

ENGLISH MUNITIONS

L46 – German Naval airship

Nighttime raid over England during WWI

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At 2.35 a.m. we were over the railway junction at Louth, south of **Grimsby**. With the agreement of the Kommandant we set up for a bomb run. Suddenly the defenses beneath us came alive. Apparently, none of them had expected an attack so late, and hurried back to their posts. **Powerful searchlights probed the sky** looking for us, and then the guns opened up with a terrible cacophony of sound that is hard to imagine. We came under an intense anti-aircraft fire. **The shells hissed up around the airship**, detonating with a sharp crack and scattering their deadly shrapnel all around, above and beneath us. For several unpleasant moments the ship was lit by the glare of star shells. These rounds consisted of a magnesium flare fitted with a small parachute and would hang in the sky, falling only slowly.

Even less pleasant were the **incendiary shells** which you could follow the path of. There were two types: one was a smaller caliber **green-white** phosphor shell we called 'Bleichgesicht' [paleface] and the other was a 15 cm round with a **fiery red mass**. When you saw them you were compelled follow their trajectories until they were clear of the airship, for if anyone of them had hit us, that would have been it. The **Palefaces** were less dangerous for they reached the highest point of their trajectory at around 5000 meters (16,404 feet), slowed and then tumbled back down towards the ground. The **fiery red balls** would go up to 8000 meters (26,248 feet).

FYI: all the German Zeppelins were **filled with hydrogen** as their lift gas, so if one gas cell caught fire, the airship would be engulfed and plummet to the ground.