



**No. 21 Group
Royal Observer
Corps
Association**



Newsletter

Summer 2015

75th Anniversary of Battle of Britain & Observer Corps 'Royal' title



Vulcan XH558 at Carlisle Airport

ROC Spitfire



RAF SAR Sea King



NATIONAL DIARY EVENTS

17th – 19th July Royal International Air Tattoo
at Fairford

**15th Sept 75th Anniversary of Battle of
Britain, service at St Paul's Cathedral**

2nd - 4th October ROCA 26th National
Annual Reunion Prince of Wales Southport

23rd October ROC Banner laid up St
Clement Danes Church London 1200hrs

& Reception - all welcome

5th November Field of Remembrance
Westminster

8th November Remembrance Parade
Cenotaph

Newsletter Cover

Thanks to John Gedge for the excellent
photos on the front cover.

Obituaries**John Hoare**

John Hoare died on 1 March 2015.

John was a full time officer, an Observer
Lieutenant Commander, and was based at
Preston for several years on the staff of
Western Area before he was posted to
Lincoln Group. I got to know John quite well,
and our acquaintance continued at several
annual training camps after his departure
from Preston.

On his retirement John moved to Chard in
Somersetshire. On 1 January this year he
was admitted to hospital for treatment of a
serious condition. Upon his discharge at the
end of February, he and his wife Dorothy
moved into a care home. Sadly John died
after just 36 hours of residence.

No doubt only those around my generation
will have memories of John. I remember his
rather light-hearted, but nevertheless
conscientious, approach to ROC duties.

Submitted by Vernon Hughes

Around the Group : Branch News**Merseyside Branch**

Normal service will now resume, we are
pleased to report that Don Brereton is fit and
well.

Morecambe Bay Branch

Our May meeting was held in the Wheatsheaf
at Beetham, with 9 present including Frank
Vine-Hall who was visiting from his new
home, north of the border.

John Dugdale gave a talk about cartoons
from the First World War to the Falklands,
noting how the cartoonists made light of grim
incidents and poked fun at senior people.
John brought along a number of publications
including "Fragments From France" (featuring
"Old Bill"),

The Wipers Times, the "Two Types", Giles
annuals, and "Up The Falklands". We all
enjoyed the talk, and the opportunity to look
at the books.

Vulcans

On 27 June Val and I visited the Solway
Aviation Museum and Carlisle Airport to see
the farewell tour of Vulcan B2 XH558. We
arrived early, had lunch in the café situated in
the control tower, and then watched the
arrival of visiting aircraft. On our previous
visits we had seen no more than a couple of
light aircraft movements.

This time dozens of aircraft arrived, including
a Chipmunk in RAF markings, and a Cessna
with an American registration. Soon the
airport was packed, with cars parked on an
adjoining field. When XH558 came into view
the surrounding roads still were full of cars
queuing to get on to the airport. XH558 did
one quiet pass, circled round, then made a
noisier pass which culminated in the classic
Vulcan howl as XH558 headed off towards
Windermere.

I have photographed XH558 on many
occasions at many locations, so this time I
wanted [and got] a photograph of two

Vulcans in the same image. We returned to the café while the traffic queued to depart, and were treated to a visit by an RAF SAR Sea King which dropped in for fuel – probably the last time we will see one before they retire – after which we visited the museum.

Submitted by John Gedge

Preston Branch

Wednesday 22nd April, 2015

4 members attended Preston Playhouse to see a new musical called Secrets which was about events at Bletchley Park during WWII, it was performed by University of Central Lancashire students and the music had been written by a member of staff / lecturer. The feedback was that it was entertaining but some cast members would have benefitted from instruction on 'projecting' and were guilty of turning away from the audience to speak their lines. The music was good and it was still an entertaining evening.

Saturday 16th May, 2015

AGM & Reunion Lunch at Crooklands Hotel. We were at Crooklands Hotel for 10:45am and in the ground floor conference room again; John Gedge and family were already there and had brought Pauling Hill too, John was busy laying out lots of items from our archive for the guests to view. Pat Fernihough, Jack Wilson and Tony Hooper were in the bar drinking coffee along with Vernon and Pat Hughes, Gordon and Sandra McKay.

I had the timetable, agenda, and prompts on a 10 page PowerPoint presentation to reduce the amount of paper printed and distributed to attendees. Guests came in and browsed the Archive material and photo collection. Copies of the balance sheet provided by Mike Smalley were on each table along with the Agenda, and last year's minutes. Sadly the number of members attending this year was only 22, We have had 25 and 30 in previous years, so fingers crossed for increased attendance, next year. Everyone got seated by 11:30am and then the AGM commenced.

Pat Fernihough kindly did the Obituaries for Daphne Seddon and John Hoare and we stood for 1 minutes silence, then she gave her 'Presidents' address and noted all the significant dates this year, 70 years since VE day, 75th Anniversary of Battle of Britain, 90 years since the original formation of the Observer Corps before it became 'Royal'.

Then Pat handed over to me, as Chairman, I gave the apologies from Mike and Ann Smalley who were touring Scotland with their American guest, Sheena Cartmell and Don Brereton who have both been ill, our best wishes were sent to them. The formal business of accepting minutes, proposed by Gordon McKay and seconded by Vernon Hughes, matters arising, election of officers was soon dealt with, thanks to the proposal to re-elect all officers enblock being accepted with a unanimous show of hands.

