

# ZEPPELINS

**Zeppelins** were airships invented in 1974 by **Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin**. Over 400 feet long they had a rigid cigar-shaped frame protecting bags filled with 400,000 cu.ft. of hydrogen and a tough outer skin. The engines with propellers and a control/passenger unit were suspended underneath. They were first flown commercially in 1910 by Deutsche Luftschiffahrts-AG (DELAG) – the world's first airline. Initially, the Germans made extensive use of Zeppelins as bombers and scouts.

On the morning of 19th January 1916, German Zeppelin airships **L3** and **L4** took off from Fuhisbuttel in Germany. Each carried 30 hours of fuel, 8 bombs and 25 incendiaries. The German Emperor had forbidden an attack on London, as he was related to the British Royal Family. Their bombs were dropped on East Lynn and Great Yarmouth. Only 9 people were killed, but the psychological impact on the civilian population was immense. The concept of war in the air was new; the airships approached virtually silently and without warning; there were no purpose built air raid shelters. In total, there were 52 raids on Britain and 500 people died.

By May 1916, British fighter planes began firing incendiary bullets into the airships. These pierced the outer shell and ignited the highly flammable hydrogen gas (later, inert helium was used) quickly destroying them. This was the beginning of the end of the Zeppelin raids.

## ZEPPELIN RAIDS ON SCOTLAND

On 2nd April, 1916, four Zeppelins (**L13**, **L14**, **L16** and **L22**) left Nordholz, heading for Scotland. The two main targets were the **Rosyth Naval Base** and the **Forth Bridge**. **L15** had to turn back with engine trouble and **L16** lost its way and dropped its bombs harmlessly on Northumberland. Edinburgh and Leith were bombed by **L14**, whilst **Chirnside**, with its paper mill was the target of **L22** and was the first village in Scotland to be bombed from the air.

The next raid on 2nd May, reached Aberdeenshire.

## ZEPPELIN RAID ON THE BORDERS

On August 1916, the **L16** made the third and last raid. Crossing the Northumberland coast, L16 flew over the Cheviots, dropping bombs on the side of Shereburgh Hill near Yetholm, in fields at Sunlaws Farm, in Mainhouse Woods, Grahams Law and Bowmont Forest. The Zeppelin passed over Kelso although no bombs were dropped on the town, to the great relief of the surgeon and staff in the Cottage Hospital where an operation was being carried out as the theatre could not be blacked out.