

THE GIRL IN THE DECKCHAIR



BEDFORD ARTS
CREATIVE

H
The Higgins
BEDFORD

Miss Dorothy Joan Cochrane-Forster 21st March 1895 – 10th May 1980

On 22nd November 1929 two female colleagues at the Royal Airship Works, Cardington were preparing to put on the best possible experience for the following day for a group of visiting VIPs and photographers. While Col Vincent Richmond's secretary, Miss Foster, went into Bedford to buy flowers and table cloths to enhance the passenger quarters, her senior colleague with almost the same surname, Miss Cochrane-Forster, was seeking out suitably smart but warm clothes to wear for her visit to the airship.

Whilst the latter's time on the airship on 23rd November is recorded for posterity in the apparently informal, but probably posed, photo, sometimes referred to as "The girl in the deckchair", we really know almost nothing about Miss Foster, the secretary.

That we know anything at all about Miss Cochrane-Forster is entirely due to one of those treasured moments in the life of any museum curator or archivist, when – out of the blue – a contact is made with a trove of new information. In this case, the chair of the Airship Heritage Trust received the following email, resulting in the acquisition of an amazing album:

"I have come into possession of a photograph/scrap album apparently having belonged to D.C. Forster, Senior Staff at the Royal Airship Works at Cardington and covering the period 18.12.1925 to 1932. The album contains many photographs of a variety of groups of staff, the R100, R101 and R33, a small hand annotated map of the R100 proving flight to Montreal and back. There is a photo of HRH Edward VIII visiting Cardington. There are also newspaper cuttings about the R101 and others from the Aero Exhibition at Olympia in 1929."

One of the newsclipping photos was of a woman reclining in a very ordinary deck chair in the extraordinary surrounding of the promenade deck in the airship R101, with the airship's navigating officer, Squadron Leader E.L. Johnston leaning nonchalantly on the handrail behind her. The photo is annotated 'Self & Sqdn



Newspaper clipping from D.C. Forster's photograph album.
Courtesy of Alastair Lawson, Airship Heritage Trust and Alan Slater.

Leader Johnson'. 'Self' being the woman who assembled the album – Miss D.C. Forster, who has annotated the album to indicate she was a member of the 'senior staff'. Miss Forster is wearing sensible flat white shoes, a warm winter coat and a felt cloche hat which seems to have a band with a bow or flower on it. Another newspaper photo from the same day shows two women MPs, some men and an unnamed woman standing in the same location on the promenade deck. The unnamed woman is marked with a blue biro cross and seems, again, to be the album's owner. Miss D.C. Forster.

At this point we still did not know who Miss D.C. Forster might be but another item in the album provided a further clue: an invitation to Miss D Cochrane-Forster to join the Hanworth Club to view the visit by the airship Graf Zeppelin to the London Air Park, Feltham, in August 1931. Starting from this slender beginning, we have been able to unravel some of the story of the 'Girl in the deckchair', although some enquiries still await answers to confirm parts of the following.

Our Miss D.C. Forster (not to be confused with the Miss Foster, the technical director's secretary mentioned in "To Ride the Storm" by Sir Peter Masefield) emerges as Miss Dorothy Joan Cochrane-Forster, born in 1895 to retired Indian Army officer Lt Col Archibald Edward Cochrane-Forster (1824/8-c.1910) and Margaret Annie Elizabeth Firth (1857-1939). Dorothy was an only child and probably lived in modest middle class circumstances as her father's army pension would not have been all that much. Perhaps they had some help from her mother's family – also Army – as Dorothy's maternal grandfather retired as a Major General, also from the Indian Army.

Nothing is known so far of Dorothy's education or where they lived in her childhood but within a month of the outbreak of the First World War, this daughter of the Army knew her duty and signed up as a nurse member in the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs) in August 1914. She would have been 19 years old, the youngest age at which members were admitted. She served until May 1918 in the outpatients and casualty department at the Ampthill Road Schools VAD Hospital, Bedford, giving nearly 4 years' full time service but gaining no promotion. A blurry 1917 newspaper photo of 35 nurses and a matron from the Ampthill VAD Divisional Hospital presumably includes her but it is not possible make out the faces clearly, and no names are given.



