

German Navy WWI Zeppelin L48

Title/Title Page: This single frame exhibit is possibly the first hybrid story for picture postcards combined with open class. In addition to picture postcards, there are philatelic covers/card plus ephemera and artifacts, including salvaged souvenirs made from duralumin structure, a medal, labels, a button, an autograph, a photograph, cigarette card, and a bomb key. The title page includes the beginning of the story with an overview of the zeppelin bombings over England before starting the L48 story on page 2.

Treatment: Purpose and Scope: This single frame **hybrid postcard and display/open exhibit** tells the **story of the German Naval L48 zeppelin bomber**, which was shot down over Theberton, England, on June 17, 1917, during World War I. The organization follows a chronological order of L48 from construction to burial of crew members. To achieve balance in telling the story, not all postcards in the collection are shown because many pictures are duplicative in wreckage depiction.

Importance: The L48 story was an important part of WWI zeppelin raid history as the first zeppelin height climber built and the last zeppelin shot down over England. In the larger zeppelin history, the evolving construction technology led to post-war zeppelin success with LZ126 (later *Los Angeles*) and LZ127 *Graf Zeppelin*. For military history, the story of home front souvenir postcards and relics reveals the ongoing perseverance and pride of the British citizens. In addition, the first aerial bombing blitz over England frightened the population and offered a propaganda advantage to the Germans.

Philatelic/General Knowledge: Lifelong research assures the exhibit's accuracy. Captions include information about postcard and object identification, publisher/author, production, country, and date. Postcard production types are determined by enlarging a small portion of the postcard image and comparing the printing patterns to a type chart compiled by the author.

Personal Study and Research: The exhibitor has published over a hundred zeppelin articles and authored books on zeppelins. This exhibit represents a story previously untold with collector objects. Research includes correspondence with other WWI zeppelin scholars and the study of L48 documents at the Zeppelin Museum Archive in Friedrichshafen, Germany.

Rarity and Condition: This exhibit would be impossible to duplicate. Items shown represent over thirty years of searching. Many real photo postcards, ephemera, and artifacts represent one or less than three seen by the exhibitor. The philatelic covers are all that this exhibitor has found in thirty years and should be considered extremely rare. The L42 crew letter with contents describing his witnessing the fireball is priceless. Condition is appropriate for the wartime period.

References

note: In addition to the Waddell webpage on the photographer's booklet and postcards, these are historical references consulted in developing the story. Sieger Zeppelinpost Katalog does list and illustrate the L48 Command Cancel on page 427 of 22nd edition.

"Waddell's Booklet." [Waddell's Booklet »](#). retrieved July 11, 2025.

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Mieth, Otto. "Shot Down by the British: A Zeppelin Officer's Story," *The Living Age* (April 17, 1926): 143-47.

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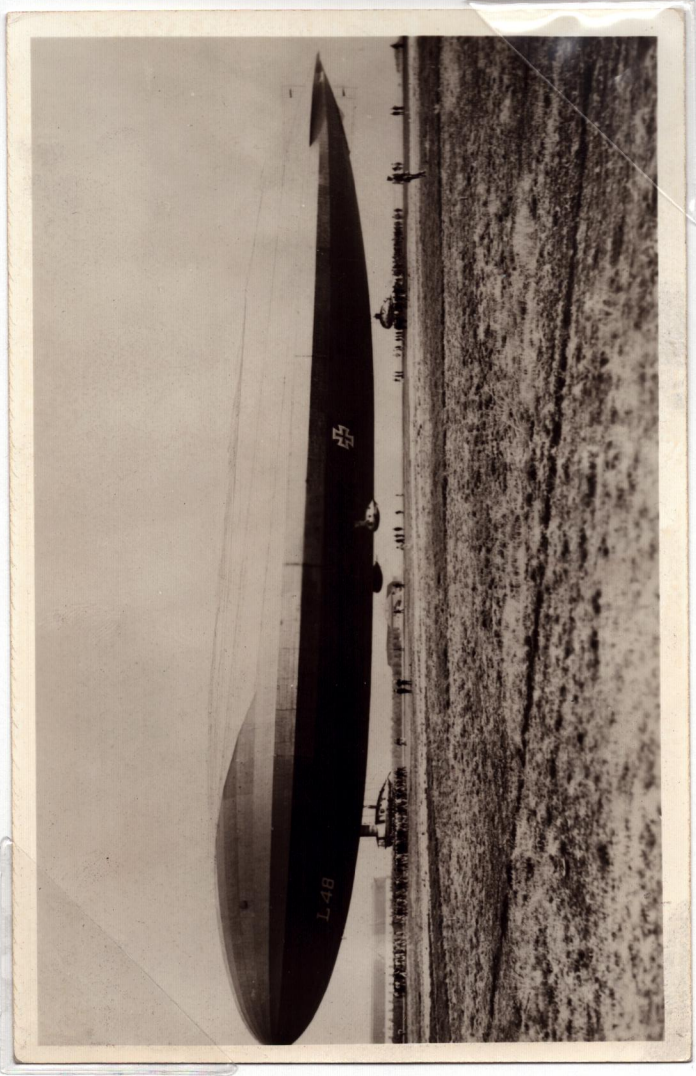
German Navy WWI Zeppelin L48

