

AIRSHIP HERITAGE NEWS

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EDITION NO.9



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Welcome to the first Edition for 2023, of our Newsletter...

To foster and promote the study of the history of airships in its every aspect and to present the results of such study to the public - since 1985 these words became one of the AHT's core principle objectives of the formation of the Trust. The thoughts on "how" this would be done has indeed changed over the years since the closure of RAF Cardington, our first home in 1999. However, with the advent of the internet, we are still able to present to the public. Along with getting back to doing talks both in person and online, along with expanding to a wider global audience on YouTube, we are still focusing on our core.

As we said in the last newsletter, we are finally getting all of the AHT stored materials together in the Office and archive. With another delivery of stored archived materials in December, more items are coming to light, this has led to the start of the cataloguing and scanning process.

Our aim is to scan as much of this material as possible, and present it in accordance with one of our principle aims, of making this available to the public via our website.

Some wonderful R.101 engineering engineers sketch books have come to light, and will be scanned. The detailing and craftsmanship of the skills of the engineers shows though in these books. A wonderful archive – some are just special bolts/rivets - beautifully drawn in pencil. There is also a sketch of the 'rounded stern' repair to the R-100, - which Nevil Schute Norway hated! Also something we'd never seen before and the drawing of the R.101 nameplate.

British Naval Airships – Brian Turpin

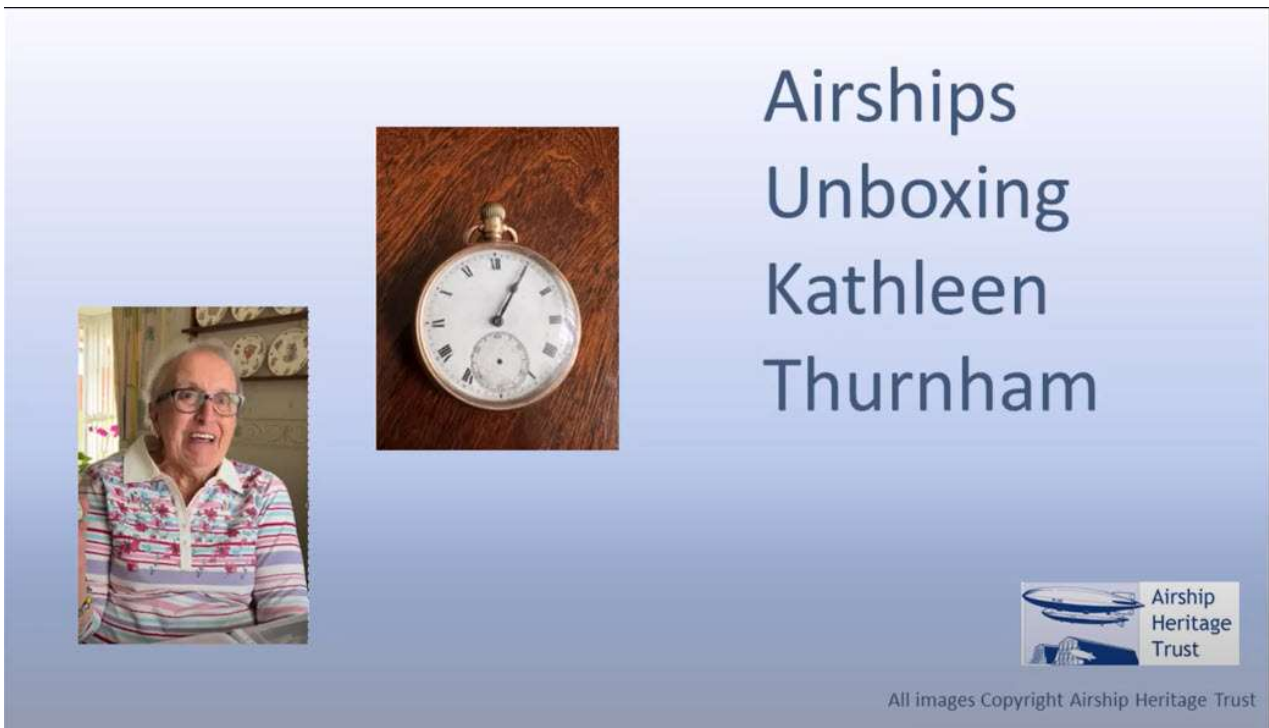
As you would have seen in *Dirigible* and on our website, ["British Naval Airships by Brian Turpin"](#) the definitive history of all airships designed for the Royal Naval Air Service 4 volume set Turpin is available for sale.