Gordon McKay kindly stood in for Mike Smalley to give the Treasurers report, FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/2015, Total income £975.89,

Total expenditure £995.16

Current balance at bank, £1104.43. Then his Auditors report. (If anyone would like a copy of the accounts please contact Elaine), he confirmed that Membership, stood at 70 for last year, followed by his Benevolent/Welfare officer update, he was glad to say there had not been any 21 Group cases.

John Gedge covered the Newsletter and its next deadline and reminded everyone of the kind remarks about our newsletter, received from Central Committee, Ken Terry and others. John handed round a clipboard to enable interested members to sign up for the Bunker Visit on 15/06/15.

AOB, there was no news from HQ ROCA about Arboretum tree markers, Pat invited anyone wishing to join the RAFA trip to Eden Camp on 5th August, to let her know. Reminders were given for HQROCA Reunion at Southport on 2nd – 4th October, And to St Clement Danes Banner Laying-up Ceremony to be held in London on 23rd October, (see details on a subsequent page) 21 Group will be represented at the Church service by Keith Heald and Tony Hooper.

Next year's AGM was agreed as Saturday 21st May, 2016, with a guest speaker Mr Gordon Bartley who would talk about his work as a Concorde guide, he has lots of photos. We finished the AGM at 12:15pm and soon our delicious lunch arrived, very tasty hot pot, with pickles and red cabbage, followed by Chocolate torte, trifle or lemon crunch, coffee and tea.

The issue of Guest Speaker had been fraught this year, Roger Carter agreed to speak but in February he had major surgery and withdrew. I went through a number of alternatives including Gordon Bartley who was busy, but agreed to be booking for 2016; others were at the ROC gathering at The Arboretum. Finally NW Air Ambulance accepted, and right up to Wednesday 13th May all was looking good, and then 4 days before the AGM they pulled out, 'due to unforeseen circumstances'.

Into the breach stepped our very own John Gedge. Fred Morris kindly gave a warm introduction for John, then John started his talk with his earliest memories of being interested in military insignia and how he started to collect it, he spoke fondly of his father and grandfather who were both avid log keepers and great letter writers.

Reading his grandfather's logs immediately transported you back to that time and also the letters written to his grandmother, safely evacuated to the countryside with the children, were so poignant especially when the startling dates were read out, 3rd September, 1939, a clear account of what was happening in Lambeth, London on the day WWII broke out, and another letter written in Summer 1940 describing what was happening as the Battle of Britain unfolded, right over his head.

John went on to emphasise how he treasures the tin box of letters and how in our current age of digital imagery and email, there may be nothing to pass on to our grand and great grandchildren, once it's gone it can't be replaced, so write it down, then keep it.

He told fascinating stories of his ROC collection and what would have been burned if he hadn't had a sympathetic officer in Keith

Heald, willing to pass it all on to John, including an ROC flag bearing the King's Crown, which was on display with the other archive items here in the room today.

Thanks to Tony Snape, the contents of No 36 Catforth post on HMS Inskip were saved and installed in Museum of Lancashire, and years later, phone calls between Tony Snape, John, me and Paul Miller at Langley Lane HQ came at such a key moment, it ensured it all found a second home, instead of ending up in a skip. John outlined how any ROC and other artefacts, not directly relevant to 21 Group, have found homes elsewhere, in the right collections and museums, thanks to his tireless research and some amazing coincidences.

John really got all his audience thinking, I have never seen them so full of enthusiasm. Vernon Hughes gave the vote of thanks for a great success, with sincere thanks to John for his sterling effort, from all those present.

It was a hard act to follow, as I eventually got everyone's attention again, to discuss the Committee vacancies for Membership Secretary and Group Secretary, but with no takers these roles will continue to be shared between Treasurer Mike Smalley and me.

My final item for the day was a follow-up on John's earlier prompting. I handed out a proforma which asked our members for their name rank and serial number plus date joined, left, what tasks performed and names of colleagues who did not go on to join the Association. **A copy of this form is enclosed in the July newsletter, with a request that it be completed and returned.** The idea is to print as much as possible from these reports, in the Christmas newsletter, and for people to keep copies.

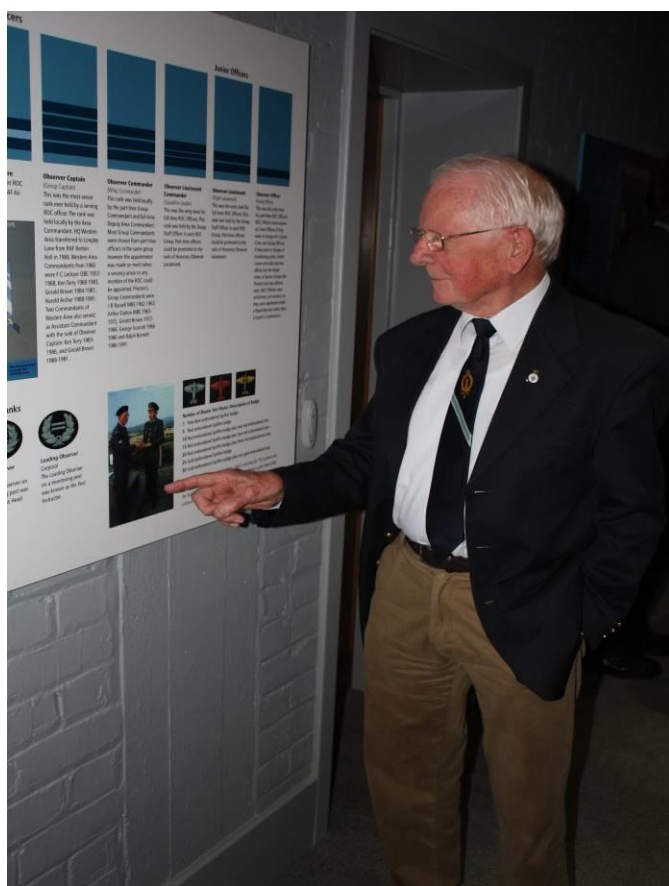
They may wish to hand these on to their descendants to help them if, one day, they start on their family histories etc. So fingers crossed for a good response. An excellent day!

