

THE R34 ADVENTURE

A project to commemorate the double
airborne Atlantic crossing in 1919

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Not Long To Go



Seven years in the making, the project is nearing fruition.

People come and go. East Fortune let us work on a show for them for six years; and then said they didn't want it. Thorpe Abbots 100th Bomb Group Museum did a complete about turn on an Open Day, so that has been shelved. Hundreds of people, schools, colleges and groups have not replied over the years. We were going to have input from the students at East Lothian College; but the course may not run, as nobody has signed up for it.

But what remains is usually the high quality stuff.

Peter Creswell's original musical work - All Aboard the R34 - has been completed and even had previews.

Schools and groups have just begun to respond, after some great coverage in the Eastern Daily Press newspaper.

Our local station, Park Radio, is keen to broadcast a version of The Log of the R34, as is Radio Saltire. They are a community station based at Tranent in East Lothian, not far from where the R34 took off.

On the centenary weekend (13th/14th July 2019) there will be some lively events (tba).

NEWS

Centenary of airship's record-breaking flight to be marked near its secret base in rural Norfolk

SIMON PARKIN

simon.parkin@archant.co.uk

Next year will mark 100 years since the historic two-way crossing of the Atlantic by the R34 airship and preparations are already underway to mark the event, which has strong links to Pulham St Mary.

The South Norfolk village achieved international fame when the massive 634ft-long aircraft landed at Pulham Air Station following its epic journey of some 8,130 miles.

The British airship had taken off from East Fortune in Scotland in July 1919, with a crew of 36, plus a stowaway William Balharry - a crew member who had been removed to make room for an American observer, who was discovered mid-Atlantic. After a journey of four and a half days that encountered poor weather and engine problems it landed in America at Mineola, Long Island.

The crew were feted by the people of New York, and met the American President Woodrow Wilson.

After several days of being entertained and re-equipping the airship made the return trip across the Atlantic, coming back to land at Pulham on July 13, 1919.

Landmark commemorations are now being planned by Diss Museum to mark the 100th anniversary but there will be events all over the world to celebrate the intrepid flight.

Meetings have taken place with the Scottish National Museum of Flight in East Lothian, the Cradle of Aviation Museum on Long Island, the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen, Germany, Tonder in Denmark and Spitsbergen.

"I have been to museums all



Pulham St Mary Airship station workers

Picture: Norfolk County Council

around the world that include material about airships and they all are keen to be involved," said Diss Museum manager Basil Abbott.

The German connection is significant, as airships were German technology, the R34 being a blatant copy of a crashed Zeppelin.

Mr Abbott said: "There is a lot of interest in the history of airships."

"There was a lot of hostility against them at the start before they went on to establish themselves as the last word in sophisticated travel for a while in

the inter-war years.

But that suddenly ended with a horrible bang with the Hindenburg disaster. Then it was like they had never been. There are strong parallels with Concorde in that sense."

Amongst events planned in

Norfolk for the centenary weekend next July is a performance of a work called All Aboard the R34 by local composer Peter Creswell, who lives in Redgrave, near Diss, while the award-winning Scottish indie-rock band Admiral Fallow will also provide specially written music.

Norfolk brewery Buffy's has

produced special R34 ale and there are plans for a range of commemorative merchandise including T-shirts and mugs.

There will also be re-creations of the banquets held in honour of the crew, plus schools projects and exhibitions on an airship theme by local art and textile groups.

The R34, whose crew nicknamed her "Tiny", was eventually scrapped in 1921 following an accident during a storm, however its history and the record-breaking flight are still remembered in aviation museums.

The airship is also immortalised

in the village sign for Pulham St Mary which depicts the R34 flying above the village.

For more information about the R34 centenary visit: airships.me.uk

Pulham Pigs

'Pulham Pigs' was the nickname given to the airships stationed at Pulham St Mary - so named because of their buff-colour similar to the colour of a pig's skin.

Pulham was chosen as the site for an Airship Station just before the First World War. The land was bought in great secrecy, so that enemies couldn't find out what was planned.