The staff of the
Divisional Hospital,
Ampthill Road,
Bedford

Although she would have had training in first aid and nursing, she may not have been paid for this arduous work, so she and her recently widowed mother would have had to live relatively frugally at their house in Kimbolton Road, Bedford.

The next we hear of Dorothy is the year 1925, when the album starts and when it is assumed she had started to work at the Royal Airship Works, Cardington. In 1925 construction had still not started on the R101, due to continuing design work being required. We believe that Dorothy was amongst the senior staff at the Works, although her role or roles are not totally clear. The album has some materials that imply she was in charge of the many women required to construct the outer covering for the airship – they are humorously referred to in the album as "The Outer Coverites".* However, there is also a photo of the Works' surgery, presumably its first aid room, in which a young woman in a short white laboratory jacket is seen in the corner. This photo is initialled with Dorothy's characteristic DCF monogram.

*** R101 covering work at Cardington**

R101 used pre-doped linen panels for much of its covering, rather than lacing undoped fabric into place and then applying dope to shrink it. In order to reduce the area of unsupported fabric in the covering, the design alternated the main longitudinals with non-structural "reefing booms" mounted on kingposts which were adjustable using screw-jacks in order to tension the covering. The pre-doped fabric proved unsatisfactory from the start, with panels splitting because of humidity changes before the airship had even left its shed. Internal walls in passenger accommodation were made of doped linen painted in white and gold.



So, can we deduce that it is Dorothy in this picture and that she has been able to make use of her VAD experience to become medically qualified in some way?

Possibly she had both a first aid role and a supervisory one – such dual duties would not be unheard of even today. Work began in earnest on the R101's construction at Cardington in 1927 and the work of the women working to make the outer coverings was probably intense. The decision had been made to construct these coverings as doped linen panels to be laced in place on the metal framework. The Royal Airship Works employed vast numbers of women and men and, as was usual in those times, there were many sports and social events for the somewhat insular community living and working at Cardington: football teams for the men and lighthearted sports days for everyone.

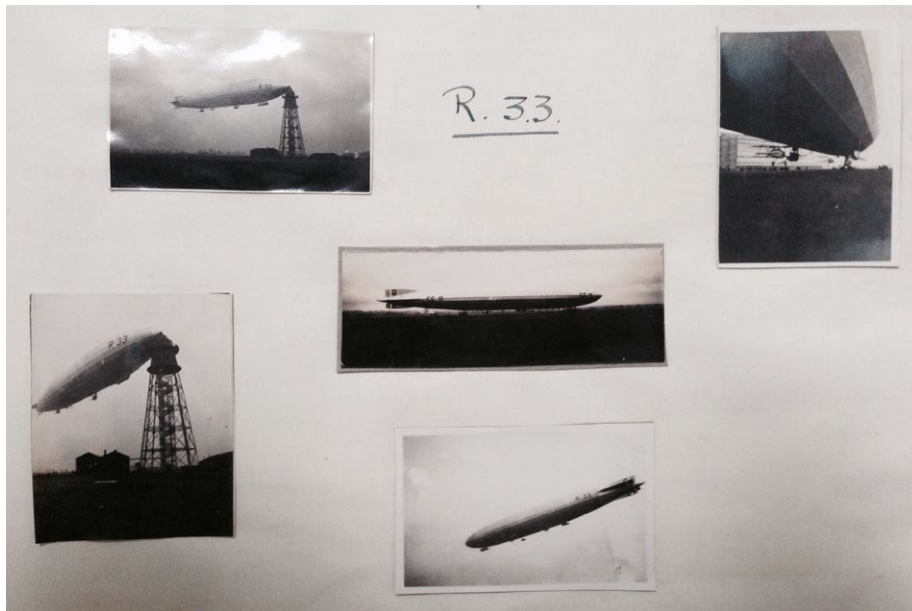
An undated photo shows the starting line for a relay race for female staff. Six very young-looking women are lined up in front of the beer tent, five of them in the pleated 'gym slips' typical of girls' school uniforms at the time, and one in collar, and tie. Older women in deckchairs and a crowd of youngsters watch while the man in charge of starting the race holds a string in front of the girls. Presumably each young woman represents a team from the various parts of the Works. The Outer Cover Shop team won!