Monday 15th June, 2015

Visit to 21 Group Bunker at Goosnargh
After a brief battle with the electronics the staff were able to manually open the car park

gates and admit our party for another visit to Langley Lane Bunker. As always Paul and his team were gracious and welcoming and keen to show us the new developments.

Mick was able to take a photograph which showed Fred Morris stood next to one of the Information panels on which there was a picture of Fred presenting a plaque to Gerald Brown, which, in itself was an unusual circumstance, Fred's crew were recognising the achievement of Gerald, who became Deputy Commandant to the Corps, the highest rank possible for part-time crew, and it all started on their post!



Fred Morris spots his image on the panel in Goognargh Bunker – 16th June, 2015

The meeting on Wednesday 22nd July, 2015 was with the Committee at the White Bull

The next gathering will be on Wednesday 19th August, 2015 for Noggin & Natter at The Anchor in Lostock Hall at 8:00pm, all welcome.

Submitted by Elaine Norris

VE Day Memories

I remember it very well as I was in transit from RAF Andreas, Isle of Man, to RAF Eastchurch, with 10 days leave in between.

To leave the Isle of Man meant a complicated series of journeys — from Andreas by truck to Ramsey, then by narrow gauge railway to Douglas, and sent off to find your own B & B, armed with an RAF voucher. Then off to catch the ferry the next morning. We all knew that VE day was near but a lack of info left us uncertain. Off the ferry, we went straight onto the London train, arriving at Euston station in the late afternoon, to be told by the enthusiastic crowd that VE Day was to be the next day! I caught the tube and a trolleybus to my parents' home in Chingford, Essex, only to find the house empty.

However I soon found my family and neighbours were enjoying themselves in the beer garden of the local pub. The celebrations continued until late into the night, to be followed by a street party the next day.

Although I was very pleased that the war was over, having been evacuated twice as a child and witnessed the house damaged by a land mine, suffered the London Blitz, and later dodged the V1's and V2's when stationed in London, I felt cheated that my air crew training for which I had volunteered, was over.

In July 1943 I had attended a selection board in London and was passed for training as pilot, navigator and bomb aimer.

I reported to Lord's cricket ground, the aircrew receiving centre, four days before Christmas, 1943. I was granted 48 hours' leave as I satisfied the conditions that I lived within 25 miles of the base, passed the uniform inspection and was an ex ATC cadet.

In the first week of January 1944, I started a six month course at Salford Technical College, now part of the University, followed by various courses in London, Torquay, Babbacombe and air experience flights in the Isle of Man in Wellingtons, whilst working in the RAF Stores. Now I was on my way to being made redundant and faced another selection board, against whose advice I held out for a driving course.

This meant wasting time in sunny Torquay until November when I reported to RAF Weeton and successfully passed the course. Little did I know that 25 years later I would serve on Weeton Post as a Leading Observer!

There were hundreds, if not thousands like myself and I soon realised how lucky I had been. After embarkation leave they tried very hard to find a trouble spot to send me to so I ended up in Blackpool waiting for an overseas posting, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY!

Submitted by Fred Morris

VE Day Beacon Lighting & Other Events 8 May 2015

A chain of beacons was lit across the country, Spitfire and Lancaster aircraft took to the skies, and a concert was held at Horse Guards Parade in London to mark 70th Anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (1945 – 2015)

On 8 May three days of festivities commenced to mark the end of the Second World War in Europe.

The concert was mainly for ex-servicemen and women and their families and the artists covered many WWII favourites including Vera Lynn, Flanagan and Allen, Andrews Sisters and Gracie Fields.

VE Day 70th ANNIVERSARY SERVICE
at the LONDON CENOTAPH

The ROCA National Standard carried by
Tim Kitching of 20 Group.

Follow the You Tube link here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9AAM6kyCyg>

Read Tim's vivid account of his memorable weekend on ROCA website



Prince Harry flying in the back of a Spitfire on a sortie from Goodwood, West Sussex, via the Isle of Wight as part of VE Day fly past. (John M Dibbs/Boulton Flight Academy/PA)

Battle of Britain Commemorations

Apparently there will be a fly-past across the south of England, on 15 September, to commemorate the Battle of Britain. This will see 35 Spitfires and Hurricanes from the UK, Europe and US, flying in formation from Boulton across those parts of the country that saw the fiercest aerial combat during the battle for Britain's skies, between July and October 1940, and of which Winston Churchill uttered the famous words: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

THE POST THAT MOVED TWICE (Catforth ROC Post)

The original surface post was located on the outskirts of the village of Great Eccleston, opening in December 1937, at that time it was designated L.1 being in 7 Group reporting to Manchester. It became part of 21 Group and was re-designated G.3 in November 1953, 21 Group at that time being based at Lancaster Castle. The post was re-sited in August 1962 to a location on the south side of the former Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) near the village of Inskip. The airfield opened as HMS Nightjar on the 15th May 1943, these naval air stations were for training anti-submarine and two-seat strike crews and were known as 'stone-frigates'.