Construction of Zeppelin L48 (LZ95)

Built by Luftschiffbau Zeppelin in Factory Shed I in Friedrichshafen, Germany
Builder number LZ95
Cost 3,264,000 DM (nearly \$15 million today)
645 feet long, 78 feet diameter
Duralumin girder structure
Eighteen hydrogen gas cells
Five Maybach engines
First flight: May 22, 1917
Delivery flight to Nordholz and commissioning: May 23, 1917

The lower surfaces of the hull were painted black to reduce ground defenses visibility. Markings include L48 and the Iron Cross. The high-altitude L48 featured a streamlined control car and nearly 25% weight reduction. L48 on Nordholz landing field, RPPC, Foto Drüppel, Wilhelmshaven, Germany, post-war printing.

Right: Iron Cross pendant made from salvage L48 duralumin girder, England, 1917.



This single frame, hybrid postcard and display/open exhibit tells the story of the German Naval L48 zeppelin bomber, which was shot down over Theberton, England, on June 17, 1917, during World War I.

Built by Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH in early 1917, construction number LZ95 became the naval airship L48. The first of a new height climber design, L48 only flew for only twenty-seven days before being shot down over England. Following its crash into a field, local photographers documented the wreckage site and sold postcards to curious and patriotic Brits. Salvaged pieces of girder were fashioned into artifact souvenirs to further provide evidence of the homeland victory over the aerial invaders. Crew mail, photographs, publications, cigarette cards, and other paper ephemera support the L48 postcard story.

Plan

Zeppelins Attack England in WWI
Construction and Transfer to Nordholz
Attack during Raid
The Crash Site
Preparing for Transport and Three Survivors
The Sixteen Dead

Zeppelins Attack England in WWI

German zeppelins bombed Britain beginning in January of 1915, inaccurately dropping explosive and incendiary bombs, often damaging private structures and killing civilians. As a weapon of war, the 1917 zeppelin L48 was the first of the new design high-altitude zeppelin bombers. These zeppelins could fly across the English Channel under cloud cover and as high as 20,000 feet without a pressurized cabin. The height-climbers ability to fly above range of British ground defenses, anti-aircraft guns, and aero squadrons ensured German attack success. Yet, only twenty-seven days after L48's first flight, British airmen shot down L48, ending that vision. During World War I, zeppelins made fifty-one raids, dropped 196 tons of bombs that killed 557 people, injured 1358, and destroyed many structures. Brits took down only five airships over British soil (more offshore): SLII, L32, L33, L31, and lastly, L48. The result of Germany's zeppelin blitz was more a propaganda tool than a strategic military success.

Left to right:

"The Zeppelin Triumph" propaganda label against zeppelin "Baby Killers" depicting deceased mother, sold for charity, Wincox Ltd, Richmond, Surrey, England, 1915.

Germany's popular anti-British slogan "May God Punish England/*Gott Strafe England*" was coined by German poet Ernst Lissauer, zeppelin & submarine bomb-shaped propaganda label, Germany, 1917.

Germans resented that a British fishing trawler refused to save drowning zeppelin crew members in the North Sea. "Loss of Zeppelin L19: Cursed be the British...1916" 58 mm bronze medal by Karl Goetz, Germany, 1916.

"Going! Going!! Gone!!!" first rigid airship SLII brought down by a British pilot postcard, RPPC, Rotary Photographic, England, 1916.

