



Welcome to our latest newsletter.

## Skyship Recollections: airship leisure flight



Skyship 600 in Esso Unleaded Livery at Cardington, 1990

Vik Hibbert contacted us with his recollection of flying in a Skyship 600 in 1990. It is interesting to hear what it was like to fly on these wonderful machines, and what often gets unnoticed is the challenge of ground handling on a windy day.



*My wife bought me a "birthday" ride in the ship from Cardington, but I can't remember exactly when it was. Probably around 1990 I think. It was a VERY windy day and the crew were unsure whether we'd be able to fly or not. The vessel was prepared and did a trial circuit. The pilot considered it safe and returned to pick us up. I remember the ground crew struggling to catch the tethering cables and we were hastily boarded whilst they fought to keep the craft on the ground.*

*Almost instantly we were airborne and spent a joyous 40mins or so drifting around the flatlands and brick fields of central Bedfordshire. The cabin held about a dozen people I think although there were only about 8 of us there that day.*

*We were able to move about freely and to open the sliding side windows for photography. All in all, it was a truly great experience.*

*Vic Hibbert*

Were you lucky enough to fly on a Skyship in the 1980's, the Goodyear Europa in the 1970's, or even a trip a new Zeppelin NT? How was it compared to flying in a heavier than air aeroplane? where did you fly? Why not share your memories and photos of the events like Vic.

## New Photos of the Bournemouth



We were contacted by Marion Sweeny who had come across some unusual photos of the Bournemouth airship. The Bournemouth was what we class as the "first" of the new revival in airships. Belonging to the little-known category of British built "private" airships, the "Bournemouth" was constructed by a group of airship enthusiasts called the Airship Club and launched in 1951.

The concept began back in 1948, when Lord Ventry posed the idea to a small group of his friends and together, they formed a small fund raising society which they called "The Airship Club".

The objective of the club was to create the first airship in Britain for over twenty years. The renowned author of "Airships Cardington" Geoffrey Chamberlain was a founder member of the club, along with being a founder member of F.O.C.A.S, now your AHT.

*The Airship Club car badge – AHT Collection*

### Why was it named the Bournemouth?

The project was funded largely by private enthusiasm, however as Lord Ventry lived on the south coast resort, he was able to canvas the Bournemouth Corporation who in turn made a substantial grant from its "Festival of Britain" funds to assist with the completion of the craft and for its first flight.

This is how the British south coast resort managed to have an airship named after it. The idea being that the completed ship would play a part in the local celebrations of the Festival of Britain year.

To keep costs down, the Bournemouth was not to have a home "base" and the following quote from "Flight Magazine" 1950

*"One of the most expensive items in the construction of an airship must be a hangar and at the present time it is one which, in a private venture, would be virtually impossible of achievement. Surprisingly, however, an airship is quite amenable to being tethered in the open, and we are assured by Lord Ventry that, with the aid of a protective screen of trees, a small non-rigid can safely ride out a 70 m.p.h. gale if properly picketed. This, therefore, is the plan for the Bournemouth—she will be kept inflated, and out-of-doors, during all spells of operational activity that promise to be fairly continuous."*

As part of the club, Lord Ventry, Squadron Leader T.P. York-Moore and a small group of enthusiasts wanted to prove that airships could still return after the closure of the British Airship programme in 1932. The Bournemouth carried out a series of eleven flights between 1951-1952. Unfortunately, on her third test flight, the trail rope fouled on an obstruction when coming in to land at Cardington.

We were contacted by Marion Sweeny who shared these wonderful unseen photos of the airship Bournemouth taken by her father in 1951, just as the ship crash landed at Cardington.

As with all personal photographs, and often overlooked in official photographs, is the number of people who witnessed the event, and seen here helping to try to recover the ship.



