

The Museum Collection

No.33

The R.A.O.B. Combined Sections Memorial Service for the Airship R101



A story and tribute to the members of the Order
from all Sections of the R.A.O.B. who attended the
Memorial Service of the Airship R101 on
Sunday 13th October 2013

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Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Grand Lodge of England

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Introduction

The reason for producing this book in the Museum Collection series is an attempt to show the Order what can be done for the furtherance of Buffaloinism when the minds of members are set in trying to bring together a vast number of members of different banners at a public function to show to the world that the face of Buffaloinism is one huge philanthropical society working for the good of mankind.

From the early days of the setting up of the All Sections Consultative Committee in December 1949, when representatives of nine of the ten Grand Lodges in the United Kingdom had gathered in Prince Henry's Room in Fleet Street, and had there subscribed to an agreement under which they acknowledged for the first time that the R.A.O.B. was one brotherhood, a brotherhood composed of a number of Sections each operating independently and enjoying sovereign rights within our own organisation, all seeking to further the same fundamental principles.

In the ensuing years, this gathering of representatives went on to set up an agreement which resulted in the First Constitutional Agreement being signed sixty years ago, on Friday 18th December 1953 by nine of the ten Sections of the R.A.O.B. operating within the United Kingdom.

At the April 2011 meeting of the All Sections Consultative Committee, I was elected as Chairman of that body and as I had been thinking for a good number of years along the lines of many of our past chairmen who had dreamed of an R.A.O.B. under one banner I made the following speech at my installation as chairman.

It was with a little bit of apprehension that I made this speech as I for one did not want to seem too forward and certainly was not thinking about amalgamation of any of the banners, so with my best voice I put forward the following proposal.

“First of all a vote of thanks to Brother Peter McPhail for the way he has conducted the meetings of this committee over the last two years, his quiet manner and his undoubted ability to chair the meetings will be a hard act to follow, I hope that I can continue in the same vein.

Brethren, I thank you for the confidence you have shown in my abilities by electing me as your Chairman of this august committee for the next two years and because of your faith I shall take this opportunity to address you on a subject so relevant, that Banners can now only ignore it at their peril and to do so would not be in the best interests of the Order in general or indeed, its Membership. I make an apology if I am breaching protocol by giving the following statement but I make no apology for its contents, and before you start to furiously scribble down the contents of this address I have prepared copies of it to be available to all members present.

Over sixty years ago, in 1951, Brother Leonard Percey said that the All Sections Committee had brought to fruition, a conception of unity within the Order, and he recalled that in December 1949, representatives of nine of the ten Grand Lodges in the country had foregathered in Prince Henry’s Room in Fleet Street, and had there subscribed to an agreement under which they acknowledged for the first time that the R.A.O.B. was one brotherhood, a brotherhood composed of a number of Sections each operating independently and enjoying sovereign rights within our own organisation, all seeking to further the same fundamental principles.

In the ensuing years, this gathering of representatives went on to set up an agreement which resulted in the First Constitutional Agreement being signed on Friday 18th December 1953 by nine of the ten Sections of the R.A.O.B. operating within the United Kingdom.

Members of the Consultative Committee and the bodies it represents are mutually concerned with the well being of the undefined and conglomerate "Order" and with the well being and status of the various independent organisations which, with a liaison or bond of goodwill, form in effect our Order as a whole.

For many years now there has been a growing urge amongst the members of the Order that the Sections should get together, in the spirit of fraternity, on matters which affect their common good.

It is now a matter of history that as a result of meetings between Grand Primo's and Grand Secretaries of nine out of ten recognised banners, the R.A.O.B. All Sections Consultative Committee came into being in January 1953 with a Constitution approved by all the participant Banners.

The need for solidarity in the ranks of brotherhood has been recognised ever since the formation of the All Sections Consultative Committee and there have always been idealists prepared to try and try again to achieve the ideal Order under one umbrella. This has been an idea of mine, and a lot of other members for a good number of years now and has been re-vitalised, certainly for me, by talking to other like minded members over the last few years.

Quite a goodly proportion of the work put into it in years gone past was wasted because it was backed by wishful thinking and much of it was abortive because the acid of personal or sectional aggrandisement corroded the idea. We all had a share in these failings

and on no one section or banner can the blame of delay be placed.