Above and right:
Images from
D.C. Forster's
photograph album.
Courtesy of Alastair
Lawson, Airship
Heritage Trust and
Alan Slater.



The first inflation of the hydrogen-filled gasbags (also made by women) on 11th July 1929, taking until 21st September to complete. There then followed a series of test flights in October and November and periods when the airship was moored at its mooring mast. This was perhaps not the ideal time of year for these trials as the weather was unreliably windy and wet. VIPs came and went, staff got the chance to take trips on the test flights, including the one on 14th November 1929 when the only woman at a senior level on the technical side, Dorothy's colleague from 1925-1930, the aeronautical engineer Hilda Lyon, went on one of the test flights.

The event of the 23rd November was intended to be one such test flight, especially for the press and 100 Members of Parliament, which had already been postponed from 16th November due to the weather. Questions were raised in the House of Lords as to why the 'cruise' had been cancelled and the Secretary of State for Air's response was that the airship could cope with very severe winds, once airborne, but that particular day had had very deep cloud cover which would have meant that the VIPs would have had a very boring trip and seen essentially nothing. On 23rd November the weather was still unsuitable, this time due to such low atmospheric air pressure that the lifting capacity of the airship was insufficient. The VIPs nevertheless duly boarded the airship and were wined, dined and photographed extensively, including our Dorothy



Left: Photos and newspaper clipping from D.C. Forster's photograph album. Courtesy of Alastair Lawson, Airship Heritage Trust and Alan Slater.

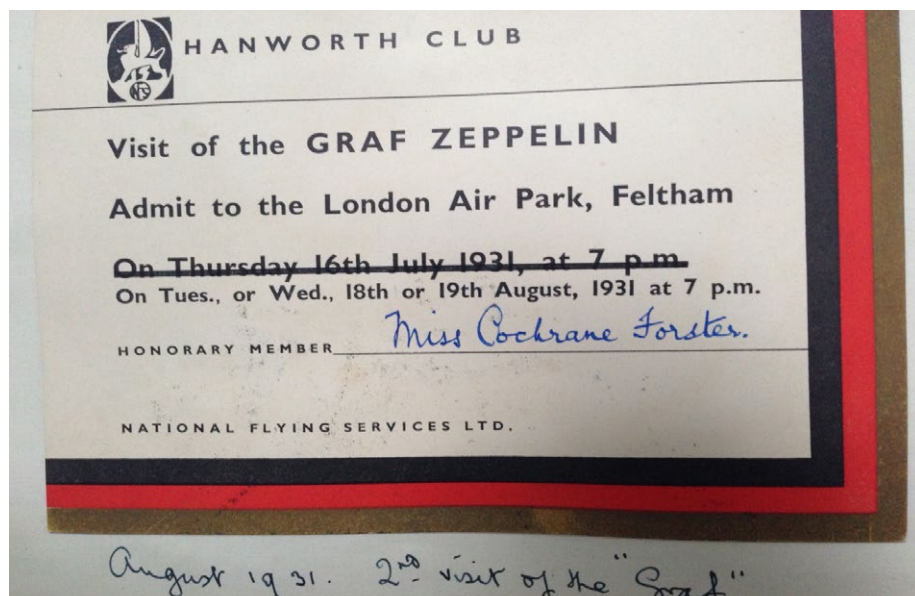
Cochrane-Forster in her deck chair. Despite the R101 remaining secured at the mooring mast and not actually going anywhere, some of the guests partook of the hospitality so thoroughly that the 45mph wind, which counts as a Strong Gale in the Beaufort Wind Scale, convinced them that they had in fact had a delightful flight in the airship!

