

A Zeppelin attack on Woodbridge Thursday 12th August 1915 10.30pm

Arthur Fairweather, of the Woodbridge reporter, wrote this account at the time but it's publication was suppressed by the Ministry of Defence, for reasons of national morale.

The reality and horrors of war were brought home to the inhabitants of one town in August when it was visited by a German zeppelin from which a large number of bombs were dropped causing the deaths of six persons, severely injuring others and considerable destruction of property.



About 10.20pm the peculiar noise associated with a zeppelin was heard and soon the huge craft said to be 900 feet long appeared over the town and to the naked eye as one observer said looked like a "big cod fish".

The first bomb fell on a concrete path on the left side of St Johns Hill (leading up to St Johns Church) close to the house owned and occupied by Mr Harry Welton. It smashed the concrete path making a great hole while the explosions and flashes were heard and seen throughout the whole town and the effects proved to be deadly destructive. The houses on either side were demolished and premises in adjacent streets within an area of more than 100 yards had their windows blown out and otherwise badly damaged.

Among the human victims were a young married couple, the circumstances surrounding their deaths being most distressing. They were apparently partaking of their suppers when hearing the noise of the zeppelin and they hastened to their front door to look at it. At that moment the bomb fell on the opposite side of the street and they were both killed in their own doorway. Their three young



children (the youngest being only four weeks old) were peacefully asleep in an upstairs bedroom and miraculously escaped although the house was severely damaged.

A pathetic incident in connection with the death of another woman was that two mornings after the raid her two soldier sons, one having been at the front for nine months, returned home by the early morning train only to find their home in ruins and the sad fate which had befallen their mother.

Another of the victims was a member of the local fire brigade. Anticipating a conflagration he put on his fireman's uniform and was hastening to the fire station passing the fateful spot when a bomb fell he was killed by shrapnel, just opposite the butchers shop of A R Smith in New Street. His little son following him was seriously injured subsequently having to have his right leg amputated and losing all power and use of his left hand and arm.

Another lad James Edward Marshall 16 years of age was in his home opposite St Johns Hill. He preceded his parents and little sister across the street to get out of danger but ran immediately into the danger zone and was killed. His parents and sister who also crossed the street escaped injury. A railway porter whose home was near the scene was also killed.

In Castle Street another bomb fell in a market garden about hundred yards from the scene of the first making a hole 30 feet in diameter and five or six feet deep. An apple tree was uprooted and part of it thrown about 30 yards distant.

In the adjoining market garden five further incendiary bombs fell, one having ignited a large pig sty and killing three pigs. Large glass tomato houses standing in the garden suffered considerably.

The roof of a large malting was badly damaged. Adjoining was another garden in which 5 bombs were dropped in the Police Station garden, Jones Mill Yard, and the recreation ground in Seckford Street.

Another explosive bomb alighted on the stables and outbuildings situated at the back of The Waggon and Horses in Bredfield Street, a public house, completely demolishing them and killing a pony.

The centre of the face of the clock on St John's Church tower was knocked out while the numerals and hands were left pointing at 10.30pm.

Altogether about 30 bombs were dropped in and about the town, but no further damage other than that mentioned was done.

When the Zeppelin left to go back to Germany it dropped its last 3 bombs on Peyton Hall Farm, they missed the house but left a lot of cracks in the plasterwork. Next morning a German cap bearing the name of an aircraft section on it was found.

His suppressed handwritten article is now held by the Woodbridge Museum.