While it is not going to be easy to convince all sections of our desire to come under one umbrella, not easy even to convince our own people, we must make a start before we all go under.

The varying factions within our sections has in the past prevented development of fraternal contact but it has given us an opportunity for the underlying suspicions to die down and the new ideas to take root. Our friends begin to accept as a fact that all we wanted from them was their friendship and that the dread word "amalgamation" was just a word we had no desire to use unless and until the initiative came from the other side. That initiative must now come from the All Sections Consultative Committee. Its real object is to provide the means for coordinating opinion and for securing cooperation for the common good.

To that end I have a proposal to place before this Committee, and that is, I would invite Grand Primo's and Grand Secretaries of the constituent sections to a forum to discuss the future of the Order as a whole and to see if we can find a common ground to progress these thoughts. I offer the facilities of Grove House, Harrogate as a meeting place, accommodation will be provided at very reasonable rates.

The forum would have to take place mid week and because of the importance that I place upon this subject it would have to be held during the autumn of this year. I envisage a stay of 2 nights which will of course include the wives or partners. If it is at all possible I would like to see the first of such meetings take place preferably before the next meeting of this committee in October.

I am sure we all realise that there may be many obstacles placed in front of us, many problems to

overcome but these are not insurmountable, much needs to be done and if we do not start it now it may never happen, talking together costs nothing and only good can be the end result and I for one look forward to the final overcome of those difficulties which in the past has prevented the achievement of a united brotherhood. A united Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, what a result! It may take years, but I cannot stress too strongly, IT MUST BE STARTED!!

It is not a new concept, during the early 1920s a group of brothers gathered together, realising that several smaller banners were rapidly going out of existence and invited all these smaller banners of the day to join them in an attempt to give them a new lease of life, that resulted in the section of the Order now known as the Grand Council being formed, so, if we take that part of the overall history of our Order eighty seven years ago, we can see that the concept does and has worked. Let us try and move that concept into the modern world of Buffaloism.

Brotherhood I believe is indivisible and the latest agreement of the All Sections Consultative Committee is an expression of our joint faith. It is not going to be easy, we will have to look long and hard at ourselves and be prepared to make some brave decisions which we can carry back to our sections for their individual discussions, we must not enter into this venture in anger or critical terms, but rather in the spirit of free and frank exchanges on progress and forward thinking. We must not just imitate history, we must learn from it and not be afraid to discuss the relevance of what we do. It will be a long process but by listening to others we will better understand the way to go forward.

Whatever our Section, I am sure we are all anxious to see Buffaloism become an even greater fraternity, to

see the sense of brotherhood intensified and to see its good work and prestige still further advanced. We all trust that the Consultative Committee will succeed in uniting all Sections in a closer bond of fellowship, and in making our great Order even grander and more honoured than it has ever been before. We have an unbounding faith in the ultimate objective of an International organisation with Brotherhood as its basis to which Lodges and Banners can subscribe.

Please do not go back to your various Banners and forget or loosely mention this item, take stock of the situation before us and urge discussion at the earliest opportunity and confirm that you are able to meet with us all and discuss this subject until we are resolved. I feel that no opportunity for interchange of views should be lost. It is of the greatest importance to the survival of our beloved Order. I urge you to support this proposal”.

This proposal led to the first meeting of Grand Primos and Grand Secretaries on 4th and 5th October 2011 at Grove House, hosted by the Grand Primo 2011 Bro.



Terry Billingham and attended by Bro. Ken Hammerton (Grand Secretary) Grand Lodge of England Ltd.; Bro. Gordon Ford (Grand Primo) Grand Lodge of England Ltd.; Bro. Geoff Gurden (General Secretary) Grand Council; Bro. Richard Allerton (Grand Trustee) Grand Council; Bro. Peter McPhail (Past Grand Primo) Grand Middlesex Banner; Bro. Ken Newman (Past Grand Primo) Grand Middlesex Banner; Bro. Chris McMahon (Grand Secretary) Grand Lodge of England; Bro. Alan Egan (Deputy Grand Primo) Grand Lodge of England; Bro. Gerry Shirley (Secretary A.S.C.C.) and Bro. Mick Walker (Chairman A.S.C.C.)

The forum was completed by a Gala Dinner in the Great Hall at Grove House, unfortunately the Grand Lodge of England Limited members had to return home in the evening so they missed the dinner, but nevertheless, it was enjoyed by those who stayed.



