

# Arthur Chivers

declared missing, presumed dead on 21 April 1917

age 25 years



Arthur's father, Thomas Chivers, was born in 1850 in Chilton Candover. In 1883 he married Jane Cousens and by 1891 the family were living in Down Lane Cottage, Dummer Down Lane. He was an agricultural labourer. Arthur was born on 19 March 1892 and was their 4th child. They had seven children all together, six boys and one girl.

Arthur signed up before the outbreak of WW1 and in 1911 he was listed as being at the Gibraltar Barracks, Stanhope Lane, Aldershot in the 1st Search Light Co. Royal Engineers. His rank was Driver and his work was described as Care of Horses. On 30 December 1913 he married Annie Nattress in South Farnborough Parish Church. John Chivers, his brother, was one of the witnesses. Arthur's occupation at that time was listed as Air Mechanic, Royal Flying Corps.



*R.N.A.S badge*  
The Royal Naval Air Service was the air arm of the Royal Navy, under the direction of the Admiralty's Air Department, and existed formally from 1 July 1914 to 1 April 1918, when it was merged with the British Army's Royal Flying Corps to form a new service, the Royal Air Force, the first of its kind in the world.

On 1 July 1914, age 22, Arthur enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service. He was described as 5'7" tall with fair hair and blue eyes. His occupation was listed as motor cyclist. He served at the HMS Pembroke II shore base at Eastchurch and HMS President II shore base in the Thames until, on the 15th December 1916, he was transferred to the Coastal airship base in Pulham, Norfolk as a CPO Mechanic 3rd grade. His wife Annie moved to Norfolk and was lodging near to the base in Harleston.

On 21st April 1917 Arthur Chivers was aboard the C.17 Coastal Class airship on patrol when contact was lost. It was assumed that the airship had been shot down and some wreckage was discovered on the beach. There were no survivors and his body was never found. Subsequently, German records were found indicating that it had been shot down by Oberflugmeister Karl Meyer of Seeflugstation Flandern 1.



HM Airship C17 at R.N.A.S Pulham giving a sense of the scale of the airship.

Marriage certificate of Arthur Chivers and Annie Nattress

No.	Wives Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Employment or Usual Occupation	Father's Name and Profession	Rank or Profession of Father
122	30 <sup>th</sup> Dec 1913	Arthur Chivers	22	Bachelor	R.N.A.S.	Motor Cyclist	Thomas Chivers	Labourer
	19/13	Annie Nattress	21	Spinster	—	Little Lane, South Farnborough	Joseph Nattress	Manager

Marr'd in the Parish Church of South Farnborough in the Bishopric of Exeter in the County of Southampton

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Witnesses: Annie Johnson, Wendham Lane, Harleston, Norfolk.



## R.N.A.S Pulham

The age of the Airship is long gone, but it was back in 1915 during the first World War that 100 RN personnel moved onto a 500 acre site at Pulham St Mary in South Norfolk to operate the UK's new airship station. By the end of the war over 3,000 Royal Navy men and support team would be based at Pulham. Initially small non-rigid airships with ten man crews were being used to patrol the North Sea looking for German U-Boats and floating mines.

The crews were housed in control cabins slung beneath the "envelopes" which could be mounted with one Lewis gun atop and another below on the cabin. The craft could also carry 360 kgs of bombs. Because of the yellow-buff colour and shape of the "envelopes" they became known locally, and later widely, as the "Pulham Pigs".

Small craft were used to protect inshore areas but later larger vessels patrolled from Margate to Dunkirk. In mid-1916 however German "floatplanes" shot down two of Pulham's "Coastals" and most of the duties were handed over to aeroplanes.

Although a Royal Navy establishment, Pulham was commanded by an Army Colonel with long experience with the craft. Later, larger "rigid" inflatables were developed based on the German Zeppelins which flew until the R101 disaster in 1930 which saw the end of the Airship era. From the RN's "Pulham Pigs" had evolved the R33 and R34 airships, the latter having been the first to make the return Atlantic crossing in 1919, landing back at Pulham.

In 1917, although a naval base, Pulham was commanded by Colonel Edward Maitland, and was the Headquarters for a specialist unit dealing with the construction of airfields. Parachute Experimental Staff were also stationed there.

A total of 45 standard Coastals and C-Stars were built. Twelve were totally destroyed in one way or another, but only two were lost to enemy action in the entire war, and just four survived to the Armistice.

<http://www.airshipsonline.com/airships/coastal/index.html>

The C.17 was a 'Coastal' Class airship.

She was built at Kingsnorth. Trials were held on the 10 Aug 1916, captained by Flt Lt Wheelwright. On 31 Aug 1916 the C.17 was transferred to Pulham from Kingsnorth.

On 21 April 1917 she proceeded on patrol, but no contact made with base after 08:00. On this fateful voyage the C.17 had a crew of 5:

- Captain: Sub Lt Edward George Oliphant Jackson,
- Observer: Assistant Paymaster Raymond A P Walters.
- Leading Mechanic, David Farquhar
- Air Mechanic, 2nd Class John Monro
- as well as **Chief Petty Officer, Mechanic 3rd Grade Arthur Chivers.**

Walters had only gone on C.17 as a passenger for some air experience.

The airship was listed as deleted at Pulham 21 April 1917, destroyed by fire. It was assumed C.17 was shot down by German seaplanes. There were no survivors.

Up until the loss of C.17 the upper Lewis gun was not usually carried. As a result of the loss, instructions were issued that the upper gun was to be manned whenever 'Coastals' were operated out of Pulham over the North Sea.

After the war, German records were discovered showing that the C.17 was downed east of North Foreland by Oberflugmeister Karl Meyer of Seeflugstation Flandern I and his observer, Oberflugmeister Kastner on the 21st of April 1917.

Name:	Arthur CHIVERS
Rating:	C.P.O. Mechanic 3rd grade
Birth date/place:	19.3.92. Basingstoke
Service branch:	R.N.A.S.
Ship unit:	HM Airship C17
Official number:	F.671. (Ch)
Cause of death:	Killed or died as a direct result of enemy action.
Date of Death:	21/04/1917
Location of grave:	Not recorded
Cemetery:	Body not recovered for burial
Relatives notified:	Widow: Annie, C/o Mrs Johnson, Wendham Lane, Old Market Place, Harleston, Norfolk.