Illustrated with over 1,200 photographs, some 230 original line drawings and 19 colour plates

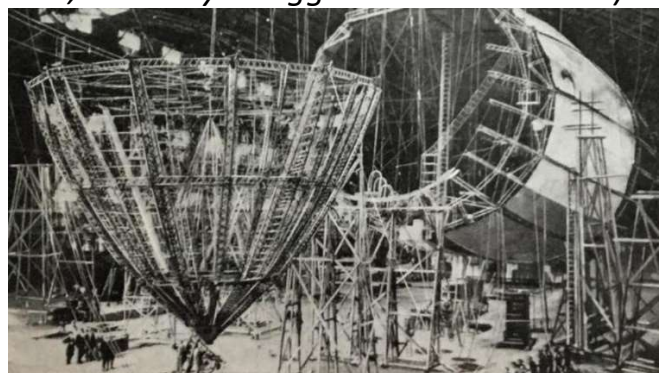
set in a 4 volumes hardback set. Published by the Airship Heritage Trust in collaboration with The Fleet Air Arm Museum

The first edition print run was a limited first run of 50 edition sets, and since its release, the stocks are selling fast. Order yours now via the AHT website, or if you would like to reserve a set, then please contact Alastair Lawson email: alastairlawson1@gmail.com or tel: 07900 692 804.

Airships Unboxing – Kathleen Thurnham



AHT member, Kathleen Thurnham kindly shared her knowledge about her Uncle, William King who, had an extensive career on rigid airships. She shows us his watch which was presented to him, following the return of the breakaway R 33 airship on 16th April 1925. (*The gale drove them to Holland, then the wind abated, and they struggled back to Pulham*)



This short interview is now available to watch online, on our YouTube channel. *To see the video [please click here](#) .*

If you have something you would like to share, then contact Alastair and we can arrange an interview.

Ghost Signs appear around Bedford

Four murals in the style of “Ghost Signs” will be appearing around Bedford and all will depict historic and technical developments from Bedford’s past. Our friends and colleagues at Bedford Creative Arts, whom we worked with in the “Airship Dreams: Escaping Gravity” project, are working on a series of Ghost Signs around Bedford.

Ghost Signs are old hand-painted advertising signs that were painted onto a building and tended to stay for an extended period of time. Some Ghost Signs are still visible on buildings today that were originally painted between the 1890s and 1960s. The BCA Ghost Signs, originating from the art deco style, will have a modern-day artistic twist with a digital element. We want to encourage the public to look out for the signs and then use #GhostSignsBedford on social media to share their experiences.



Of the four, a third piece will be by artist, Keith Hopewell, it will look at the future of flight!

The Bedford airships were cutting edge for their time, but what is coming next?

This is what Keith will explore.

2023 FRIENDLY REMINDER...AND WISHING A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS. WE HATE TO TALK ABOUT MONEY IN THESE TOUGH TIMES, HOWEVER IF YOU DO PAY BY CHEQUE, IT WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED IF YOU COULD SEND YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS WHEN THEY ARE DUE. OUR MEMBERSHIP RUNS FROM 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST DECEMBER EACH YEAR, AND SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE A KEY INCOME TO KEEP THE TRUST AND DIRIGIBLE MAGAZINE RUNNING. SHOULD YOU WISH TO MOVE TO PAYING ONLINE, THEN PLEASE VISIT OUR [MEMBERSHIP PAGE](#) WITH MORE DETAILS.