So successful was this first meeting that it was decided that further meetings would be arranged to follow the All Sections Consultative Committee meetings

during 2012 and to become a regular item in the A.S.C.C. Calendar.

Most of the topics discussed were reported in the Grand Lodge agenda and have been a regular feature in subsequent Grand Lodge agendas.

I place this introduction here as a reminder that the theme for the following service of remembrance was one of unity and working together.

Read and enjoy.

Mick Walker

November 2013



Ordinarily, I would not dream of updating the Museum Collection Book No. 24 as the whole story of the R101 was recounted in that publication but as this was such an historical milestone in the annals of Buffaloism and generated so much interest, I thought it warranted another book, and I now publish for the interest of the members of the Order what is my version of the events that took place on Sunday 13th October 2013.

Bro. Tony Allen, Grand Primo 2013, had been to my house earlier in the year and whilst we were chatting about various things, as you do, the subject of the R101 memorial service held in 2010 cropped up. The 2010 service was the 80th anniversary of the disaster and the Grand Primo Bro. Hayden Bennett requested that the R.A.O.B., G.L.E. be given access to this service which was being held under the auspices of the Airship Heritage Trust. Places were duly arranged but we were limited to about 20 members. The account of this service is recalled in the Museum Collection Number 24.

Tony had decided that the best date for this service was Sunday 13th October 2013 and that it be organised by the R.A.O.B. G.L.E. so that we could have a service with our members. The Grand Secretary, Brother Chris McMahan, was approached and he started the ball rolling, contacting the vicar of St. Mary's church, Cardington and sending out a circular letter advertising the event.

It was decided from the start that because the names of the R.A.O.B. members who perished in the disaster had belonged to many of the Banners that make up the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, that the event would be advertised as an inter banner function and we invite all the Banners and Sections that make up the All Sections Consultative Committee to take part.

The problem of organising the Order of Service cards was easily overcome as the Provincial Grand Secretary of the Bedfordshire Province, Bro. Chris Buckle, had

an original copy of the first service held in 1930 which he kindly sent to me. Armed with this we decided to stick as close to this original as possible so I drew up a draft copy and sent it to the Grand Secretary who in turn sent it to the vicar for his observations. I must say at this stage the vicar was most helpful, he made quite a few suggestions which were taken on board.

Nothing really happened during the next six months, although the arrangements were still going on in the background, there seemed to be very little interest in the event.

Brother Tony Allen had arranged to pay a visit to Canada in late September, returning in early October. As nothing seemed to be happening he asked me if I would liaise with the Grand Secretary to get things moving, this I did and as it turned out the Grand Secretary had other functions on during the proposed date so he would not be able to attend. It was then that I took over the final arrangements, Chris McMahon suggested that there might be as many as 100 of our members attending and that I should prepare and print about 150 Order of Service Cards. I contacted the vicar, Reverend Stephen Smith, who was very obliging, I spoke with him for nearly an hour and between us we came to an agreement on the way it was to be conducted, the choir was booked and the organist knew what he had to do, especially where the Absent Brethren Hymn was concerned. This conversation with the Vicar was to be the pivotal point in the arrangements, although he was the vicar at the 80th Anniversary, he had no idea what the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes was about and what we stood for but I gave him a brief outline of our activities which he was to incorporate in his opening address.

The evening prior to the 13th was the Investiture of the Grand Alderman of Benevolence, Bro. Albert Lloyd, where not too many people attended, I took 50 of the Order of Service cards with me on that occasion where I could hand them out to prospective attendees, Bro.

Andy Gratton was sat next to me and he suggested that he sells the cards for a donation to the Grand Primo's appeal, this proved to be very popular as souvenirs and raised quite a bit for the appeal. I also asked Bro. Keith Bland, who was there to capture the investiture on camera, if he would take the camera to the parade the following day, to which he readily agreed.

Come the day, and I must admit I was getting worried about the amount of people going to turn up as I had not received any indication that the word had got around plus the fact that the weather did not look too good.

My fears were unfounded however, when we drove up the road to the Church, cars were parked everywhere.

A visit to the church first, with Brother Tony to speak with Reverend Stephen Smith and have a dry run through the service, this was important as we were due to march down to the cemetery after the service, but what if it was raining? Rev. Stephen said that the R.A.O.B. Funeral Service could be held in the Church.

