While claiming an attack on Derby (home of the Rolls Royce Company) actually her main attack was on Bolton, Lancashire, some 60 miles to the North West. The writer well recalls that about 12.15 a.m. on the night of September 25/26th he was residing some three miles to the North of Bolton overlooking the Moors, when he was awakened by the drone of the "Maybach" engines of a Zeppelin. It was a brilliant starry night with no moon; everybody came out of their homes in their night attire covered by overcoats, to witness something they had never seen or heard of before. A few minutes later L21 released a number of bombs which fell on a terraced row of houses in Kirk Street situated between Henry Bessemer's steelworks and Trinity Street main line railway station, killing 13 people. It would appear that the red glow from the flames of the steel furnaces attracted the attention of the commander of this airship. A double-decker tram car making its last run of the evening from the suburb of Duns-car, stopped about 1½ miles from the Town Centre, when the electricity was cut off. The conductor apparently lived about fifty yards away, and was making for his home when the bombs dropped. He immediately dropped flat on his face, and the pavement was strewn with coppers emanating from his leather money satchel.

L21 and her company lasted for two more months. On the afternoon of the 27th November, 1916 Kurt Frankenberg's birthday, Hans Salzbrunn had a premonition. It was only too correct, L34 commanded by Max Dietrich was the first to go, shot down in flames by Second Lieut. Ian Pyott in a BE 2c of the 36 Squadron R.F.C. at the mouth of the Tess, just before midnight. L21 lasted a little longer; after crossing the English Coast at 22.20 she had many adventures passing near Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Chesterton, Peterborough and Norwich. Due to engine trouble she was clearing the coast and was caught by aeroplanes from Great Yarmouth, when she was silhouetted against the dawn sky. During attacks by several R.N.A.S. pilots, Flight Lieut. Egbert Cadbury probably administered the fatal stroke in a BE 2c setting her on fire in the stern. When she took fire the machine-gunner in the top nose position ran straight over the bow into Eternity, but one of the gondola gunners continued to

fire until he was engulfed. About ten miles East of Lowestoft a broken propeller blade and a large patch of oil-stained water was all that remained to mark the end of L21 and the seventeen men who had been her company, and had made eleven raids over England.

Life is curious in retrospect. I well remember in the late thirties, I was motoring to the south of France by the route des Alpes. After leaving the University and industrial Town of Grenoble, I proceeded via Aspres-sur-Buech-Serre-Laragne, and thence to Sisteron. At 11 a.m. being the 11th November, I was some 10 miles north of Sisteron and I stopped to observe the minute's silence for World War I, warming my hands on the radiator of my car, it was a bitterly cold day and snowflakes began to fall. At this moment an old unshaven shepherd accompanied by his mule, two sheep dogs, and about 1,000 sheep, on his way from the Alps to the warmer climate of the south of France, approached me and asked me if I had broken down. I replied in the negative, and that I was simply observing the Armistice of W.W.I. He asked me if I was Italian, I replied that I was British, he went to the saddle of his mule and produced a bottle of red wine with a cracked glass; he offered me the glass and himself drank from the bottle, saying in French "we will drink to the health of your King and my President" and gave me the following toast, "Time passes, the mountains remain, but we men may meet again" and indeed we did, because of the heavy snowfall I was obliged to discontinue my journey and stay the night in Sisteron. After dinner I went into the Cafe adjoining the hotel, and met up again with my shepherd friend and over a "pousse cafe" (brandy and coffee) reminiscing about the 1914/18 war, he told me that he had served locally in the French Army, and that in late October 1917 he was stationed at the Citadelle or Fort on a pinnacle overlooking Sisteron where a number of German P.O.W.'s were imprisoned. It was at this time he was guarding a number of prisoners working on the banks of the river Durance, when in mid-morning a Zeppelin came down and straddled the river bed, after hitting a rock on the banks of the river. The Germans immediately set fire to the airship, and about 15 or 16 of the crew surrendered to them. They were transferred and put with the other prisoners already in the Citadel. He also told me that one of his local friends was at the time serving in the French Army on the Marne, on the Western Front, and that some of their anti aircraft had also brought down a Zeppelin early in the same day. After some research I have discovered that the Zeppelin brought down at Sisteron would have been the L45 which with a number of Zeppelins, about thirteen in all, had encountered very bad weather over England, and several had been destroyed from this Armada. It would appear that the second Zeppelin that was hit over the Marne may well have been the L44 also known to have been destroyed that same day.

**FOOTNOTE:** It was at Aix-les Baines, France, a well known Spa for rheumatism, nestling at the foot of the Savoyarde Alps, on the evening of the 4th August, 1938 a Consular friend of mine, Arthur Dean, then British Vice Consul at Mentone and myself were commentating on the meteoric rise of Hitler and the possibility of war. We were then talking about our W.W.I experiences, he was an ex Naval Officer and a former Cadet in the training ship HMS Conway, when I mentioned I first joined the R.N.A.S. to be trained as a Pilot before transferring to the R.A.F. on the 1st April, 1918. He asked me if I knew Egbert Cadbury who was flying an aircraft almost twenty years to the day, whose observer Robert Leckie was responsible for shooting down the last Zeppelin of the War. Arthur Dean, after W.W.I, was at one time Administrative Officer of the well known Quaker Chocolate firm of Cadbury's of Bournville near Birmingham, and a friend of the late Egbert Cadbury who eventually became Managing Director of this famous Co.