Member visits:

Trustee Nigel Hills visited to bring and set up our new laptop computer for the office. This will ease the scanning with the A 3 laser scanner purchased last year. Member Andy Millington has again donated his works day voluntary service to us. *Many thanks indeed Andy!*

Donations:

It has been fascinating for us to explore the boxes which Trustee John Baker brought last time. Even more exciting is when my telephone rings, with a donation from a non-member – he found something in his Grandfather’s loft to do with airships – and saw my details on the website. See below, - ‘permissions’ for what never happened – sadly.



My contact emailed: “It is probably not relevant unless you have a copy of the invited guests list, but my Grandfather was Horace Dyson Kingham and was a British Officer attached to the Indian Army, during his time in India he held the ranks of Captain, Major and Lieutenant-Colonel.”

Which leads me to this article online from the Pakistan Defence Website, the donor’s name, many years ago now, apologies – now lost. (Roger.)

Karachi's Airship Shed.

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1 Jun 10, 2016#1

Karachi's Airship Shed

If this generation doesn't then I am sure a generation before ours definitely remembers this famous landmark of Pakistan which was called ***kala chapra*** (the black shed). *(This name was confirmed to Roger by a BOAC, latterly Concorde pilot who flew in there regularly.)*



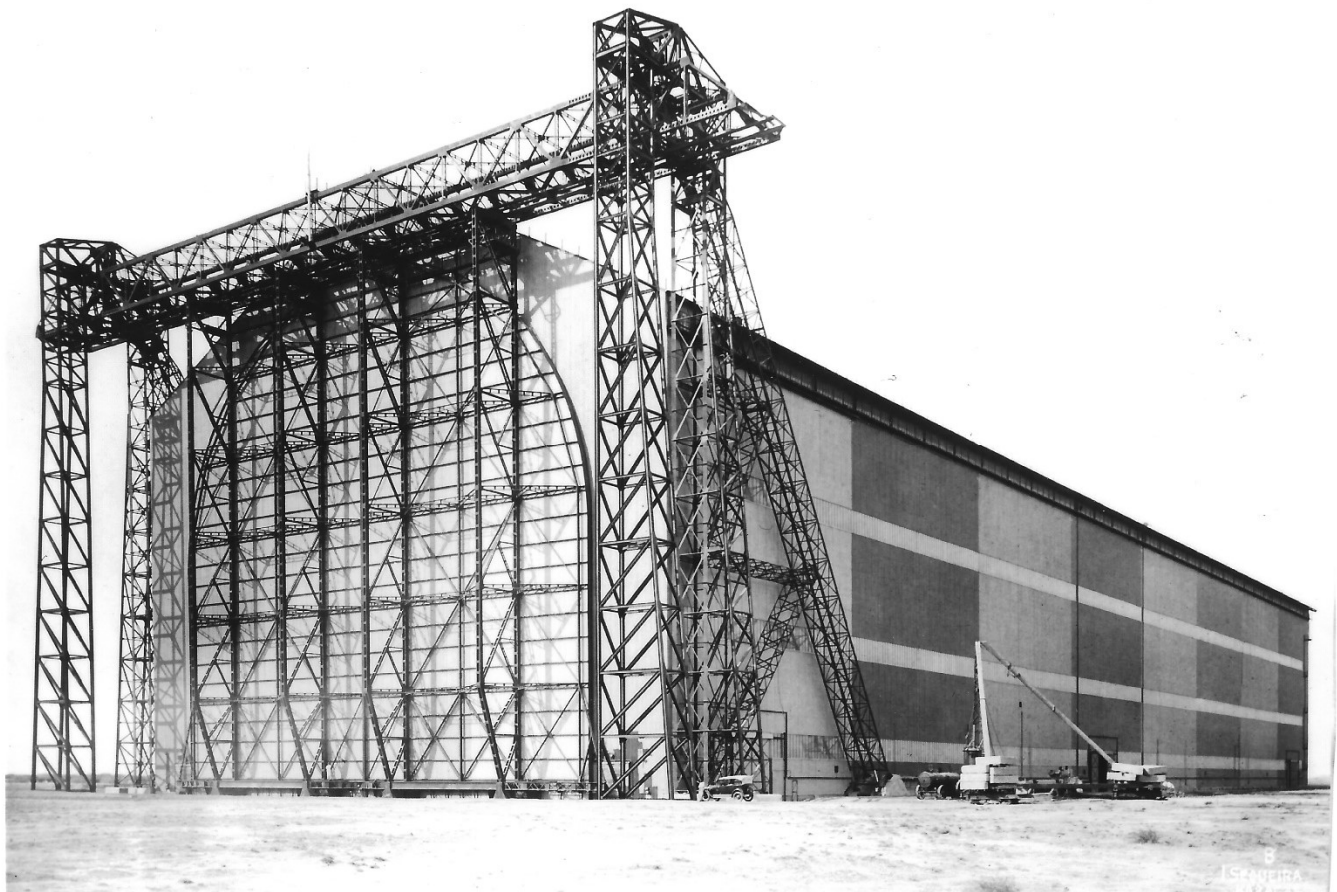
This shed was part of a 3-structure complex to house **R101** and later the **R102** type airships. The other two structures included a 203 ft. tall mooring mast to dock the airship and in the base of the mast were mooring winches and a hydrogen plant to refill the airship.