From 1915 until the 1930s, airships from Pulham travelled the world. The R34 is probably the most famous thanks to its record-breaking two-way trip that took seven days 15 hours and 15 minutes (not including the three day stopover in the US). When the R34 arrived in the US, Major E.M. Pritchard parachuted to the ground to supervise the landing process, becoming the first man to parachute onto American soil. The return journey took just over 75 hours landing back in Pulham on July 13, 1919.



Diss



The Airship R34 (left), which made the first two-way crossing of Atlantic in July 1919. Picture: Archant Library and (above) Diss Museum. Picture: Basil Abbott

This is the kind of coverage we got in a regional newspaper over a year before the centenary



This is the standard of art work coming in from our local group

states on Thursday and are staying at

At Nearby Resorts.

(Special to The Eagle.)

Garden City, L. I., July 12—This has been one of the most interesting weeks that Garden City has known since the last international polo match at Meadow Brook between the pick of American and English players which brought together for the event residents of almost every section of the United States and many from England.

Similar scenes have again been daily in evidence with the polo replaced by the giant British R-34 as the chief attraction.

At the Garden City Hotel dinner parties have been given the various officers of the R-34 by aviation, naval and Army officers.

The largest of these dinners was given on the arrival of the dirigible in the large dining room of the hotel. Among those present were Gen. Charlton, Lt. Com. Lansdowne, the U. S. observer who came over from Scotland on the R-34; Col. Archie Miller, commanding the various Long Island aviation fields; F. A. Seiberling, Lt. J. Lawson, Frederick Watson, L. T. Briggs, Charles Lindsay, Dr. J. H. Harris, J. M. Mayer, Rear Admiral McDonald, Col. Lucas, representing the British Government; G. T. Wilson, Louis Nixon, Lt. H. Zuck, Gen. Berry, Admiral Wilson, Capt. J. Durrant, Com. Cabanott, W. R. Hurlburt, Alfred Craven, J. W. Lane, Capt. C. L. Arnold, R. A. C. Smith, Col. Burleigh, Capt. Symington, Vice Admiral Gleaves, Gen. Menohar, Maj. J. Pritchard, Admiral Rodman, Maj. G. Cook, Capt. G. Greenland, Maj. Fuller, representing the British Government; Gen. Davison, Rear Admiral Brittain, Col. Chandler, J. D. Thompson and Capt. A. W. Johnson.

Garden City Hotel arrivals from Brooklyn include Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Cox, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Delatour, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Bailey, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Blair.

Many dinner parties were arranged by guests of the hotel for friends coming for the week-end to be present on the arrival of the R-34. Among those entertaining were Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Oakman, Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Taft, Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Pettis, Mr. and Mrs. William G. Roome of New York, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Bigelow were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Ward Melville.

An item from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle of 13 July 1919, by which time R34 was safely back at Pulham.

There have been three Garden City Hotels. One was destroyed by fire. A second can be seen in the first shot of the film about Lindbergh, Spirit of St. Louis. The aviator and pressmen are waiting in the hotel for the weather to clear.

That hotel, where the R34 banquet was held, has long gone, to be replaced by the current building.

← The arrowed paragraph makes it sound as though the airship turned up in the hotel.

The dinners were, no doubt, for the Officers. Other ranks would not be invited to such a swanky occasion. Major Pritchard, who parachuted down to supervise the mooring, is mentioned, as are Captain Greenland and Major Cooke.

But otherwise the guest list is largely made up of American military bigwigs.

It would be good if the hotel joined in with the commemoration. We could provide information, photographs, the powerpoint presentation that has been seen around the world; and even General Maitland himself to speak at a centenary dinner.



University of Suffolk students entered the spirit of the project by putting on naval caps like those worn by the R34 crew.

(l-r) Tom Gibbs, Henry Crofts and Elliot Chester are creating an educational interactive experience for children in Diss Museum, as part of their university course.

Masonic Ladies Night in Diss



An example of what could be done at the Garden City Hotel.

The menu was inspired by the banquet given there for the R34; and included tomato bisque and turkey.

The hall was decorated with flags and World War One and airship memorabilia.

The ladies were encouraged to dress like the characters in Downton Abbey, with the men in evening dress.

The event had a Master of Ceremonies, a Toast to the King, one to the Ladies, a reply by the hostess and a speech by General Maitland of the R34. The entertainment was Judi Daykin as music hall artiste Marie Lloyd.

