**DMC**

**DATE: 14 July 2018**

**TIME: 12:00 – 13:30**

**ATTENDEES:** Tom Gibbs, Elliot Chester, Henry Crofts | Sheila

***MEETING WITH SHEILA, HISTORIAN @ THE PENNOYER HERITAGE CENTRE, PULHAM ST MARY***

**Aims of this client meeting:**

* To fact check the research we have already conducted
* Enquire in further detail into:
  + the crew
    - Where were they/each rank during the voyage
    - The identity of the Stowaway and reason for smuggling himself aboard
    - Major’s role in the New York landing
  + The R34
    - Initial reason and cost of producing the R34
    - Living quarters and operational areas
    - Any visuals/description of the airship interior
    - Maximum capacity
    - Maximum voyage distance/time
    - Travelling altitude
    - How crew boarded/disembarked
* Request any lesser known information regarding the R34 and its voyage

**Meeting Minutes:**

Meeting with Sheila confirmed by Henry via phone call.

All team in attendance.

Began the meeting by discussing the general history of the R34 in vague detail before narrowing down on the specifics of the Atlantic voyage.

Sheila was able to confirm the information we had gathered so far was correct. After detailing the elements where we have had difficulty locating information Sheila was able to offer explanations:

* The R34 was the result of recovered German airship designs, reverse engineered by British forces
* Each gondola had ladders extending into the keel which allowed the crew to move between area
* R34 was a exclusively a military vehicle. There had been intentions to adapt the design for carriage of passengers, but the R100 design was more appropriate for commercial ventures, scrapping any commercial future for the R34.
* All crew members slept in sling hammocks either in the gondolas or keel.
* The R34 needed 400-600 well drilled people to assist in its landing (as shown by the actions of the Major and subsequent events in Roosevelt field, New York)
* On landing ropes were dropped to earth static charge
* Propellers had a degree of movement. Angle of which could be adjusted to help raise/lower airship on landing/take-off
* All available space in gondolas was filled by instruments to monitor airship speed, location and altitude – though the majority of instruments functions was to maintain communication with the RAF.
* Airship had no direct means of heating food/drink. Prior to take-off the engineers repurposed sections of the engine exhaust to heat kettles.
* Airship travelled at 10,000ft at a maximum speed of 62mph, but averaged 55mph.
* Cost £350,000 to construct in 1919. Adjusting for inflation, equal to £17,180,365 in 2017.
* 640ft long, 790ft diameter. 1.95million cubic feet.
* Specification was designed for a crew of 22.
* The progression hoped for by the RAF was to allow the airship to carry aircraft beneath the ship and rapidly expand a network of impromptu “airports” (large flat fields is a more apt description).
* To board the airship all crew must board through the nose cone of the ship, then walk along the keel.
* The ship was designed to moor and a mooring tower, but mooring rings could be employed if needed.
* Crew could enter/exit via simple doors on gondolas if airship was at ground level.
* Design allowed for the body, gondolas and propellers to have a small amount of rotational freedom from one another. The intent was to prevent joint sheering and lessen the effect of strong winds.
* Airship crashed and was damaged beyond repair in January 1921. No explosion, No casualties. Likely engine failure though exact cause remains unknown.
* Catastrophic failures of sister ship R33 and other current and next generation models (R38, R101), which all lost the majority of their crews, saw the focus in the air move away from airships.

As part of Sheila’s advice above, she advised that the crew boarded via the nose cone of the airship – we advised that none of our research gave an indication of this and that on the R34 all crew boarded/departed via gondola doors. Sheila was surprised by this but assured the team the ship specifications indicated the nose cone as preferred route for crew.

The team notes that with the exception of the nose cone mooring, all of the information provided by Sheila corroborates our own research and adds a significant amount of detail to the events.

**Tasks for the current week:-**

* **Add Sheila’s information to our research documents.**

Team trip to RAFM, Hendon arranged for 21 July 2018. All members to meet at Atrium car park by 09:30 to then walk to train station.