The base of the mast contained buildings followed along the baseline in an octagonal shape. The hydrogen plant had enough gasometers to completely fill the R101 airship with **5.5 million cubic ft** of gas.

The photo to the right shows the airship mooring mast at Karachi along with the octagonal base building which also housed the mooring winches and hydrogen plant for airships. Similar to the Montreal mast.

The construction on this shed complex started in **1927** and completed in **1929**. The size of this shed was **859ft L x 200ft W x 170ft H**. In 1920s Karachi airport area was nothing but a desolate desert. In contrast to that landscape this shed appeared as such a visual magnanimity that for many years it was used as a visual marker for airplanes attempting VFR (visual) landing in Karachi. Due to the enormity of this structure to its surroundings, local residents of Karachi started calling this shed as *kala chapra* (black shed) – The word '*chapra*' (or '*chappar*') has almost become archaic in Urdu used in Pakistan these days. It means a 'shed'. Many current residents of the city who have seen this structure still recall it by its local name '*kala chapra*.'



The cost of building this shed/mast complex in **1928** came out to be **93000** British pounds.

Following photo is courtesy of PakistaniAviation.com. It is circa **1941** and credited to Brian Knight.

So why was this shed and the adjoining mooring mast complex built in Karachi? It was part of an airship communication scheme of British Government in **1924** to connect far-fetched areas of British Empire with a airship service. Big airplanes were not available then and those which were available were noisy, uncomfortable and not capable of long distance travel. The mode of transport which seemed to have best chance then were the airships. These offered quiet and comfortable journey for passengers and could lift cargo too.

The **Imperial Airship Communications** Scheme was thus developed to provide mail and passenger service from Canada at one end of British Empire to Cardington, England to Egypt in Africa to Karachi in then India. Another leg was proposed to connect India

with Australia later on.

The home base of R101 airships was in Cardington, Bedfordshire England. The mooring mast at Karachi was exactly the same size and style as the one at Cardington (shown below) except for the octagonal building at the base of Karachi mast – similar to that near Montreal Canada.

The length of the shed in Karachi was made **859ft** so that it could fit the future **R102** model of airships which was going to have a length of **822ft**. The shed however never got chance to host either **R101** or **R102** airships.



On **October 4, 1930** the R101 flew from Cardington England on its way to Karachi via Ismailia, Egypt, but on its maiden passenger flight it crashed in France. This crash essentially put an end to R101 type rigid airships and the Imperial Airship Communication scheme of the British Government. Even though the airship program got cancelled, the hangar and mast complex survived for 30 more years.

*This photo is dated **May 19,***

1949. *It shows a portion of the 'black shed' and one can also appreciate the size of this structure in this photo*

In **1952**, the Government of Pakistan decided to bring down the complex and sell the metal structure for scrap. The structure managed to survive till **1960** when it was finally brought down and steel was sold or used on Railway structures and bridges across Pakistan. This brought an end to the lifecycle of this unique piece of civil engineering in Pakistan.