The station was paid off and decommissioned on the 2nd July 1946, becoming a major RN radio station on the 12th January 1959 and was commissioned as HMS Inskip in 1966. Nowadays it is run by the Defence Communications Service Agency, as Radio Services Inskip and retains its world-wide communications function for all three services

The underground post was opened at HMS Inskip in May 1963, changing its name from Great Eccleston to Catforth, it was designated H.3 within Group 21 from October 1968, by this time the group control was based at Goosnargh. In the 1960's it formed a cluster with Weeton and Fleetwood. Weeton post was originally named and located at Blackpool until 1964, when it was re-sited to the army camp. Weeton was closed in October 1968 as part of the major re-organisation of the Corps, it was a difficult post to gain access to, as it was very close to the 22 yard firing range and on one exercise the crew were prevented from reaching the post for some time as there was a shooting competition underway, these issues no doubt contributed to its selection for closure.

The crews also believed this post had a greater protective factor due to the extra spent lead on the roof! Catforth post was later clustered with Forton and Longridge the latter being the master post. By stand-down there were two clusters on the Fylde, Fleetwood and Lytham (30/31 posts), then Longridge and Catforth (35/36 posts)

There seems to be few picture of the post above ground, mainly due to its proximity to the wireless station, with special instructions covering this. The crew gained access to the post through the navy site, eventually becoming well known to the staff at the gatehouse.

Chief Observer (C/Obs) Fred Morris spent most of his Corps time at this post, being transferred there in April 1968 until March 1984. Fred was a long-time member of the ROC having joined in 1952, being awarded a medal and two clasps, for his service. One of the modifications Fred made at Catforth was to alter the vent on the monitoring room door. If the hatch was open

a draught would blow straight down and across your feet, the floor of a post is not the warmest place even without this, so he made a deflector to send the air into the room.



Inside the post having another brew! The tool selection is visible on the wall, along with the satchel for GZI papers and spare seal for the FSM dome. The carrier receiver can be seen on the table (copyright Fred Morris)

Another one of those little things many crews did to help make life more comfortable and it also latterly helped confirm the doors origin. Added to this were things like pieces of carpet, which Fred remembers came from in his mother in-laws bedroom at one time and of course pots and pans to enable hot meals to be made.

Another item which made the post unique in this area was the installation of the Luwa Air Filtration system, a manual system where the observers had to wind the handle for several minutes at regular periods. Fred recalls that they only 'closed down' the post once and used the air system for one night of an exercise, after that an order came down that they must not close the hatch lid when anyone was inside, Health and Safety ruled!



C/Obs Jack Pollitt and (then)L/Obs Fred Morris enjoy a brew on a fine sunny day

Stand-down came on the 1st September 1991 and marked the start of the posts transient relocation, well at least its fixtures and fittings.

Within a couple of years of stand-down former C/Obs Tony Snape who's full time job was working as a Display Technician for the Lancashire Museum Service, had been asked to put something together to support a 'Volunteers' exhibition and being instrumental in ensuring the Corps were represented. The exhibition ran from mid-1993 through to 1994 at the Museum of Lancashire (MoL) and focussed on uniformed volunteer organisations and included Victorian Rifle Volunteers, Sea Cadets, WRVS, Scouts and of course the ROC.

Tony had the knowledge of what was needed and where it might be located so after obtaining permission from the MOD he went to Inskip and duly gained access to the post, unfortunately he did not have a key to the padlock, but the staff at Inskip were more than accommodating in cutting off it off for him!

Some of the components, for example the hatch and counter weight required the concrete to be chipped away; not an easy task in the days before modern portable power tools.



The recreated post at the Museum of Lancashire, the hole which Tony created through the 'concrete' wall can be seen to the right, as can the sign to the viewing platform. The Luwa air system is in the centre of the picture, its filter in the by-passed, i.e. the normal condition. The post office termination and test box are in front of the observer along with new style teletalk. Also the later type of FSM meter is shown buried in the desk, with a strap over it to prevent theft! (1994 – copyright Mike Norris)

He also removed the louvered vents, the top of the Bomb Power Indicator (BPI) pipe and liberated the mount for the Ground Zero Indicator (GZI). He spent quite a few hours sawing through the Fixed Survey Meter (FSM) pipe, which was not just a drain pipe as it had been nicknamed in the Corps, this accounted for the all the above surface features.

Inside the post both doors were removed along with their frames, the table, cabinet and wire runs were also removed. Some of the other interesting fittings that Tony removed were the air filter, which took quite a bit of getting out to the surface, having to use a rope and winch to get it out, in addition he recovered all the pipe work, which included the FSM flange, used to secure the probe head either at the top of the pipe, or in its shielded position part way down the pipe. Again this needed liberating from the concrete; the BPI pipe work was somewhat easier as there was a union to disconnect it.



Another view taken at the Museum of Lancashire, on the right through the door is the toilet and base of the shaft, including the sump pump. The bunks were from Forton post, the FSM flange plate is visible in the ceiling, although the probe rod is missing. Various paper work copies replace the tools on the board; again these were too easily removed (1993 – copyright John Gedge)

Even the sump pump and grating were saved. The equipment and bunks and other removable items had all been removed from Catforth at stand down, so Tony visited a couple of other posts to see if anything could be found. After visiting Chorley he went on to Forton where he was surprised to find that it was like the 'Marie Celeste' everything was just as the last crew had left it, including paper work, bunks, GZI papers and even the satchel for the GZI papers.

