



# **Air Raids on South-West Essex in the Great War: Looking for Zeppelins at Leyton**

*Alan Simpson*

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A quarter of a century before the Blitz of 1940, the inhabitants of south-west Essex were terrorized by an earlier aerial menace. Over the course of four years, German Zeppelins, Gothas and Giants flew above their homes, unleashing hundreds of highly explosive and incendiary bombs on London. During three of these raids, bombs were dropped on Leyton and many others landed elsewhere in south-west Essex. These early air raids are now largely forgotten in local memory, but for the inhabitants of the time the attacks were unprecedented, unexpected and lethal.

In the years since the Great War a great deal of literature has been published on London's first air raids and about the defence network that evolved around the metropolis, but what happened in the capital's eastern suburbs and the nearby Essex countryside has received less coverage. This meticulously researched and insightful book attempts to put that right, looking at the area which, in 1914, was part of south-west Essex, but now comprises the London boroughs of Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, Newham, and Barking and Dagenham.

Focussing in particular on Leyton and Ilford, this is the first book to ever examine what happened before and after the raiders reached and bombarded the capital. The author has included a wide range of contemporary letters, diaries and newspaper reports from local sources, plus several previously unseen photographs. To set the story in its wider context, the book also contains a wealth of information about the defence of the London area generally and vivid reports from combatants on both sides.

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