It would be almost another full year – October 1930 – during which time yet more adjustments to the airship's size and hence coverings were made. Dorothy's Outer Coverite team would have been kept very busy sewing and dopping the linen panels. These frequently tore during the various test flights, necessitating a lot of repair work too. The album has some images of these workers, apparently taken in 1932, perhaps just before the Works were closed, everyone sacked and the whole UK airship programme scrapped forever, after the tragedy of the R101's fatal maiden flight, also laden with VIPs, when she crashed in France.

No information has yet emerged as to what Dorothy Cochrane-Forster did to support herself after the Works closed in 1932 (it was mothballed until its use for preparing barrage balloons for the Second World War), and somewhat surprisingly no record for her has yet been found in the 1939 ID card register, or what she did for war work in the Second World War. 1939 was also the year when Dorothy's mother died in Bedfordshire. As an only child, and an unmarried daughter, we can probably assume that Dorothy lived with her mother until the latter's death.

The next and final piece of evidence from Dorothy's life is a newspaper piece, from the Reading Standard, Friday 12 October 1956, when the Oxfordshire Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) was discussing Civil Defence matters, perhaps in the light of the Cold War fears of the time: "Miss Cochrane-Forster, deputy county organizer, spoke on emergency feeding and rest centres." By this time she was living in Chipping Norton, in Oxfordshire and evidently embedded in the local community. That newscutting led the search to the WVS (now RVS) archives, who confirmed that:

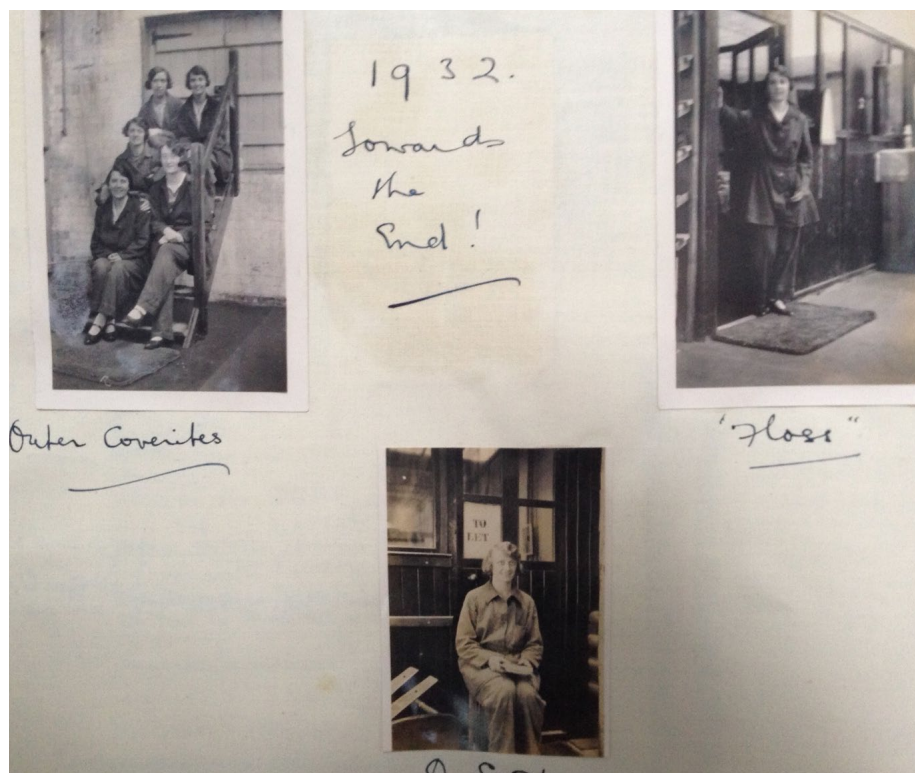
"Dorothy joined the Oxford County Office Staff in 1952. Exactly when is unclear, but the first report signed by her is from September that year. She simply signs herself 'County Staff'. Appended to it is a short note to



the chairman dated 13/10/1952 which says 'Incidentally everybody is much impressed by Miss Cochrane-Foster ...' It would seem that before she came along no one had written a report to Headquarters from the County Office for some years and the County leadership seems by inference to have been very poor. By 1955 she is signing herself Deputy County organiser. The last report she writes is for February 1965 and, by January 1966, a new County Organiser and Deputy are in place."