*Dear Alastair,*

*When going through my parents' old photos, I found a few of 'The Bournemouth' including the aftermath of the crash. These were noted as being taken in 1956 but I see from your website that the correct date is 1952? I am sure it is 'The Bournemouth' though, it looks just like it.*

*By way of background my grandad, Fred Conder lived in Shortstown and worked at Cardington Camp for many years retiring in (I think) 1965. He probably took the photo, or it could have been my father. The photos were originally in an album with the descriptions/dates written alongside. They were next to photos of a family wedding that definitely took place in 1957. Later, my mother digitised the images and annotated them, so there is potential for the dates to be incorrect. Anyway, I am sure it is The Bournemouth that is depicted!*

*I have attached two photos of the aftermath of the crash. It was jokingly said there must be a family curse on airships, as when a family member took a photo of 'The Europa' that too crashed shortly afterwards, I'll have to see if I can find that one!*

*Best Regards,  
Marion Sweeney*



The event was recorded by Pathe news and captured on this newsreel:  
<https://youtube.com/Vej8Gs6xBoU?si=zW9b9Tt6lkcQEa0Q>



## Overseas Dirigible delivery disruption

From March 2023, new customs duty rules came into force regarding the delivery of goods to the E.U. Consequently, we have received a small number of copies of *Dirigible* returned to our offices as a result.

We are trying to work out the full extent of the problem and for our overseas members, and which countries are impacted. Please can you let us know directly if you are missing any editions? The full extent of the problem is not known at present as the overseas customs teams are not obliged to return the magazine to us.

Spring 2023 No.98	Summer 2023 No.99	Autumn 2023 No.100

If you have found that you are missing any copies of *Dirigible* during 2023, of which there were 3 editions sent, please contact Alastair Lawson who will send out missing copies to you email: [alastairlawson1@gmail.com](mailto:alastairlawson1@gmail.com)

## Rickmansworth and the Airship Age: Major J.E.M. Pritchard OBE AFC

Rickmansworth Library May events

Panels presenting his biography from WWI to R38, plus model and book display  
Zeppelins over Hertfordshire: Panels introducing Zeppelins, their WWI use and Cuffley in particular.

The display will be at Rickmansworth Library, High Street, Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 1EH

Also an evening talk is planned – *On a Wing and a Prayer: The Imperial Airship Scheme*  
30th May, 6:30-7:45pm; tickets £5 each with refreshments.

Tickets can be booked at Rickmansworth Library or online at <http://tinyurl.com/3r6skzuv>

## Ipswich and District Historical Transport Society

Evening talk will be given by Alastair Lawson to the Ipswich and District Historical Transport Society, *The Golden Age of British Airships: the R101 and R100 story and history of Cardington Airship station.*

Wednesday 24th April 7:30pm

Ipswich Salvation Army Citadel, 558 Woodbridge Road Rd, Ipswich. IP4 4PH

## Dauids Bookshop Letchworth – His Majesty’s Airship

S. C. Gwynne, the author of His Majesty’s Airship, will be visiting from America in March and will be giving a talk about his book on 19th March at the Café in the David’s Bookshop, Letchworth.

Tickets for the evening event are available via their website.

<https://www.dauids-bookshops.co.uk/blogs/news/author-events>

It promises to be an interesting event on a subject which has a strong local connection.  
12-16 Eastcheap, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3DE

## IMPORTANT UPDATE: SUBSCRIPTION RATE INCREASE REMINDER

**UK membership £30**

**Overseas Membership £40**

### What does this mean for you?

#### PAYMENT BY BANK TRANSFER STANDING ORDER

Please update your standing order directly with your bank.

#### MEMBERS WHO MAKE PAYMENTS MADE VIA PAYPAL

Please login to your account and check the recurring payments button. Please update the recurring payments to the new subscription rate, for either UK or Overseas.

*We will be updating all the PayPal subscriptions approximately 30 days before your subscription is due to take into account the new subscription rates. You will be notified automatically when the change is processed. Please note your membership renewal date will remain unaltered.*

### Visiting the AHT Office and Archive.

Over the last 12 months more books and research materials have arrived and are in the process of being sorted and catalogued. Available for members and researchers to come and visit and see the collection. We are scanning as much as we can, but this will take some time, but the original books and manuscripts are available to be viewed.

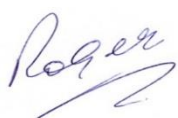
**Please do telephone and arrange to visit us** – even if you are on the way to somewhere and can only stay a few minutes.

0115 933 4795 or 07973223111

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Located off the A52 between Radcliffe and Bingham opposite to the Saxondale village turning, 12 miles from the A1 or 1.5 miles from Radcliffe Railway Station.

Looking forward to meeting you all, and we can offer coffee too – Cheers,



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