

Brattleby - First World War - Losses Other Than Village Residents

In addition to those residents who lost their lives during the Great War a number of other people died while serving at the **Home Defence Flight Station Brattleby** (also known as Brattleby Cliff). It was opened on the site of the current RAF Scampton in late 1916.

The first operational unit was A Flight, [33 Sqn RFC](#), which flew [FE2bs](#) and Avro 504's defending against the [Zeppelin](#) threat and duties involving aerial co-operation for coastal defence. ¹ The site then developed into a training aerodrome, supporting No. 60 Training Sqn, followed by No. 81 and No. 11 Training Sqns, flying the [Sopwith Camel](#), [Pup](#) and [Dolphin](#). It was closed in April 1919. The area was then returned to its previous owners and by 1920 all the buildings, including the hangars, had been removed. ³⁴

There were 37 such airfields in Lincolnshire with one at South Carlton.

Squadron HQ: Kirton Lindsey.

Personnel: officers: 7, NCOs: 3, Corporals: 2 & R&F: 39.

Aircraft: Avro: 8

Aerodrome: 1,400yds by 1,000yds - 287 acres (30 acres occupied by station buildings).

HASL: 200ft, soil is loam on limestone.

Sheds: aeroplane sheds - 80ft by 130ft: 2.

The airfield was home to Nos.11 & 60 Training Squadrons, and No. 81 Squadron on 01.04.1918, later becoming No. 34 Training Depot Station. Also 'A' Flight of No. 33 Squadron (Avro 504) spent some time there.

50% of those who died did so whilst training.

The Great War (1914 - 1918)

During the Great War Lincolnshire was of strategic importance to the air campaign in two ways. In addition to flight operations from 37 military aerodromes by the end of the War the county was also a major centre of **aircraft production, focussed around Lincoln**. This included the manufacture of over 5 000 aircraft by Clayton and Shuttleworth, Ruston and Proctor and Robey & Co.

Lincolnshire was an early centre of military air bases due to its geography and the nature of the terrain. The Lincoln Edge is a high limestone escarpment that runs through the centre of the County, along the edge of the Trent Valley. The land rises here from 22ft to 200ft above sea level, a significant land feature when set against the pancake-flat fens of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and East Anglia. This feature was used by the early Air Force which built airfields along the Edge to help provide extra lift for aircraft. In the north-east there are also the uplands of the Lincolnshire Wolds, where other airfields were built during both Wars.

At the outbreak of war, on 4 Aug 1914, the RFC had 5 squadrons. All but No 1 Sqn RFC were sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force. The RNAS had more aircraft than the RFC and its main role at the onset of war was fleet reconnaissance, patrolling coasts for enemy ships and submarines, attacking enemy coastal territory and defending Britain from enemy air-raids. Lincolnshire locations for maritime patrol included **NAS Killingholme**. Aircraft from here were pressed into Zeppelin intercepts during Sep 1914 raids on Lincolnshire. Zeppelin raids caused a public outcry as they were attacks far behind the traditional conflict zone of opposing front lines. Some damage was caused in Lincolnshire and aircraft were scrambled from both RNAS and RFC aerodromes in response to the threat, from **RNAS Killingholme** and **Cranwell** and RFC Home Defence Squadrons from **Leadenham**, Brattleby, **Kirton in Lindsey**, Gainsborough, **Elsham Wolds** and **Tydd St Mary**. In Jan 1916 three civilians died in Scunthorpe as the result of a Zeppelin bombing raid. A few weeks later an attack on Humberston and Cleethorpes resulted in the death of 31 soldiers. In this raid it transpired that it had not been possible to contact the fighter aircraft at Cranwell because the phonelines were down.