At the age of 70 she seems to have finally retired from a long and active life in public services. Her death certificate confirms her dates (1895-1980) and that she died of bronchopneumonia. She was at that time living at Castle View, Spring Street, Chipping Norton, which was a council residential care home but recently replaced with a retirement 'village'.

So the story of the 'Girl in the deckchair' is slightly more filled out than when the album first came to our attention but, as with the photo itself, much of what we would like to know is obscured by time and lack of detail. More positively, we know more than we did before and if this partial story is available to readers in print or online, new information may yet come to light to fill in more gaps.



Left: Invite and photos of the 'The Outer Coverites' from D.C. Forster's photograph album. Courtesy of Alastair Lawson, Airship Heritage Trust and Alan Slater.

Timeline

Birth – 21st March 1895¹

Her parents married in 1877, but that doesn't seem to tally with her appearance in the 1929 deckchair photo. She seems to have been an only child.

1901 Census

Col Archibald C Forster (ret'd) at Adderstone, St Andrews Rd, St Peters, Bedford with wife Annie and a servant but no sign of Dorothy – perhaps she was at school somewhere?

1910

Father died in Portsmouth.

1911 Census²

A Colonel Forster living at 20 Kimbolton road Bedford.

1914–1918

VAD nurse member, August 1914 to May 1918, Outpatient & Casualty Department, Ampthill hospital. Living at 20 Kimbolton Road, Bedford.³

1925

Construction contract for R101 delayed by design work, to 1927

1925–1932

D.C. Forster, Senior Staff at the Royal Airship Works at Cardington and covering the period 18.12.1925 to 1932.

1929

Aero Exhibition at Olympia in 1929.

1929

First inflation: hydrogen gasbags began on 11 July 1929 and was complete by 21 September. Flights⁴ on 14, 18 October, 1, 2, 14,⁵ 16 (cancelled⁶) 17 November, then R101 remained at the mast until 30 November, when the wind had dropped enough for it to be walked back into the shed.

1929 – 23rd November⁷

The deckchair photo, with Squadron Leader Ernest Livingston Johnston⁸ who was the head navigator on the R100 & R101. Note that she mis-spells his name as *Johnson* and also mis-spells the word promenade as *promenade*.

1930

Flights: 26, 27, 28 June. 29 June back in the shed for extension and cover repairs/replacements.⁹ Final flight 4 October.

1931

Invited by the Hanworth Club to the landing of the Graf Zeppelin at Hanworth¹⁰ in 1931.

1939–1945

Somewhat surprised that I cannot find her in the 1939 war ID register.

1939

Mother died in Bedfordshire (July/August or September).

1952

1st record of her at WVS Oxford County Office.

1956

WVS deputy county organizer.

1965

Last record of her at WVS Oxford County Office.

1980

Died 10th May 1980¹¹ at Castle View,¹² Spring Street, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, where a Marcia Ellen Frampton was the notifier of her death.

1 From death certificate.
2 Summary sheet only so no names of other people (2m, 3f) in the household.
3 <https://vad.redcross.org.uk/Card?sname=forster&id=77257&first=true>
4 <https://www.airshipsonline.com/airships/r101/Flight%20Log1.html>
5 The one that Hilda Lyon went on.
6 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1929/nov/20/airship-r101>

