

## Zepplins over Wellesbourne?

The war was about to enter its second year. The young men, who had enthusiastically volunteered to feed the war effort, had long left and Wellesbourne had settled back into as normal a life as there could be, under the circumstances.

In preparation for the winter months, following the routine of previous years, the Parish Council of Wellesbourne Mountford met on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1915 to appoint a lamp lighter for the coming season. Mr. Albert Pitcher would take on the duties for the princely wage of two pounds twelve shillings and sixpence for the season, effective from the 25<sup>th</sup> September, but it wasn't until the 3<sup>rd</sup> September that the Wellesbourne Hastings Parish Council met to confirm the same arrangement.

Albert's tenure as Lamp Lighter however, was to end sooner than he imagined:

**THE GREAT AIR RAID- ZEPPELINS OVER SIX COUNTIES** ran the headline in the 5<sup>th</sup> February edition of the Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser. Six or seven of the Airships were reported to have carried out raids on the previous Monday night over Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. 54 Killed, 67 injured, 220 bombs dropped.

An emergency Council meeting of both Wellesbourne Parishes was called for the 7<sup>th</sup> February in the school. It was believed, and so it was minuted, that the 'visiting' Zeppelins had actually passed over or nearby to Wellesbourne, although from the records so far examined, no actual eye witness accounts appear to exist. The continued use of the street lighting was addressed and the councillors unanimously agreed that it in view of the

possibility of further night raids it should be discontinued forthwith. Albert was now redundant.

The Committees of both St. Peters and the Wesleyan Churches met independently and decided it would be prudent to take out insurance against any further Zeppelin attacks, particularly against the tower of the Anglican Church. Sunday services would now start at 3p.m. instead of 6.30p.m.

Official regulations were issued concerning night time blackouts and immediately came into force within two weeks of the Zeppelin raid. There would be no early warnings of possible future airborne attacks for villages such as Wellesbourne. The ringing of bells after all had been outlawed by the Defence of the Realm Act(1914), as had flying kites or lighting bonfires.

Unidentified biplanes, although probably British, continued to be seen in the skies above Wellesbourne at odd times during the rest of the war but no further sightings of the Zeppelin were reported.



*However, very recently this photo has come to light. We are advised by a Wellesbourne resident that it was taken by his grandfather late one Saturday night in June 1914 after he left the Stag where he was a regular*

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