It seemed that everybody had assembled at the Kings Head, Cardington Green prior to marching down to the church, when I got there the sun shone briefly



then the rain came, undaunted, the members hoisted umbrellas and still carried on congregating. At 2.45 the rain had lessened, which was a blessing.



In the absence of the Grand Chamberlain, Bro. Andy Cattanach, who could not attend due to illness, the Grand Tyler Bro. Peter



Spence took charge and assembled the members in some kind of marching order. The parade proper began, with the Grand Tyler Bro. Peter

Spence in the lead with his baton held high and proud. He was closely followed by the Grand Primo G.L.E. Bro. Tony Allen along with Bro. Geoff Gurden Grand Council General Secretary, in his capacity as Chairman of the All Sections Consultative Committee, followed closely by Bro. Bill Jones, Grand Primo Grand Lodge of England Ltd.; Bro. Toby Foot Deputy Grand Primo of the Grand Lodge of England; Bro. Gordon Ford Immediate Past Grand Primo Grand Lodge of England Ltd.; Bro. Steve Minchin Grand Council Treasurer representing the Grand Council; Bro. Rod Smith, Deputy Grand Primo Grand Lodge of England Ltd.; Bro. Norman York Grand Treasurer Grand Lodge of England; Bro. Reg Vass Grand Primo Grand Middlesex Banner;



Bro. Peter McPhail Past Grand Primo Grand Middlesex Banner; Bro. Ken Newman Past Grand Primo Grand Middlesex Banner; along with Bro. Hayden Bennett, Bro. Terry Billingham, and Bro. Barrie Kingston, past



Grand Primo's of the Grand Lodge of England, followed by a goodly number of Brethren from all sections assembled.

Bro. Den Whittenbury

who was representing the Grand Executive Banner didn't join the march as he was busy with the video camera to record the event.

There was no band playing marching music, just a long procession of members dodging puddles, with a determined step, heads held high and very proud, umbrellas in the folded position.

Arrival at the church door was met by one of the church Wardens, Bro. Jim who ushered the party to their seats, most of the RAOB Ladies were already in position as were members of the congregation, the



Grand Primo's taking seats to the front to enable them to stand in front of the congregation where they later read out the names of the known members who were on that fateful flight.

The vicar came to the lectern and welcomed everybody to this special service, we then sang the first



hymn which was "Fight the good fight", interestingly the vicar had informed us that this hymn was number 101 in the hymn book, I wonder if this hymn was chosen on the



original service because of its rather unique number.

There then followed a lesson read by the Vicar after which he gave an address encompassing the history of the R101 and the work that thousands of people had put in to make the dream of the airship come true, especially here in Cardington where the village church

of St. Marys played an important part in the everyday life of its people.

Next came the hymn “Praise my soul the King of Heaven”, sung in a very robust way.



The Grand Primo, Bro. Tony Allen was next up to the lectern giving his address, bearing in mind he had very little time to compose an address he nevertheless made a sterling effort and I print it here for you to appreciate, the theme was always going to be along the lines of the R.A.O.B. working together as one.

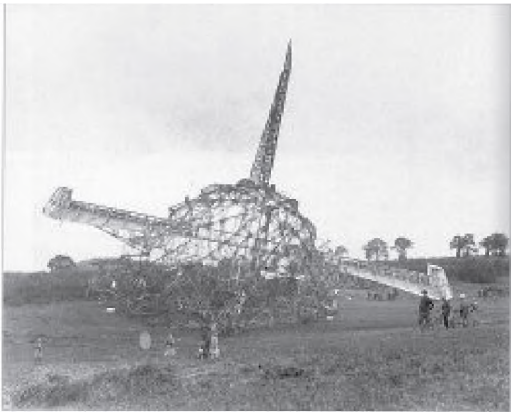
“Ladies, Gentlemen and members of the Order. First of all I would like to thank Reverend Stephen Smith for the use of his beautiful church for this service, and secondly thank you for your support in your attendance here today, and for allowing me the opportunity to address you all.

For those of you who do not know a great deal about the history of the R101, I will give you a short précis of the events leading up to the disaster.

The airship R101 was built here at Cardington in 1929, well that’s when she was completed, it took 3 years to design & build. Most people have heard of the R101, it was the largest lighter than air airship at the time. The R101 and her slightly smaller sister ship, the R100 were the start of the great Imperial Airship Scheme.

