



ESPG Seminar

Brett Holman

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4pm, Friday 16th May

Fritz Loewe Theatre, School of Earth Sciences
University of Melbourne

Facing Armageddon: Britain and the Bomber, 1908-1941



In the first four decades of the 20th century, the British public was continually warned of the dangers of aerial bombing, which, many experts asserted, would reduce London and other cities to rubble, kill thousands or even millions of men, women and children, and paralyse its essential infrastructure systems—all within days or perhaps hours of the start of war. Those who survived would panic, and eventually starve. High explosive, incendiary and poison gas bombs would destroy the fragile threads holding industrial society together: Britain would lose the war as soon as it had begun. When the Blitz came in 1940–1, it became clear that the pre-war predictions had been greatly exaggerated, but in the meantime Britons had to decide how to respond to the perceived threat of bombing. In my talk, I will survey British fears about bombing and the defences they considered, to show how one society responded to a threat to its very existence.

To be followed by further discussion and refreshments in the tea room.