Needless to say these helped to furnish the finished display. Apparently most of the post bunks were sent out to the Gulf following the incursion there, because the supplied beds were not fit for purpose.

Following the removal of the fittings, the Catforth site was bulldozed and the monitoring room smashed in and buried, removing all trace of the post.

Having been in the same crew as Tony and worked with on exercises when he was triangulation supervisor I knew how fastidious he could be. So this eventually led to an excellent display where he created the mock up monitoring room and completed it with the surface features, he even added artificial turf to the surface to complete the illusion, all the ground level items were visible from the museum's gallery. The biggest problem was what to put on display, in order to keep the items safe, as the museum is next door to HM Prison Preston and the visiting partners and wives would leave their offspring in the museum while visiting! A nice touch of Tony's was the appearance of cutting through the concrete wall of the operating room so visitors could gain access to its interior without having to come down the ladder.



The surface features of the recreated post in the Museum of Lancashire, taken from the viewing gallery; unfortunately the lighting was not good. The FSM dome, hatch and GZI are all visible as is the artificial grass forming the roof of the post. The Sea Cadets display can just be made out in the background. (1993 – copyright John Gedge)

In fact the shell of this monitoring room is still visible today, although it now acts as post war 'Pre-fab' house, but is still possible to see where the shaft and toilet were!

Following the closure of the exhibition the items went into store for a few more years. They had not been accessioned by the museum and were still noted as the property of Tony. This could have spelt disaster as one of the museum keepers wanted to clear it out and had ordered a skip, with some of material being consigned to it; along with some rather expensive display cases but that is another story.

Fortunately the tale takes another twist, when the former Sector and Group Control bunker at Preston (21 Group – Goosnargh) came up for sale in 2004. A veterinary practice had bought the control and its surface training buildings 10 years earlier, following stand-down. Having established the business, they discovered they were only using the surface premises and had little use for the bunker itself and as separate access could be made available they placed it on the market.

The first potential buyer pulled out of the sale leaving the bunker on the market until 2005. The following client was keen to find out about the bunkers history. In February 2007 he contacted my wife Elaine, who was then the Royal Observer Corps Association (ROCA) Preston contact. We were able to provide him with some background information and to arrange contacts to other members within the former 21 Group. This culminated in a visit to the former control in November that year, whilst it was still being refurbished for its new role.

Around this time Tony Snape was being pursued to remove his artefacts from store at the museum and after contacting our group archivist John Gedge, we were able to get the post materials transferred to their third home. At a meeting in June 2009 the bunker owner was able to show us the former tank room which would contain another recreation of the post monitoring room. Within six months most of the post had been recreated including the surface features which were located outside the bunker some 50 yards from the entrance.

It was the discovery of this and its subsequent posting on the Sub Brit forum titled 'ROC Mystery – a new post at Goosnargh' which prompted this article. The surface features include a fenced area and gate, the hatch and vents, FSM dome and BPI baffle. The hatch and vents were created using concrete and shuttering much like the original, although there are only footings below ground and definitely no tunnel to the former control.



The surface features in their third re-incarnation in Goosnargh. Catforth post never had a radio, so this is a representative item. (2013 – copyright Mike Norris)

The ladder was recovered but was used for the internal representation which was reconstructed inside a former water tank in the control bunker. The tank was built in panels, removed and the plumbing adjusted so that a post sized room could be constructed, with the shaft and toilet.



The former water tank room, in the control bunker. The pipe visible at 45 degrees is where the posts toilet room will eventually be located. (2009 – copyright Mike Norris)

The toilet has the original door and Elsan, the shaft the ladder and sump pump, although no sump due to the concrete floor of the bunker. Inside the monitoring room many of the original features are on display and it does provide a space for additional items to be shown, for example the post radio, which 36 post itself wasn't equipped with.



This is a general view of the recreated monitoring room, looking toward the shaft and toilet. The door clearly showing Fred's deflector modification, the sump pump is visible beyond. On the wall is the Luwa filter system, shown in its 'Active' condition, 'Pete' enjoys a cigarette! The post radio was never issued to Catforth but is displayed in the correct location. (2014 copyright - John Gedge)



The view of the monitoring room looking the other way, the bunks came from Forton post. The door to view the room is on the right of the picture, which precludes having the bunks where they were at Catforth post. At Catforth the Luwa equipment would have been mounted on the wall where the bunks are normally and connected to the vent visible above, hence the slight rearrangement (2014 copyright- John Gedge)

We are very fortunate to have an owner of the bunker who has welcomed the ROCA and maintained an interest in the heritage of the building, providing a valued location for items which would otherwise have been lost. Added to this the ROCA have had the privilege of being able to hold meetings in the bunker once or twice a year. The highlight of which was a beacon lighting event in June 2012 to celebrate the Queens Diamond Jubilee, where Fred Morris lit the beacon standing on top of one of the bunkers vent stacks, in a 'Fiery Fred', beacon lighter pose, the emblem of the Corps.

Thanks to:

Former C/Obs Tony Snape
Former C/Obs Fred Morris
Former C/Obs John Gedge
Michaela Jackson-Smith and Stephen Ball (Lancashire Museum Service - MoL)
Paul Miller (The current custodian of the control bunker)

Finally in memory of C/Obs David Hogarth whose uniform now adorns 'Pete' in the recreated monitoring room.