It was a plan to link the far reaches of the Empire with quick travel. At that time aircraft were in their infancy, and travelling any great distance had either

to be a sea voyage, or a cramped aeroplane making several stops along the way. A trip to the other side of the world would have to be taken by sea.



On her maiden flight, just under eight hours after leaving her mooring mast at Cardington, she suffered a drastic loss of hydrogen gas and came down just outside Beauvais in France.

The escaping gas caught light, and the airship was consumed in fire. Eight of the fifty four on



b o a r d managed to escape, but two of the i n i t i a l survivors did not recover from t h e i r injuries and died, one the day after, and

the other, two days after, bringing the total deaths to forty eight. Of the fifty four on board at the time, approximately half were members of the Order, including Lord Thomson of Cardington, the Air Minister.

Their remains were returned to London where they laid in state until 11th October 1930, when they were brought to Bedford by train and a procession then took them to Cardington village where they were laid to rest

in a communal grave in Cardington cemetery, almost to the hour that they departed the Saturday before.

The communal tomb was completed in 1931 and inscribed with the names of those who perished, and today this memorial still dominates the churchyard.

Of the thousands of workers who built the airship, many were members of our Order and they were very proud of the work they had achieved, in fact a vast number of workers were there to cheer the lift off, even the handling party which consisted of some 400 men, many of whom were members of the Order.

The maiden voyage drew large crowds, there were traffic jams for four and a half miles, from Cardington to Bedford, and roads became a solid parking lot.

The airship was the size of an ocean liner but could only carry 50 people.

Because there were so many of our Order involved with the airship, today sees a milestone reached with many Banners attending as one body.

The R.A.O.B. has never been content to stand still; its strength has always been its willingness to move forward with the times and to provide resources which changing conditions demand.

This service today is borne of a fervent desire to have within the Order a fresh impetus to carry us forward into the next generation. Today has been framed in such a way as to be a universal gathering of all our members, and by its very nature to serve as an example to our membership how close we are, not united in grief, but united in remembrance.

The progress we have made in recent years cannot be denied, neither can the efforts of those involved today be shelved; we are continuing to rebuild our once great Order.

Let us continue in the same vein that has been the hallmark of our Order, Benevolence, Conviviality and most of all Friendship”.

We had given some thought about reciting the Royal British Legion Exhortation by Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) “They shall not grow old as we who are left grow old”, but with the service being about the R.A.O.B. members it was decided that Tony should finish his address by simply saying

“We will remember them”.

Then followed that ever popular hymn “Abide with me” and if the other hymns didn’t raise the roof, this one certainly did. Next came the prayers from the vicar and moment of quiet reflection.

During the next hymn “Eternal Father Strong to Save” the vicar announced that a collection would be taken to help with the upkeep of the church, six volunteers from the RAOB were overseeing the collection, and knowing the generosity of the RAOB members, the vicar would be well pleased with the result. It was during this hymn that I went outside to check on the weather, it was raining very hard, so I whispered to the vicar ‘Stephen, it’s chucking it down’, so the decision was made there and then that the RAOB Funeral Service would take place in the church.



After the hymn 'Eternal Father', representatives of the five Banners attending came to the front and each in turn read out a name, there were eighteen known names of the members of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes who were aboard the Airship on that fateful flight.

I list for information those representatives who read out the names, from left to right, Bro. Tony Allen, Grand Primo Grand Lodge of England; Bro. Reg Vass, Grand Primo Grand Middlesex Banner; Bro. Bill Jones, Grand Primo Grand Lodge of England Limited; Bro. Geoff Gurden, General Secretary Grand Council in his capacity as Chairman of the All Sections Consultative Committee; Bro. Steve Minchin, Grand Treasurer Grand Council; Bro. Dennis Whittenbury, Past Grand Primo Grand Executive Banner.

