

# The Zeppelin Raid

Joan Read

THE GOLDEN VIRGIN Ch. 28 'Night and Morning' (Macdonald 1984 ed. p. 438ff).

The vivid description of the searchlights fumbling nervously to catch the German Zeppelin as it passed over London dropping its bombs, is followed by the grief felt when a bomb fell on Lily's home in Glenview Road (now known as Nightingale Road).

The following notes are based on work done with reminiscence groups of the subject of WW1, using Registrars' certificates, newspaper articles, etc.

The Zeppelin, known as airship L.45, left Tondern, commanded by Kapitanleutnant Waldemar Kolle, at 11.25 a.m. on the 19th October 1917, carrying enough fuel for 22 hours flight.

Her cargo contained two 300kg bombs; two 100kg bombs; sixteen 50kg bombs and ten incendiaries.

On arrival near Withersea in Yorkshire at 8.20 p.m. the airship climbed to 19,000 ft to avoid pursuit planes.

Passing over Leicester at 10.00 p.m. and Northampton at 10.50 p.m. her first bombs were unloaded. Turning southwards to drop her main cargo on London, she cruised over Hendon and dropped two 50kg bombs, followed by one 100kg and two 50kg bombs to the south of Cricklewood Station; one 100kg bomb in Piccadilly at 11.30 p.m. and a 300kg bomb at Camberwell.

Finally a 300kg bomb was dropped at Glenview Road, Hither Green, destroying three houses and damaging many others.

In this attack 5 women and 9 children were killed and 2 men, 3 women and 2 children were injured.

Samuel Lilly Milgate (Lily Cornford's father) died in hospital five days after the raid.

Mrs Mary Jane Milgate (Lily's mother) lay seriously ill in hospital.

Arthur George Milgate (Lily's brother) aged 15, was allowed to leave hospital.

The fourteen victims of the bomb were buried in two deep graves which had been dug side by side in 'Heroes Corner' in Ladywell Cemetery. Three were members of the Milgate family, two sisters and a brother.

The airship passed over Sidcup at 11.40 p.m. and just after midnight was attacked by a plane, south of the Medway. It managed to continue its flight to the French coast and was sighted about 2.40 a.m. near Berck-sur-mer; 6.05 a.m. at Auxerre; came under fire at Vongé; flew over Lyon and Meysieux about 8 a.m. Kapitanleutnant Kolle brought his ship down safely on the dry bed of the River Durance and marched his crew to a Laragne farm. They were interned in a prisoner-of-war camp at Sisteron.

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Joan Read's covering letter accompanying this piece contains the following percipient thought: 'With the book cover of *The Golden Virgin* beside me depicting the fall of the statue, it occurred to me as I re-read the final chapters that Lily's sudden death must have been to Phillip the fall of his 'golden virgin'. How poignant!'