The inauspicious end of a Zeppelin

Failure to prevent the Zeppelin bombing raids led to the RFC being given responsibility for home air defence in Feb 1916. Three squadrons given the responsibility for Home Defence were based in Lincolnshire. **33 Sqn RFC** was the first Sqn to be formed in Lincolnshire to counter the Zeppelin Raids on the Midlands over north Lincolnshire in 1915/16. It operated out of **Elsham Wolds**, **Kirton in Lindsey** and **Brattleby**. **38 Sqn RFC** operated in the south from **Leadenham** Aerodrome and **Buckminster**. In addition to their home bases the squadrons could call on emergency landing strips at **Anwick**, **Braceby**, **Bucknall**, **Cockthorne**, **Cuxwold** (nr Grimsby), **Grimsthorpe Park**, **Kelstern**, **Market Deeping**, **New Holland**, **Swinstead**, and **Winterton**. The network of emergency landing grounds was the best available solution to keeping the fighters airborne as long as possible to engage enemy aircraft and dirigibles.

The size and number of bombing raids increased during 1916 as the new, larger L-30 class airships were delivered to the German navy.

No. 33 Squadron was formed from part of [12 Sqn](#) at [Filton](#) on 12 January 1916. For the remainder of the [First World War](#) the squadron was employed in the Home Defence role in [Lincolnshire](#), guarding against German airship raids against northern [England](#), being first equipped with [Royal Aircraft Factory BE.2s](#), these being supplemented with [Royal Aircraft Factory FE.2s](#). Its headquarters were at [Gainsborough](#), with its flights spread over three separate stations: [RAF Scampton](#) (A Flight), [RAF Kirton in Lindsey](#) (B Flight) and [RAF Elsham Wolds](#) (C Flight). The FE.2s were replaced by [Bristol Fighters](#) in June 1918, which were in turn replaced by dedicated [night fighter Avro 504](#) in August. The squadron did not destroy any enemy airships, despite a number of interceptions; it was disbanded in June 1919.^[1]

RFC Brattleby – Incident Logs

27 November 1916, 33 sqn, FE2b, Suffered engine failure on take-off responding to a Zeppelin alert. Casualties not recorded.

24 December 1916, 33 sqn, BE12, 1 killed

17 March 1917, 37sqn, RE8, Dived in during a steep turn, 1 killed

17 April 1917, 37sqn, RE8, 1 killed

4 May 1917, 37sqn, RE8, 1 killed

3 July 1917, 37sqn, FK8, casualties not recorded

7 July 1917, 60sqn, RE8, 1 killed

11 July 1917, 81sqn, Sopwith Pup, Engine cowling came off causing a nose dive into the ground, casualties not recorded

18 July 1917, 60sqn, Avro 504a, 1 killed

26 July 2017, 33sqn, FE2b, 1 killed

28 July 1917, 60sqn, RE8, 1 killed

15 August 1917, 33sqn, Avro 504b, casualties not recorded

31 August 1917, 34 TDS, 1 killed

25 September 1917, 33sqn, FE2d, crashed during Zeppelin patrol, 1 killed

20 October 1917, 33sqn, FE2b, engine failure during Zeppelin patrol, 1 killed

3 November 1917, 81sqn, Avro 504j, collided with another plane, 2 killed

17 November 1917, 33sqn, FE2b, 1 killed

17 November 1917, 81sqn, Avro 504j, 1 killed

30 November 1917, 33sn, FE2d, 1 killed

12 January 1918, 33sqn, FE2b, 1 killed

31 January 1918, 33sqn, FE2b, 1 killed

5 March 1918, 11sqn, Sopwith Camel, engine failure, caught fire on forced landing, 1 killed

16 March 1918, 81sqn, Sopwith Camel, 1 killed

3 April 1918, 81sqn, Sopwith Camel, seat belt failed, pilot thrown from aircraft, 1 killed

17 June 1918, 11sqn, Sopwith Camel, engine failure on take-off, 1 killed

9 July 1918, 60sqn, Sopwith Camel, stalled and crashed, 1 killed

23 July 1918, 34TDS, Dolphin, no other information

26 July 1918, 34TDS, Dolphin, 1 killed

23 August 1918, 34TDS, Avro 504k, 1 killed

12 September 1918, 34TDS, Avro 504k, 1 killed

18 September 1918, 34TDS, Sopwith Camel, spun in, 1 killed

25 September 1918, 34TDS, Sopwith Camel, spun in, 1 killed

15 October 1918, 34TDS, Avro 504j, 1 killed

12 November 1918, 34TDS, Sopwith Pup. Hit a tree, casualties not recorded

28 recorded deaths. Few if any in combat.