I also list for information, the known names of the eighteen members who were on that flight, again in no particular order;

1. Brigadier-General, The Right Hon. Lord Thomson of Cardington, Air Minister.
2. Wilfred Moule (Engineer) No. 2 car.
3. George W. Short (Charge-Hand Engineer).
4. William H. King (Engineer).
5. Maurice F. Littlekitt (Engineer) No. 1 car.
6. Hector E. Ford (Assistant Coxswain).
7. Charles A. Burton (Engineer).
8. Albert H. Watkins (Engineer).
9. Martin G. Rampton (Assistant Coxswain).
10. Sidney E. Scott (Charge-Hand Engineer).
11. Squadron Leader Ernest L. Johnston (Navigator).
12. Major George Herbert Scott (ADAD Flying).
13. Leonard E. Oughton (Assistant Coxswain).
14. Arthur J. Richardson (Rigger).
15. Cecil E. Taylor (Rigger)
16. Arthur (Ginger) Victor Bell (Engineer) No. 5 car - survivor.

17. Joseph H. Binks (Engineer) No. 5 car - survivor.
18. Victor Savory (Engineer) No. 3 car - survivor.

The last hymn was of course our ever faithful Absent Brethren hymn “Sprit of Truth”, and although the choir in attendance were very good, the seventy five or so brethren in the church were in such fine voice I think the singing of that hymn could have been heard in Bedford, it was enough to make the hairs on your arm stand up, I personally was very proud of our members in attendance, for when the time called, they were of one voice.

The prayers and blessing saw the close of the official service, we were supposed to march down to the cemetery for the laying of the wreaths and the RAOB GLE Funeral service but as I said before, the weather was not being very kind to us so we formed the link inside the church, in the aisle, and the wreaths were placed on the floor at the head of the link.



Brother
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hallmarks, for ceremonies, during his year as Grand Primo, and we once again sang the Absent Brethren Hymn, this time with no organ accompaniment, what a pleasure to hear, male voices in one accord all standing proud and singing their hearts out.

By the time we had finished the rain had abated and most of the members paraded, in silence, led by the Grand Tyler, Brother Peter Spence together with Reverend Stephen Smith, down to the cemetery for the laying of wreaths.



The parade to the R101 Tomb



The assembled Brothers about to lay the wreaths



The rear end of the Tomb

Back to the church for a very welcome cup of tea or coffee and biscuits and a chat with some of the parishioners and the vicar, also the members were renewing old acquaintances and making new ones, as we do when a group of Buffaloes assemble, I must say, the vicar, Reverend Stephen Smith, was very impressed with the whole day and how well it went, so impressed was he, that he would like to have another service, just like this one next year.

Perhaps one of the other banners might like to organise next year's parade, I know that the invitation was thrown open the following week when the All Sections Consultative Committee met, as it happens, the date of next years' service will fall on Sunday 5th October which will be eighty four years to the date of the crash.



Because the event was organised by the Grand Lodge of England, the lesson to be learnt by each member of the Order is not one of victory for G.L.E., it is just a clear victory for the members in all banners who place the principles of brotherhood high above all “banner” interests. I sincerely hope that nothing has been lost in this venture, indeed, we live in hope that the love of well-doing under the banner of Buffaloism still lives and flourishes.

You came not because you knew them, but because each of us is part of each other. We have a faith in the belief of a common humanity.

Those of us, who like the brethren of the All Sections Consultative Committee and all who have gone before us, have dreamed dreams of a Buffaloism which will bring all banners into one cohesive and coherent whole will rejoice that, even though it may only be one small step, it shows that our ideals are nearer to a closer working together, and is concrete evidence that the Buffaloism of our visions will come, not by any banner wielding its superior force, not by either blandishment or coercion, but by the urgent and irrepressible demand that lives in the human soul, for a consolidation of all the forces which exist to build into glorious life, the beautiful ideal we have named “Buffaloism”, and which constitutes the base upon which a true brotherhood of man will one day arise.

No account of this event would be complete unless reference and thanks were made to Bro. Mick Walker, Bro. Chris McMahon and Reverend Stephen Smith for the work they put in to make this a very special event, they exercised the tolerance and patience which overcame every obstacle and made progress possible.

I also give my thanks to Bo. Mick Brewster who sold and distributed the Order of Service cards at the entrance to the church and personal thanks to Bro. Simon Austin who acted as my pusher, as I was wheelchair bound on the day.

The following letter was sent to all banners from the Grand Primo Bro. Tony Allen and I print in full the text of that letter.

“Dear Sir and Brothers

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the representation at the recent R101 Airship Memorial from your section. Having attended many functions of the R.A.O.B. it gave me much pleasure that five sections came together as one body for this service and that we stood as one. It is not something that one section can claim as their own, but as one; we can claim a milestone that will move us forward together.