Location of Black Hangar versus Isphahani Hangar?

Writer says: One thing I am not sure myself yet is whether the present day wide-body Isphahani Hangar of PIA is located at exactly the same place where once this Black shed stood or is it in a different location? I know for sure the general vicinity of both hangars is Karachi Airport but don't know if they shared the exact same spot. Our readers' comments and citations are sought here. I'll make the update once we confirm it either way.

Trivia:

Karachi Airport has a railway station on Pakistan's Main Railway track. The station today is simply called 'Airport'. But for few years in the 1920s before Karachi airport was built,

this railway station was called '**Airship**'.

Following photo of kala chapra is from the later days when Karachi Airport had been built and operational. Karachi airport's runway is visible in this photo. This photo too is courtesy of PakistaniAviation.com. It is circa **1941** and credited to Brian Knight.



We also have a range of photos and details of all the airship sheds and masts on our website: www.airshipsonline.com

Dirigible magazine.

If you want a back copy, please email me with your request. All but the most recent are now available to read online.

Rather than saying what we do have, these below are **NOT** available - starting 2010.

WE DO NOT HAVE copies of 'DIRIGIBLE'. NOs 59/60/61/66/67/68/69/86/89/90

All others are priced: **£7.00 incl UK postage, Overseas by arrangement:** We'll work out the costs dependant on geographical location and weight.

Dirigible Binders

These are available in Blue, with Dirigible on the spine. They take up to 12 magazines and will keep your collection perfect in your bookshelves. Great for ease of reference! **£12.00 each incl Postage.**

Books for Sale. (prices incl. UK postage)

THE ZEPPELIN FIGHTERS. Arch Whitehouse. Good Paperback.	£5.00
THE HINDENBERG. Michael M. Mooney. Good Paperback.	£5.00
AIRSHIPS. Robert Jackson ex library with the usual markings. Well read. (NB: Page 188 photo is R-100 being broken up, not as captioned!)	£8.00
THE GERMAN AIR RAIDS ON GREAT BRITAIN 1914-1918. Capt. Joseph Morris. As new Paperback.	£8.00
THE BRITISH AIRSHIP AT WAR 1914-1918. Patrick Abbott. Hardback. Excellent.	£9.00
BATTLEBAGS. British airships of the First World War. Ces Mowthorpe. Hardback. Excellent.	£9.00

DVDs as last newsletter at present.

VHS CASSETTES GALORE, but airplanes **not** airships. Make us an offer – we need to move them. **Can be viewed here. Come and spend time with us by arrangement**, and watch Cassette videos and/or DVDs.

We do ask members and others to help to reduce our surplus stock – ideal as festive or Birthday gifts perhaps? Your money will also help to offset the ongoing cost of the office.

Members will be welcome to come to browse what we have – buying items as well if they wish.

Call for Help: Digitisation Project

Their volunteer assistance with the digitisation particularly, will be greatly appreciated. We also have a router to connect up your laptop.

Newsletter creator Roger has generously offered his time and will personally operate this office/store, since it is under 2 miles from his home, and on a day time 'every 10 mins' bus route from Bingham to Nottingham, and return.

Please telephone Roger before visiting: Home: 0115 933 4795. **Mobile. 07973223111**, to make sure he will be there to let you in.

OFFICE ADDRESS IS:
ST. JAMES BUSINESS PARK
RADCLIFFE ON TRENT, NOTTINGHAM NG12 2JP

Located off the A52 between Radcliffe and Bingham opposite to the Saxondale village turning, 12 miles from the A1 or 3 miles from Radcliffe Railway Station.

Can you help...? Do you get time off from work as a charity initiative like member Andy Millington, if so the AHT needs you!

Also – please do keep searching wherever you are, for 'Airship' related items.

2023 should see exciting times for us all, so do 'Stay safe' everyone,

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

Cheers,




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