



The William Alvey School

R38/ZR2

Centenary Service of Commemoration

St Denys' Church

Thursday 30th September 2021



History of the R.38/ZR2

Originally built in Cardington near Bedford, the R38 airship was designed for Britain's Royal Navy during the final months of the First World War, intended for long-range patrol duties over the North Sea and was the world's largest airship when it first flew in June 1921. Four similar airships were originally ordered by the Admiralty, but orders for three of these (R39, R40 and R41) were cancelled after the armistice with Germany and R.38, the lead ship of the class, was sold to the United States Navy in October 1919 before completion.

The airship was to be given a series of tests before being handed over to the U.S. Navy, who would fly it across the Atlantic. J. E. M. Pritchard, the officer in charge of flight testing, proposed to carry out 100 hours of flight testing, including flights in rough weather.

On the 24th August 1921, after a brief speed trial, a series of turning trials was started at a speed of 62.7 mph and an altitude of 2,500 ft. At 17:37, while close offshore near Hull and watched by thousands of spectators, the structure failed amidships.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing creases down the envelope before both ends drooped. This was followed by a fire in the front section, and then by an explosion which broke windows over a large area. The remains fell into the shallow waters of the Humber Estuary. Sixteen of the 17 Americans, and 28 of the 32 Britons, in the crew were killed.

Amongst those lost, was Charles William Penson, a Sleafordian who attended the William Alvey School. Following the recovery of his body, which was brought back to Sleaford and laid overnight in the Bede House Chapel, the town shops and business's closed for over an hour as a large crowd gathered in the market place for the funeral service in St Denys Church.

Afterwards a procession was formed to the cemetery headed by a band and firing party with arms reversed, followed by the brier and mourners in three carriage's. Three volleys were fired at the graveside with buglers sounding the last post.

Charles is buried at Sleaford Cemetery, details of which can be found in the Sleaford Cemetery Guide and map.

Music

With special thanks to the Ensemble of the Band of the Royal Air Force College

Welcome

From the Revd (Flt Lt) Philip Johnson RAuxAF, Vicar of Sleaford

Civic Welcome

From Councillor Robert Oates, Mayor of Sleaford

Call to worship

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.*

Amen.



Reading

Read by Wing Commander Alison Morton, RAFC Cranwell

The Lost by Herby Corby

*Think of them. You did not die as these
caged in an aircraft that did not return.*

*Whenever hearts have song and minds have peace
or in your eyes the prides of banners burn.*

*Think of these who dreamed and loved as you,
and gave their laughter, gave their sun and snow,
their English grave blessed by their native dew
that you would live. To them this debt you owe.*

*Their glory shines about the sky for ever,
though in these things they left to you, the ghost
should haunt your field of ease and resting river.
Their lives are ended, but dreams are not yet lost*

*If you remember in your laugh and song
these boys who do not sing and laughed not long.
That you would live. To them this debt you owe.*

Their glory shines about the sky forever.

*Though in these things they left to you, the ghost
Should haunt your field of ease and resting river.
Their lives are ended, but dreams are not yet lost*

*If you remember in your laugh and song
These boys who do not sing and laughed not long.*

Reading

A history of the airship disaster

Read by Natalie Mason, teacher at the William Alvey School

Music

Airman's Hymn sung by Cranwell Military Wives Choir

Reading

Aircraftsman 1st Class Charles Penson

Read by Stephen Tapley, headteacher of the William Alvey School

Reading

Read by Matthew Hall, Year 6 pupil

High Flight by John Gillespie Magee

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, - and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...*

*Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew -
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

Moment of reflection

Bible reading by Revd. Philip, Isaiah 40. 29-31

*The everlasting God gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.*

*Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.*

Music

*Ennio Morricone, Gabriel's Oboe arr. Shuttleworth by the Ensemble
of the Band of the Royal Air Force College*

*Two children from the William Alvey Primary School will bring
forward Charles' and his father, James Ambrose Penson's medals .*

Prayer of commendation and Kohima Epitaph

By Revd. Philip

The National Anthem

*God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen:
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us:
God save the Queen.*

The Blessing

Please remain standing while the Principal guests and civic party depart.

Special thanks

We wish to sincerely thank...

Wing Commander Alison Morton , RAF Cranwell,

The Ensemble of the Band of the Royal Air Force College ,

Vice Chairman Councillor Lucille Hagues and County Councillor Andrew Hagues,

The Mayor and Mayoress of Sleaford, Councillor and Mrs Oates,

Jon Major, Head Verger at Hull Minster

Cranwell Aviation Heritage Museum

Megan Keller, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Kate Argyle, Historic England

Western Front Association, Lincoln branch

RAFA Cranwell branch

Mark Bamford, Sleaford Museum

John Dale

Daniel Davies

Every single person who kindly donated to our Just Giving page to raise the funds to buy Charlie's medals- they belong to you too.



British Roll of Honour

George Stanley Anger
Frederick Ernest Burton
Charles Ivor Rae Campbell
Charles Watt Donald
Cecil John Drew
Cecil William Duffield
William Hunter Greener
Sidney James Heath
Ivor Cecil Little
Edward Maitland
Alfred Thomas Martin
John William Augustus Mason
Thomas Frederick Mathewson
Rupert Samuel Montagu
William Oliver
John Robert Pannell
Roy Parker
Charles William Penson
John Edward Maddock Pritchard
John Rye
Frank Smith
Eric Edward Steere
Godfrey Main Thomas
Harold Thompson
Frank Warren
Richard Whithington
Victor Houghton Wicks
John William Wilson

American Roll of Honour

Charles Ivan Aller
Valentine Nicolas Bieg
Emory Wilbur Coil
Robert Monroe Coons
Lloyd Erwin Cowl
Marcus Herbert Esterly
John Trustcott Hancock
Henry Willets Hoyt
William. A. Julius
Maurice Lay
Charles Gray Little
Albert Lenin Loftin
Louis Henry Maxfield
Ad Pettit
William Jeremiah Steele
George Welch

