

# Media Kit

## S.C. Gwynne

Author of

**His Majesty's Airship: The Life  
and Tragic Death of the  
World's Largest Flying  
Machine**



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# Announcing

## *His Majesty's Airship:*

### *The Life and Tragic Death of the World's Largest Flying Machine*

Recently released, *His Majesty's Airship: The Life and Tragic Death of the World's Largest Flying Machine* (Scribner; \$32.00; Hardcover) is a captivating and thoroughly researched book that takes readers on a journey into the birth and flight of the monumental British airship R101.

In *His Majesty's Airship*, Gwynne weaves a rich tale of unlimited ambitions and technical limitations, airy dreams, and explosive endings.

*"A Promethean tale of unlimited ambitions, airy dreams, and explosive endings."*  
— *Wall Street Journal*.

Through meticulous research, he brings the story of the R101 back to life, capturing an era of technology, daring, and folly that transcends its subject matter. At the heart of Gwynne's narrative is a brisk and tightly focused account of R101's first and final voyage, keeping readers engaged and turning the pages. Drawing from official survivor accounts and recent scholarly research, Gwynne deftly reconstructs the doomed flight, pinpointing the exact cause of the airship's destruction.

*"A captivating, thoroughly researched book. Gwynne spins a rich tale of technology, daring, and folly... Like any good popular history, it's also a portrait of an age."* — *The New York Times*

Step into the world of ambition and tragedy with *His Majesty's Airship*. Available now at leading bookstores and online retailers.

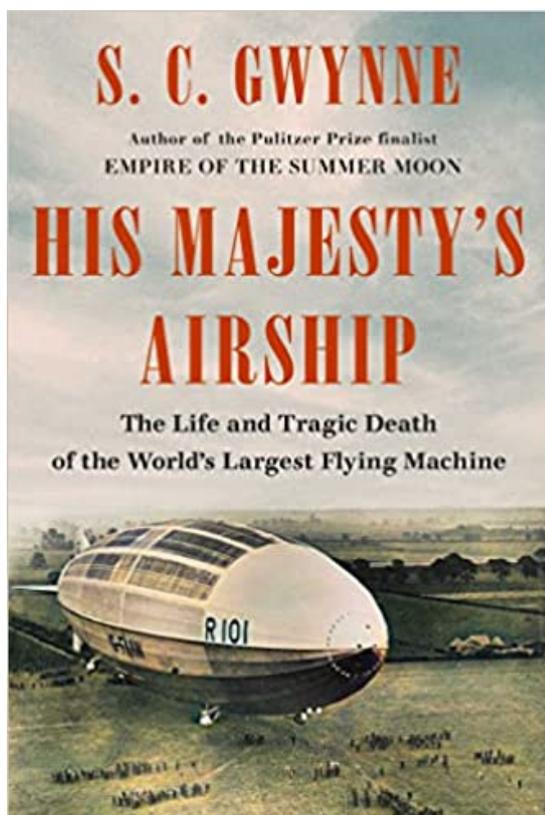
Please let me know if you want to interview Sam Gwynne or would like a review copy of his book.

Thank you,  
Fauzia Burke and Tricia Hedman

# S. C. Gwynne

## Interview Intro

**S.C. Gwynne** is the author of *Hymns of the Republic* and the *New York Times* bestsellers *Rebel Yell* and *Empire of the Summer Moon*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He spent most of his career as a journalist, including stints with *Time* as bureau chief, national correspondent, senior editor, and *Texas Monthly* as executive editor. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife.



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You can download a hi-resolution book jacket and author photo [here](#).



# Suggested Questions

S. C. Gwynne is available to discuss the following. You can call him Sam.

1. What inspired you to delve into the story of the British airship R101 and its tragic fate?
2. Can you tell us about the research process for *His Majesty's Airship* and the sources you relied upon?
3. The crash of the R101 is not as widely known as the Hindenburg disaster. Why do you think the story of R101 has been largely forgotten?
4. How did you balance the historical accounts and personal narratives to create a cohesive and engaging narrative in the book?
5. The R101 represented the ambitions and dreams of a nation. Can you discuss the symbolism and significance of this airship within the context of the British Empire?
6. Lord Christopher Thomson and Princess Marthe Bibesco's doomed romance adds a poignant layer to the story. What compelled you to include their relationship in the narrative?
7. Can you share some insights into the technical limitations and challenges faced by the airship industry during that era?
8. How did the R101 crash impact the future of airship travel and the perception of the technology?
9. What role did hubris and impatience play in the downfall of the R101?
10. How do you think the tragedy of the R101 shaped the subsequent advancements and safety measures in the aviation industry?



# Excerpt from Chapter One

## DREAMS, PIPE DREAMS, AND IMPERIAL VISIONS

Our story begins in the company of the Right Honorable Christopher Birdwood Thomson, First Baron Thomson of Cardington, Privy Councillor, Commander of the British Empire, peer of the House of Lords, ex-brigadier, ex-General Staff, ex-Cheltenham, ex-Woolwich, ex-Royal Engineers, ex—a lot of other things. His official title is Secretary of State for Air, which has a nice Shakespearean ring and is an apt description of what he does for a living. He is also, according to his lengthy dossier, a talented multilingualist, a devoted Francophile, and a writer of some note. He is exceptionally tall. He has an elevated forehead, a strong Roman nose set between frank, wide-set eyes, and an understated, late-imperial mustache.

The date is October 4, 1930.

Lord Thomson is traveling this day from London to Karachi, India, by airship, a five-thousand-mile, single-stop journey over some of the earth's most hostile terrain that no one, lord or otherwise, has ever made.<sup>1</sup> The idea is a bit crazy, in the way that experimental projects often are. But relatively few people, in this time and place, appear to think so.

Thomson must first drive from his London residence to Cardington, sixty miles north of London, a place that sounds—based on his titles and honorifics—as though it might be a Renaissance country estate in rolling pastureland. Cardington is instead a gritty little industrial suburb of the small city of Bedford. Lord Thomson of Cardington has chosen it deliberately as part of his title, just as the imperial heroes Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, Lord Roberts of Kandahar, and Lord Wolseley of Tel-el-Kebir chose theirs. But instead of a battleground of empire, Thomson is lord of a sprawling manufacturing complex—the center of the exotic world of British rigid airships.