24 recorded deaths at South Carlton.

NOVEMBER CASUALTY OF THE GREAT WAR

OWEN AUGUSTUS ELLIS ALLEN was born in Cambridge on 21st April 1893, the eldest son of William and Alice Allen. William owned a successful bookbinding business and sent his two boys, Gilbert was Owen's younger brother by a year, to the Perse School – a famous independent school which still flourishes today and whose famous alumni include Sir Peter Hall of the Royal Shakespeare Company. The 1911 Census records Owen, now 17 as a student school teacher and living at home with his family at 7 Montague Road, a pleasant tree lined boulevard of substantial middle class houses close to the River Cam.

Prior to the outbreak of war Owen had secured a teaching post at Elmstead, a village near Colches-ter but the day war was declared, August 4th 1914 he was back in Cambridge enlisting into the Cambridgeshire Regiment, his time (2 years and 2 terms) in the Perse School OTC holding him in good stead. Promoted to Sergeant on 10th September he was awarded a commission into the 9th Suffolks the following month and the Regimental History (RH) records him landing with the main body of the Battalion in France on 30th August 1915.

He certainly saw action at Loos when on 25/26th September the Battalion made a strong advance into the German lines but were held up by heavy machine-gun fire from the direction of Hulluch. Casualties were heavy (135) and in the course of the action Sergeant Arthur Saunders from Ipswich won his Victoria Cross. The Battalion had been in France for some 25 days.....”*as a first experi-ence of fighting, it was indeed a staggering ordeal*”. (RH)

For the next ten months Owen and the Battalion were in and out of the Ypres Salient but in early August 1916 were “*thrown into the simmering cauldron of the Somme*” (RH). Their first action was the Battle of Flers-Courcelette on the 15th September when they were heavily involved east of Ginchy against the strong German redoubt known as the Quadrilateral. Owen survived unscathed and a short while later transferred to the Royal Flying Corps being commissioned an Observer on 20th February 1917. In practise he would already have been with the squadron for some time, al-most a form of probation, flying with “A” Flight, 22 Squadron before his formal appointment.

He returned to England for pilot training and was posted (6th August 1917) to 37 Squadron at RFC Brattleby near Lincoln which later became better known as RAF Scamp-ton. The aerodrome was established in December 1916 as a Home Defence station before assuming a training role as No. 34 Training Depot Station (34 TDS). Owen was subse-quently promoted Lieutenant and Flying Officer (31st Au-gust 1917) and it was while he was instructing that he was involved in a mid-air collision.

“*It appears that on Saturday last Lieut. Allen had been on a flight with a pupil and was in the act of landing, when his machine collided with another. The occupant of the other aeroplane was killed instantaneously. Lieut. Allen was rendered unconscious, and lived for about two hours while the pupil who was with him escaped with a broken leg. Lieut. Allen was 24 years of age.*” (Cambridge Inde-pendent Press. Nov. 9th 1917).

Owen was rushed to the No. 4 Northern General Military Hospital in Lincoln but efforts to save him were unsuccessful.

(During the Great War the 4th Northern General Military Hospital in Lincoln occupied the old school buildings of the former Lincoln Grammar School, now the comprehensive Lincoln Christ's Hospital School. It held 41 officer beds and 1126 OR beds with over 45,000 men being treated there during the war.

Owen's body was returned to Cambridge where he was buried with full military honours in Histon Road Cemetery. He had married Miss Laura Moore in early 1917 and she gave birth to their son Dennis Samuel Ellis Allen in 1918, mother and son emigrating to South Africa in 1920. Laura never remarried and Dennis became a Major in the South African Army.

Lieut. O. A. E. Allen,
R.F.C., son of Mr. and Mrs. t
W. A. Allen, Chesterton,
killed in flying accident in
Lincs.