Submitted by Mike Norris

BUNKER NEWS

Battle of Britain bunker to extend opening hours in 75th anniversary
Hillingdon & Uxbridge Times: 31 March 2015

For the 75th anniversary of Battle of Britain, the 11 Group Operations Rooms Museum at RAF Uxbridge (also known as the Battle of Britain Bunker) will extend their regular weekday opening to include the third weekend of each month between April and August. It was the home of Fighter Command No.11 Group, and it was in the Bunker that most of the RAF's defence of Britain's skies was co-ordinated during the Battle of Britain.

Decisions were made by the Bunker's controller to scramble the Hurricane and Spitfire squadrons. Today, the Bunker looks exactly as it did on 15 September 1940, the most decisive day of the battle.

The original plotting map remains and visitors can follow in the footsteps of Churchill and Eisenhower.

They are fully guided tours lasting for around 1.5-2 hours and must be booked in advance. The tours include a short film on the Battle of Britain followed by a presentation in the Plotting Room, describing how the battle in the sky above London and the South East was controlled from this historic room. Displays include many artefacts from WWII, as well as exhibits focusing on the Women's Royal Air Force, **Royal Observer Corps** and the history of RAF Uxbridge.

Next 2015 weekend openings, July 18-19 and August 15-16, with tours at 10 am, noon and 2 pm. All visits must be reserved by calling 01895 238154 or email to 11gpenquiries@btconnect.com

Oldham's nuclear secret

Mancunian Matters & Oldham Evening Chronicle 21 May 2015.
Reported by Jack Howson

It was forty years ago that Oldham Council began the building of the imposing 200ft Civic Centre tower. Thousands of Oldhamers visit the Civic Centre every year with no idea what lies directly beneath their feet.

A secret nuclear bunker with a labyrinth of tunnels and rooms was built in case the Cold War turned nasty. It is believed just a few select officials including senior councillors and officers, police chiefs, engineers, doctors and communications experts would have had entry into the high-security chambers should the sirens have gone off. The purpose of the bunker – to keep the borough functioning.

Inside, the old relics remain untouched; including telephones, a communication exchange and boxes of ticker tape should the post-apocalypse survivors be able to make contact with the outside world.

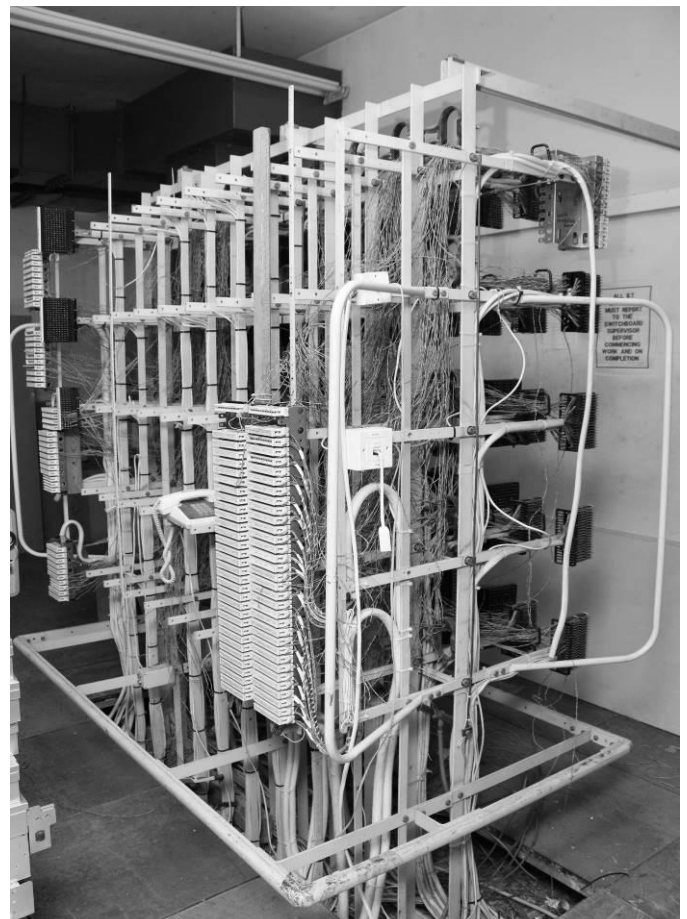
Still lining the tables are dust-covered spare fuses and light bulbs. The different-sized chambers, constructed of reinforced concrete and brick were built by designers Cecil Howitt

& Partners, and opened in 1977, and still bears the original sign, 'no unauthorised persons allowed beyond this point'.

Councillor Jim McMahon, Leader of Oldham Council said: "It is quite strange and shocking to think that if the bomb would have been dropped this is where some of the survivors would have ended up, effectively being entrusted to help run what was left of the country". "Thankfully the bunker never had to be used but hopefully these images will give people a look at what it would have been like living and working underground."

While London was expected to be annihilated by two to four bombs of up to five megatons each exploding over the city, experts predicted Manchester would be in line for one or two 'airbursts' 333 times more powerful than the 1945 US nuclear bomb which flattened Hiroshima, killing 140,000 people. In response to the threat produced by the tensions with the USSR, the UK government ordered the construction of thousands of underground complexes like Oldham's. Since then, many have been decommissioned, have found different uses or been sold off.

See FLICKR - Oldham Nuclear Bunker



Nuclear war monitoring station being restored in Cumbria

News & Star, 5 June 2015

By Jenny Brown.