7 The flight for the MPs had been rescheduled for 23 November. With the barometric pressure low, R101 lacked sufficient lift to carry 100 passengers, even though all but a bare minimum of fuel was drained off and the ship lightened by removing all unnecessary stores. The flight was cancelled because of the weather, but not before the politicians had arrived at Cardington: they accordingly embarked and had lunch while the ship rode at the mast, only kept in the air by dynamic lift produced by the 45 mph (72 km/h) wind. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R101>
8 <https://namesofr101.weebly.com/johnston-squadron-leader-ernest-livingstone.html>
9 At the same time, the gasbags were given a complete overhaul, two of the engines were replaced by the adapted engines capable of running in reverse, and most of the cover was replaced. The original cover was left in place between frames 3 and 5 and in two of the bays at the tail. These parts of the cover had been doped after fitting and were therefore thought to be satisfactory, even though an inspection by McWade had found that some areas where reinforcements had been stuck on with a rubber solution were seriously weakened; these areas were further reinforced, using dope as an adhesive.
10 <https://habitatsandheritage.org.uk/blog/the-graf-zeppelin-flying-down-to-rio-next-stop-hanworth/>
11 Death certificate.
12 Was a council care home, now the whole site redeveloped as a retirement village.

Airship Heritage Trust

I was doing some more research into Miss D.C. Foster and her photo album. From the new details I've attained, Miss Foster was Colonel Richmond's¹³ Secretary (the Designer of the R.101) and she would have worked in the Administration block, or currently known as the Shorts Building. She would have had access to the main fabric shops which were behind the main office, and hence why many photos show the ladies in the fabric shop.

From what I can gather, in addition to her secretarial role, it was her idea to go and get the tablecloths and flowers from local suppliers in Bedford to improve the "look" of the R 101's main lounge and dining room, and she was also responsible for the design and arrangement of plants and ferns in the main lounge area, famously shown below around the base of the columns. On the evening before the press came to visit the ship in 1929, she worked until 11:00pm to make the interior of the ship look good. She also escorted the press around the ship and the Cardington Works for the visit. She also escorted MP's around when they came to visit the ship.

It's noted in "To Ride the Storm" by Sir Peter Masefield, that on departure Miss Foster wrote in Colonel Richmond's Design Office Diary the final sentence of "R.101 left for India this evening at 7:36BST"

By working at Cardington and being so close to Colonel Richmond and the rest of the main design team, along with the crews, she would have been in the heart of events with regards to the life of the R. 101 and it's these members of the team who are often overlooked.

I hope this helps and it's a fascinating story, which we keep finding more details on.

Kind regards

Alastair
Alastair Lawson
Chairman
Airship Heritage Trust
www.airshipsonline.com

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_Crane_Richmond

British Red Cross Archives

Miss Dorothy Cochrane-Forster
<https://vad.redcross.org.uk/Card?sname=forster&id=77257&first=true>

FORENAME: Dorothy Cochrane-
SURNAME: Forster
ADDRESS: 20 Kimbolton Road, Bedford
COUNTY: N/A
AGE WHEN ENGAGED: N/A
CHARACTER: N/A
SERVICE FROM: 08/1914
SERVICE TO: 05/1918
HOSPITAL: Ampthill Road Schools VAD Hospital, Bedford
PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT: N/A
RANK AT ENGAGEMENT: Nursing Member
DATE OF ENGAGEMENT: 08/1914
PAY AT ENGAGEMENT: N/A
RANK AT TERMINATION: Nursing Member
DATE OF TERMINATION: 05/1918
PAY AT TERMINATION: N/A
PARTICULARS OF DUTIES: Outpatient & Casualty Department
WHOLE OR PART TIME: 5000
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: VAD Hospital, Ampthill Road, Bedford
DEPARTMENT: N/A
COMMISSION: Bedfordshire
CERTIFICATE NO: N/A
HONOURS AWARDED: N/A

Royal Voluntary Service Heritage Collection

I've had a look through our records, and it seems that Dorothy joined the Oxford County Office Staff in 1952. Exactly when is unclear, but the first report I have signed by her is from September that year she simply signs herself 'County Staff'. Appended to it is a short note to the chairman dated 13/10/1952 which says 'Incidentally everybody is much impressed by Miss Cochrane-Foster ...' It would seem that before she came along no one had written a report to Headquarters from the County Office for some years and the County leadership seems by inference to have been very poor. By 1955 she is signing herself Deputy County organiser. The last report she writes is for February 1965 and by January 1966 a new County Organiser and Deputy are in place.