I certainly hope that this and perhaps other functions can be arranged where the R.A.O.B. can stand shoulder to shoulder and that each section would take the lead in the arrangements. I know as far as the R101 Memorial is concerned the Rev. Smith would be more than happy to have a service of this type in 2014. Rather than any one section taking things as their own, I would issue an open invitation for another section to continue with the service at Cardington.

I know that the Grand Lodge of England Ltd. are thinking of a tribute in respect of the WW1 and WW2 Ambulances and they will of course gain our support. So please would you make your intentions known if you wish to take on the R101 Service or any other gathering.

I would like to place on record my grateful thanks to you all for your attendance and positive attitude to being part of one body, one face of unity towards the public and our members.

Yours fraternally.

Bro. Tony Allen, R.O.H.,

Grand Primo, Grand Lodge of England.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to include an article from Brother Geoff Gurden, Grand Council General Secretary, who placed the following in the Grand Council Newsletter Number 74.

“I do not think I have ever left an R.A.O.B. function with such a sense of pleasure and satisfaction at having been involved in a most worthwhile event. Yes, I had been aware of this happening back in April, but it was most definitely on the back burner until just a few days prior, when the Grand Council Treasurer mentioned in conversation that he would be attending and I decided to join him.

I refer of course to the Memorial Service held on the 13th October in remembrance of the Brethren of the Order who were killed in the disaster of His Majesty's Airship R101, on the 4th October, 1930, eighty three years ago.

Why was I so pleased ? Well, somewhere in the region of seventy five Buffs had assembled for the parade and service, mostly Grand Lodge of England members but with added representation from The Grand Council, The Grand Lodge of England Limited, The Grand Executive Banner, The Grand Middlesex Banner and the All Sections Consultative Committee. Sadly the weather did not look on our actions kindly and there were many umbrellas in evidence. It was decreed that the original request for full regalia was to be reduced to collar, sash and jewel in view of the conditions, but it was still a pretty impressive body of Brothers who gathered at the Kings Arms on Cardington village green to start the short procession to the Church.

It seemed to me that this was what it was all about, Brothers walking together with no thoughts of barriers or differences, but with warmth and good fellowship.

The chief representatives of the Banners present were assembled towards the front of the parade; Bro. Steve Minchin R.O.H. representing Grand Council with myself, as Chairman of the A.S.C.C., representing that body.

When all were congregated the church seemed full and the Service of Remembrance began at 3 p.m. with an opening address by the Rev. Stephen Smith outlining the history of the R101 and details of the subsequent disaster on the 4th October 1930.

Additionally, in the Order of Service the following statement was made: "The R.A.O.B. were not given any part in the original parade on the 11th October 1930, but in order for members of the Order to pay their respects, The Bedford & District Province organised a memorial service held the following month on Sunday 16th November.

On the day some 6 or 7 thousand people attended the memorial service which was held in Shed No 2, those that attended, including the Grand Primo, were estimated at 5,000 Buffs".

The story of the ill-fated inaugural flight to India which ended so tragically in Alonne, near Beauvais in Northern France is well documented and remains full of controversy to this day.

It had been intended to march from the church to the memorial in the nearby cemetery but the rain had intensified briefly and the decision was made to lay the wreaths within the church. Despite this several Brothers did make the short journey there and then the event finally broke up in farewells.

Both Brother Steve and I were extremely proud to have represented Grand Council and there is talk of a follow-up parade next year. It would be very gratifying to see Grand Council well attended there".



The following pages show many of the photographs that were taken on the day which could not be included in the text, they are a pictorial reminder that the representing Banners were gathered as one.

Grateful thanks go to Bro. Keith Bland and Bro. Mark Dench for the use of the many pictures they had taken on the day, they both braved the cold and rain to bring these pictorial pages together.

It would not be complete without the thanks given to Bro. Dennis Whittenbury of the West Hertfordshire Province who captured all of the event on video, I'm sure that when the DVD is released it will be a very graphic reminder of the excellent day spent in Cardington and in good company.

The photographs are in no particular order neither are they focussed on any one member, I have tried to put them in a chronological order but with so many pictures to choose from I may have failed miserably in my efforts, but none the less they are a good set of pictures.