Former members of the ROC have restored one of the few remaining outposts that were once dotted throughout the county, full of equipment which would be used to monitor and record attacks and nuclear fallout. Using their own money, Dave Shaw and David Atkinson have brought the monitoring post back to how it was in the 1980s. Threlkeld 56, situated in a field outside Keswick, with orders to report findings to Carlisle 51 – the former 14MU based at Kingstown.

After the Cold War ended the organisation was stood down in 1991 and many posts were demolished. Thirty have since been rescued.

The pair were both stationed at the Appleby post, but that has been demolished. Their project ties in with the ROC's 90th anniversary. In the late 1980s Mr Shaw received a shock. "We got the call through as though we were going to war," he said. "We didn't find out it was an exercise until we actually got to the post, for what we called transition to war. I had the shakes."

Threlkeld 56 Post is sited on land at Burns Farm caravan park and campsite just off the A66. Open days are held from time to time. For details visit their Facebook page "Carlisle 51 Post – Threlkeld".

On June 11, ITV News covered the story with a video online. **Inside Threlkeld's secret nuclear bunker**

York Cold War bunker to mark nuclear weapons anniversary

Northern Echo, 5 May 2015

One of the best preserved cold war bunkers in the country is set to mark the 70th anniversary of the creation of nuclear weapons. The former Royal Observer Corps' headquarters in York, which was mothballed until English Heritage took on the site in 2006, will open five days a week ahead of the anniversary of the Trinity weapons tests on July 16.

The date in 1945 saw the United States Army conduct the first successful test of a nuclear weapon, a 20 kiloton explosion which was the outcome of the Manhattan Project, a joint effort by British, American and Canadian scientists and researchers. There have been a series of events and activities to mark the event, on Saturday, 16th May, the Cobweb Orchestra performed a site-specific underground recital composed by Michael Betteridge.

From June 20, a season of film screenings and after-dark tours will be held at the bunker, with a curated programme of rare films showing the different sides and aspects to war and the nuclear issue.

The Beyond Trinity programme at the bunker will culminate in a talk by University of York lecturer Dr Charles Barton on nuclear technology and the future, combined with a short tour of York Cold War Bunker's Operations Room on 25th September.

For details, call 0370-333-1181.

To see a photograph of some of the orchestra in the bunker, and other pictures, visit their Facebook page "York Cold War Bunker".

Cuckfield ROC Post- 2015 Open Days

As usual the post will be fully equipped at open days, all welcome. Please do come again even if you have been before as the bunker has had another facelift and has lots of new items that will be on display. Some of it will be hands-on as well, with items such as the tele-talk now able to communicate with other bunkers in the UK! We hope to see you there.

Sat 15th Aug 11am to 5pm, Sun 16th Aug 10am to 1pm

Any other questions please send a message via Sub Brit website. They also have a Facebook page "Cuckfield Nuclear Bunker".

Submitted by Mark Russell

Leicestershire Nuclear bunker set to unlock its war secrets

Hinckley Times, 27 May 2015.

By Karen Hambridge

The secret Royal Observer Corps underground monitoring post was one of 1,562 employed across the UK to warn the local population of radioactive fallout in the event of a nuclear war. Purchased by Stoke Golding resident Terry Bottrill in 2008 the bunker has been fully reinstated into its original condition, complete with authentic equipment. He organises an open weekend every year (usually May or June) this year included a special Royal Observer Corps reunion for former members and associates on the Saturday.

Terry now intends to restore the Second World War observation tower above ground next to it.

Owning the bunker inspired Terry to look into the history of the ROC and its work both during the Second World War and beyond into the Cold War era. It prompted him to take on the bunker as a retirement restoration project and he has pumped time and money into recreating the post as it would have originally appeared.

The Stoke Golding post, known as George 2, was a master post, opening in 1960 and closing in 1991 following the end of the Cold War. Access is from Wykin Lane along the footpath to the left of the new cemetery and will be signposted on OPEN days.

<https://community.subbrit.org.uk/t/hinckley-times-nuclear-bunker-set-to-unlock-its-war-secrets/19932/1>

Newcastle bunker plotter Kitty Brightwell records her Second World War story

Chronicle Live - 5 June 2015

By Tony Henderson

Memories of the North East's role in the Battle of Britain have been digitally recorded by 93-year-old Kitty Brightwell. This summer is the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, during which 18-year-old Kitty worked in the bunker plotting the positions of enemy planes

on a large map. Kitty's story has been recorded and made a permanent part of the North East's online archive of digital stories.

Kitty said: "Kenton Bunker was a very important location because it was the headquarters for the Number 13 Fighter Group. It was from here that air defence was coordinated for the North of England, Northern Ireland and Scotland." Plotters like Kitty were given information about sightings of enemy planes via headsets and would then use long rakes to move blocks around a large map of the UK to show where the planes were.

Kitty said: "Air Vice Marshall Saul would work out how to respond to an enemy attack. He'd have to quickly decide which airfields were nearest and then he gave them clear instructions about how many planes to 'scramble' into the air. On August 15, 1940, more than 80 German planes were spotted on British radar, headed for the North of England.

Kitty said: "The men and women at Kenton Bunker responded very quickly and approximately 60 planes were immediately scrambled to intercept the German planes. An intensive battle over the North Sea began." The German attack on the east coast met with such heavy opposition that they never attempted such a large scale air attack on the North again.

Alex Henry from Curiosity Creative said: "We recorded Kitty's story in conjunction with Tyne Wear Archives Museums, who use it to teach school pupils about the Battle of Britain "It's really valuable to have someone like Kitty tell us her story now it is available online for everyone to watch and listen to."