It has taken me quite a while to untangle this from reports etc. and sadly most of the county office correspondence for Oxfordshire have not survived past 1945 due to weeding in the past. She does mention herself and some activities she undertakes in the reports, but I am afraid that I have exhausted the time available under our remote enquiry service and do not have time service to read and summary these for you.

From Matthew McMurray BA(Hons) MA MLitt
Keeper of Heritage

Ancestry

Her father Archibald Edward Cochrane-Forster (1824/8-1910 but see 1911 census!), was born in St Jago, South America, her mother, Margaret Annie Elizabeth Firth (1857-1939), born in India. They married 24 Feb 1877,¹⁴ Thayet Myo, Bengal, India. In May 1844, AECF commissioned as 2nd Lt in 5th Regiment of Foot (Northumberland),¹⁵ July 1847 Lt AECF from 5th Foot to 45th Foot replacing another lieutenant, December 1848 AECF gazetted as lieutenant without purchase: Lieutenant Archibald Edward Cochrane-Forster from half-pay of the 28th Foot, December 1849 to be Lieutenant with purchase¹⁶ from half pay 28th Foot. 1872, as a Captain in Ceylon Rifles,¹⁷ in army list as in Paymaster dept from 1860, 1886¹⁸ Army Pay Department, Staff Paymaster and Honorary¹⁹ Major Archibald Cochrane-Forster has been placed on retired pay, with the honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Dated 10th September, 1886. 1908 army list he is now an honorary Lt Col., having retired 1 June 1879. 1893 living at Alve Carne,²⁰ St Mary's Penzance. 1910 apparently died in Portsmouth but in 1911 still on census!! 1902 29 St Andrews road, Bedford, rate payer.

Dorothy's mother also came from a military family: her mother's father was Major General Henry Hilhouse Firth. Both he and his wife married and lived in Vellore, Madras, India but died in Bedford (1894 and 1886 respectively), as did some of their 7 children. Given the much more exalted military rank of Dorothy's grandfather compared to her father, perhaps the Major General left her mother, Annie Firth Forster, some money to help out.

¹⁴ He almost certainly had to wait until he was promoted to Major before being allowed to marry, under Army regulations.

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Northumberland_Fusiliers The regiment, which was increased to two battalions in 1857, saw active service in the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1880. Query sent to RNF museum Alnwick. <https://www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk/contact/>

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purchase_of_commissions_in_the_British_Army

¹⁷ <https://www.ceylondatabase.net/military.html> 1 of 2 captains and 2 lieutenant paymasters 1873. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceylon_Rifle_Regiment

¹⁸ *The London Gazette*, September 14, 1886.

¹⁹ Most frequently, honorary ranks that are granted are those of junior commissioned officers, which are granted 1 or 2 weeks before retirement.

²⁰ Odd name for a house. In Portuguese this means 'white meat'!

British Newspaper Archives

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 19 January 1917 – Photo of Ampthill VAD hospital nurses. DCF is presumably in this but, due to the quality, it is impossible to tell.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 16 November 1923 – BEDFORDSHIRE LADIES' MUSIC AND ART CLUB. THE EXHIBITION. Wednesday afternoon the exhibition of arts and crafts held annually in the Corn Exchange....Christmas cards, calendars, and menus are fairly numerous, and very artistic. A Winding path depicted in Miss Chippendall's premier exhibit. Miss Alice Phillips is second with calendar which a quaint and quiet village street is painted, and her other productions are excellent, are the calendars of Miss May Vercy, **Miss Cochrane-Forster** (whose "St. George" is perfectly drawn).