Wet, but still full of life



I can't believe Bob Fairbrass is using a Grand Tylers broolly



Damp but cheerful



Wendel looking for Divine inspiration



I'm alright Jack



Grand Lodge of England



Grand Lodge of England Limited



Grand Lodge of England Limited and Grand Middlesex Banner



be careful, this is the first puddle



The short march



Bedfordshire lads



almost there



awaiting the arrival



Moving out from the pub



Not quite so wet



First call for assembly



Second call for assembly



A fine body of men



Are we ready?



Mind the puddles



Pay attention please



Somebody is out of step



Dennis Whittenbury bringing up the rear (and the video camera)



Nearing the church



A fine body of men (& Women)



Almost there



Please wait



Grand Lodge of England & Grand Middlesex Banner



A packed church



Bro. Tony Allen



Reg Vass, Bill Jones, Geoff Gurden, Mick Walker



the entrance to the church



Reverend Stephen Smith



Tony Allen, Reg Vass, Bill Jones



Geoff Gurden, Steve Minchin, Den Whittenbury



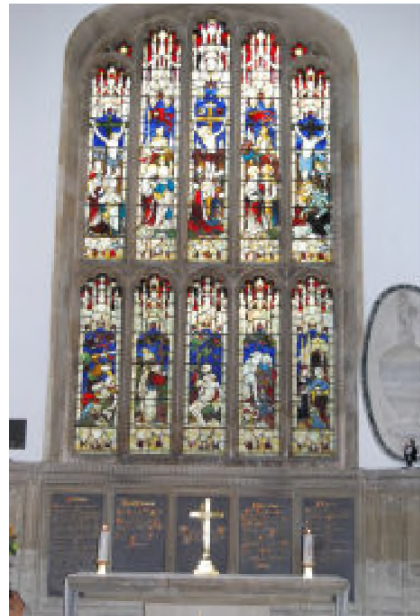
View of the church from the main road



the magnificent organ and choir stalls



Bedfordshire Province wreath



one of the excellent stained glass windows



The Procession



The Tomb with the Royal Air Force Insignia



Bro. Bill Jones, Grand Lodge of England Limited



Bro. Reg Vass, Grand Middlesex Banner



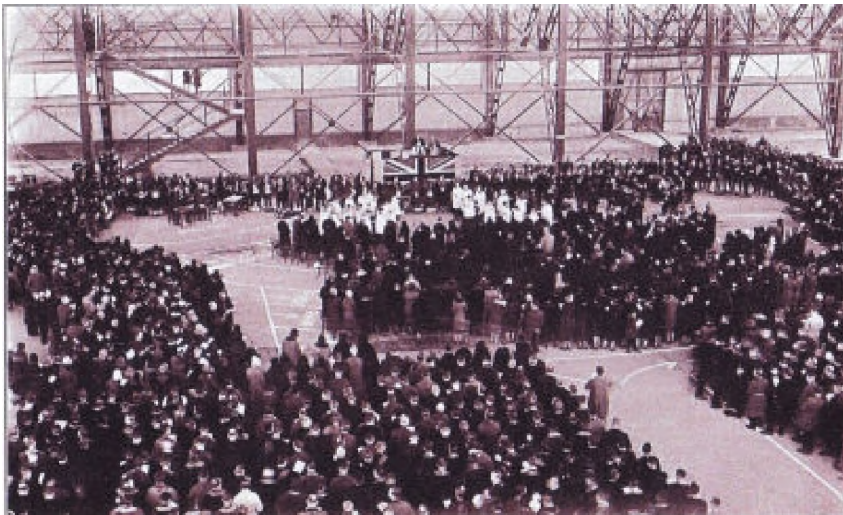
Bro. Gordon Ford, Grand Lodge of England Limited



Bedfordshire Deputy Provincial Grand Primo



The headstone of Brother Arthur (Ginger) Victor Bell, one of the survivors who was later interred in a separate grave very close to the main tomb, in the background.



First memorial service, shed No. 2



forming the link



Procession to the Tomb



the remains of the flag that survived the crash



Another stained glass window

This pictorial session then completes the book, I hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as I had in the production of it.

Also available in the Museum Collection series

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- No.31 Souvenir of our new Orphanage.
- No.32 Theory of the R.A.O.B.
- No.33 R101 October 2013

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