Kitty's story can be watched at www.curiositycreative.org.uk

NATIONAL NEWS

Laying Up Royal Observer Corps Banner
RAF Church of St. Clement Danes London
Friday 23 October 2015

Final details are as follows: application for tickets must be made via your Group Secretary (Elaine Norris or Mike Smalley). Please note there is no limit on numbers; all are welcome, including families and friends. Applications for tickets are to be submitted by 31 July. Late applications will be accepted, but they may not be successful in attending the reception afterwards. The Service will start at 12 noon and members are asked to be seated by 11.30.

Admission to the Church will be by named tickets only. Information on dress codes & medals etc. will be printed on your ticket. After the service a sit down Buffet Reception will be held in The Elizabethan Suite of The Imperial Hotel, Russell Square London WC1B 5BB. This is a 15 - 20 minute walk from the church. Alternatively you can take a bus or share a taxi.

A cash bar will be available at the reception for your lunchtime drinks. The room is booked until 4.00 p.m. This is a one-off prestigious event, which will be a memorable and fitting tribute to recognise the unique voluntary service, given by all who served in the Royal Observer Corps, since it was formed 90 years ago. The Chairman and members of the National Committee, look forward to your participation, and thank you for your loyal support. The success of this day depends on a good turnout; please do your utmost to be part of it. If you wish to book accommodation at the Hotel the phone number is 020 7837 3655.

Key NATIONAL Dates and deadlines

Tickets for Parades / Service
It is recommended that Group Secretaries draw up reserve lists of those members who would like to attend an event even if it is not their Area's turn to have tickets.

Group Secretaries to notify the National Secretary of ticket numbers annually by:-
St Clement Dane RAF Commemoration Service 10 tickets by 5th January 2016

Battle of Britain Westminster Abbey 10 tickets by 20 August 2016

Field of Remembrance St Margaret's Westminster 1 ticket by 1st October 2016

London Cenotaph by 1st October 2016

It is the practice to rotate representation between the Areas in the order:

St Clement Dane	BoB	Field of Remembrance
2015 Midland	Scotland	Metropolitan
2016 Scotland	Southern	Midland
2017 Western	Metropolitan	Southern
2018 Southern	Midland	Western
2019 Metropolitan	Western	Scotland
2020 Midland	Scotland	Metropolitan

NEW BOOK

Were you awarded the ROC Medal? If so your name should be in this book.

"The Royal Observer Corps Medal"
by Richard Sirley
(Ex-ROC & a member of Truro Branch ROCA)

A complete history of this long service medal from its introduction in 1950 to when the Corps stood down in 1995. All the recipients of this medal are listed together with details of when the award was made, any subsequent award of clasps, where the recipient served and any entitlement to other awards. The process of designing the medal, ribbon and clasp is fully described and illustrated. A brief history of the Corps explains how it developed and changed over the years to meet changing circumstances. The various badges worn by the Corps over the years are also described and illustrated. Many interesting groups of medals are illustrated in colour and described in detail.

Published March 2015, case bound with colour jacket, 612 pages,
ISBN 978-0-9568266-4-0. contact
generalsecretary@onws.org

or by post to :-
PO Box 6195, ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA,
WARWICKSHIRE, CV31 9JU UK OMRS
Or order and pay using credit and debit cards
via the Society website: - www.omrs.org

Review by Lawrence Holmes is on website
www.rocatwentytwelve.org/uploads/1/2/9/1/12917554/review_sirley_medal_book_2015.pdf

INTERESTING WEBSITES

FIRST WORLD WAR

Historic England website - Traces of the Home Front

Historic England is working to document for the first time the 'footprint' that the First World War has left on England's buildings, landscapes, and in her coastal waters. This rolling programme of investigation and photography will cover the 2014-2018 centenary and beyond

Practice Trenches and other pages on the First Blitz, Munitions Factories, and so on. Hopefully more will be added in due course.

<http://historicengland.org.uk/news-and-features/first-world-war-home-front/home-front-traces/land/practice-trenches/>

WORLD WAR ONE HIT SONG

Revised - Pack Up Your Troubles
Bill Aitkenhead, - our very own D-Day Veteran - is included in this video re-make of the song that inspired thousands during the First World War. It was released to publicise the work of SSAFA. Follow the link below to the BBC Website, and hear the story behind the video.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28730439?SThisFB>

[A few more interesting website items from Ian Edge](#)

Nuclear Secrecy

This looks like an interesting app, just so long as it isn't connected to NORAD!

<http://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/>

Russian planes over UK

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11618620/Russian-spy-plane-in-British-skies.html>

Project Atom

A Competitive Strategies Approach to Defining US Nuclear Strategy and Posture 2025 - 2050

It makes interesting reading!

http://csis.org/files/publication/150601_Murdoch_ProjectAtom_Web.pdf

BBC News

Lincolnshire pair sells Tornado fighter jet on Gumtree -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-33262593>

For Sale on eBay

Want your own missile base? It's on eBay
<http://rt.com/usa/270232-base-sale-missile-ebay/>

PLEASE SUBMIT ITEMS FOR CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER BY 12th NOVEMBER, 2015

To John Gedge
jdq41@talktalk.net
41 Worcester Ave, LANCASTER, LA1 4AZ

21 GROUP ROCA AGM ON 16th MAY 2015 AT CROOKLANDS KENDAL.