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 21 November 1924 – BEDFORDSHIRE LADIES' MUSIC AND ART CLUB. 3rd in etched Christmas cards.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 11 November 1927 – BEDFORD CAMERA CLUB. THE ANNUAL EXHIBITION. Class A (landscapes and seascapes) Miss D. Cochrane-Forster's Fishing Fleet presented realistic cluster of masts and sails. In Class C there were 29 studies architecture. Limits time and space forbid an excursion into this attractive array sunlit cloisters, abbeys and cathedrals, poems in stone, and storied windows richly dight. Exhibitors of careful studies were **Miss Cochrane-Forster**.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 16 November 1928 – BEDFORDSHIRE LADIES' MUSIC AND ART CLUB. ...**Miss Cochrane-Forster** was commended for two excellent pictures of Canterbury Cathedral. Also a 2nd class in photography section.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 08 February 1929 – 1929 PRIMROSE LEAGUE ARTS AND CRAFTS. BEDFORD HABITATION'S ANNUAL EXHIBITION. Joint 1st in photography.

Bedfordshire Times and Independent – Friday 20 November 1931 – POPPY DAY RESULTS SALES IN THE BEDFORD DISTRICT. The following results of the sale of poppies Remembrance Day are supplied the Bedford branch of the British Legion: Royal Airship Works (**Miss Cochrane-Forster**), £2/1/4d.

Reading Standard – Friday 12 October 1956 – W.V.S. and Civil Defence. The importance of the link-up between the W.V.S. and the Civil Defence Corps was stressed by Dorothea Lady Goodenough, W.V.S. county organizer for Oxfordshire. when she addressed a W.V.S. convened meeting at Henley Town Hall last Friday. **Miss Cochrane-Forster**, deputy county²¹ organizer, spoke on emergency feeding and rest centres. Local members of the W.V.S. described their work in connection with meals-on-wheels. national savings, the collection of papers, hooks and magazines for the Forces. the supply and storage of clothing, the distribution of welfare foods and the finding of holiday homes for children.

²¹ Which county? Henley is in Oxfordshire. Query sent to WRVS archives.

Archives and databases checked but no entries found

The National Archives

The Woman Engineer (WES journal)

Davis archive of female maths graduates before 1940

University of London graduates (British History Online)

London Gazette (apart from her father's military service)

Project information

The Airship Dreams: Escaping Gravity project is funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Bedford College, The Harpur Trust, Airship Heritage Trust, The Gale Family Trust and Bedford Borough Council. It was developed in partnership with The Higgins Bedford.

About Airship Dreams: Escaping Gravity

Airship Dreams: Escaping Gravity is the result of three years of investigation and research into Bedford's history with the airship and Cardington Sheds, working closely with award-winning artist Mike Stubbs, who grew up in the town.

The research into D.C. Forster was in collaboration with Dr Nina Baker, author of *Adventures in Aeronautical design: The life of Hilda M. Lyon*, and Alastair Lawson, Chairman of the Airship Heritage Trust. The Higgins Bedford and BCA felt her story needed to be told as many women worked on the R101 but their achievements and skills weren't always known.

About Bedford Creative Arts (BCA)

Bedford Creative Arts is a contemporary arts organisation that has worked across Bedfordshire for 35 years. It is committed to commissioning high quality art in communities, working with people to make great art in response to the place where they live. We work at different levels, from light participation to deeper collaborative projects between artists and the public. Throughout our work we seek to make new work that is accessible and engaging for audiences, and questions and develops social practice within contemporary art. Bedford Creative Arts also delivers The Culture Challenge programme for schools and is an Arts Council England national portfolio organisation. www.bedfordcreativearts.org.uk

About the Higgins Bedford

The Higgins Bedford showcases wonderful and varied collections including fine and decorative arts, world-class watercolour and prints and unique groups of work. The Higgins Bedford explores the inspiring stories of local people and encourages a 'sense of place' for Bedford and the surrounding area. Using collections of archaeology, social history and ethnography, the museum shows how the town of Bedford has developed. The Higgins Bedford is a Bedford Borough Council cultural service. www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk

For further information, contact BCA Press
info@bedfordcreativearts.org.uk