

YEOVIL GROUP ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS ASSOCIATION

Founded 1986

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Edited and produced by Bill Anderson



NATIONAL REUNION 2015

For our 26th Reunion we will return to The Prince of Wales Hotel in Southport from 2nd to 4th October. The cost of a two nights package is £140 per person in a double or twin or £160 in single occupancy. For three nights the cost is £190 or £205. Included in the two night package is:

Friday: Carvery dinner followed by meet and greet in private function room.

Saturday: Full English breakfast, Gala Dinner, with music for dancing.

Sunday: Full English breakfast.

Overnight en-suite accomodation on Friday and Saturday.

The Annual delegates Meeting will be held on the Saturday morning.

Closing date for bookings is 31st August.

Anyone wishing to go please contact Bill Anderson, telephone 01458 850788 for fuller details and a booking form.

SOUTHERN AREA REPRESENTATIVE

Last year offers were invited to fill two vacancies as Southern Area reps, following the death of Murray Whitcher, and the end of Jenny Morris' term. Luckily, Jenny was willing to stand again and as no one else came forward Jenny was elected for a further three years. In addition to being the sole SA rep, she will have the position of National Honorary Secretary again. We are lucky to have her.

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

The latest information shows that National membership stands at 1,820.

ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS BANNER

The National Chairman has written to all Group Chairmen to tell members that at our National Committee meeting held on 28th February the laying up of the ROC Banner was discussed at length. Wing Commander Paul Crook from the RAF Ceremonial Office attended to give a presentation and to answer questions. After a full discussion it was unanimously agreed to proceed with the laying up. An important factor for taking the decision is that we were informed that the Banner cannot remain in the Rotunda at Cranwell in perpetuity. We all agreed that 2015 is the most suitable year to lay up the Banner while many of us are fit and able to attend the ceremony. Wing Commander Crook told us the first Banner currently on display at St Clement Danes will remain on display along with our second Banner. The Chairman appreciates that some members will be disappointed at this decision but the National Committee and our President, Air Marshal Spink, feel that this is both the correct decision and the correct time to do it, on the 90th Anniversary of the formation of the Corps. The Banner will take its place along with all the others in the RAF Church in London and will help cement the close relationship between the RAF and the ROC for many generations to come. We hope that as many members and ex Corps people will want to attend this prestigious occasion and we ask all Groups to come together to ensure that the laying up of our Banner is conducted in a proper manner as befits our proud history.

The laying up service will take place in the RAF Church, St Clement Danes, The Strand, London, WC2R 1DH on Friday 23rd October 2015 at 12 noon. It will be followed by a reception and light refreshments. Preferred dress for our members will be lounge suit. and appropriate dress for ladies, with ROC beret, ROC or ROCA tie and medals.

The ROC Association National Standard and its two escorts will be paraded as will Group Standards if wished. It is expected that a rehearsal will be required before the service, and standard bearers should be available from 10.30.

Members of Yeovil Association wishing to attend this momentous occasion are asked to submit their names, and those of their guests, ie family members or other ex Corps members, to Bill Anderson by 14th July, by telephone 01458 850788 or by mail to Rocklea, Henley Lane, Butleigh, Glastonbury, BA6 8UA. Admission to the Church will be by named tickets only.

WHO GOES THERE ? By Bill Jones

I JOINED the Royal Air Force in 1943 and was selected for training as a WOP/AG, wireless operator air gunner and posted to RAF Yatesbury. During the course the syllabus was changed and we were to become Signallers and to be the first to wear a new brevet, "S".

One evening, I was on guard duty at the entrance to the Officers Mess at the east end of the camp; we had been told to be extra vigilant as three prisoners of war had escaped from Melksham. They were thought to be heading for an aerodrome as one was a pilot, the second a navigator and the third a U-boat captain. My spell of duty was from 2 am to 4 am and it was a cold crisp morning when I saw three figures, silhouetted against the hills in the distance, walking along the road; next I could hear some muttering and the three stopped at the top of the road leading to the Officers Mess. If they moved on I could ring the guardroom, but no, they started to walk in my direction. What to do? I found the clip of five live rounds in my greatcoat pocket, slipped them into the rifle and waited. They came on and as they neared I stepped out into the road and challenged them - no reply, but the three had stopped walking.

I challenged again, waited a short time, still no answer. The third time I challenged and fired two quick rounds over their heads. The answer was immediate, "All right airman, Orderly Officer". I called "Advance Orderly Officer and be recognised". I had no idea what the Orderly Officer looked like but up came an officer (who had had a few to drink). There was I, trying to shine a torch on him, a rifle bayonet a few inches from his chin and alarm bells sounding from the Guardroom. The Orderly officer was bringing in a sergeant and a WAAF, who had been on a binge in Marlborough as it turned out. A posse arrived headed by a senior NCO. We all stood around, I told my story and was put in the vehicle (someone else taking my place). I stayed the night in the guardroom and next morning was charged "I had fired my rifle without an officer's permission". However, the charge was thrown out and I was complimented by the officer sitting in judgement. So there was nothing on my sheet and it remained clean to the day of my demob.

So back to the Signallers course. It was then that I went sick with nephritis, a kidney inflammation. I spent many months in Yatesbury hospital subsisting on a diet of mainly baked beans. One night we were kept awake by the noise of aircraft flying overhead: next day the news reported "Allied troops had landed in France.

We were encouraged to take up some sort of occupational therapy. Tailoring being in the family I opted for needle and thread, making a tea cosy with buttonhole stitches. It was almost complete when we were told that someone of importance was coming round the ward and we were to look busy. It turned out to be Queen Mary. She inspected my work, seemed surprised and passed on to the next bed. After she had departed someone rushed into the ward with the request that when I had finished the tea cosy Her Majesty wished to purchase it! I never found out whether she did.

At one time the Matron gave me a small aspidistra to cheer me up. By now I was on the way to recovery and was awarded a bottle of Guinness a day. At that time I did not drink so what to do with this liquid? I could not give it to the other kidney patients, so I poured it into my aspidistra plant. The plant grew rapidly and the matron on her rounds remarked "I had an aspidistra the same size as that and mine is nowhere the size of that one is now". A voice from the top of the ward said "Your bugger doesn't get a bottle of guinness a day". I'm not sure whether she heard.. A few weeks later I departed to convalesce at "Cripples Corner", Blackpool. The MO instructed me to drink a couple of pints a day!

However, I was now deemed unfit for aircrew duties, so I never did get the Signaller brevet. Instead I was remustered as a clerk general duties, which as it turned out led me to some interesting situations. At one time I was at the maintenance and stores depot at RAF Handforth, near Stockport when I was temporarily attached to the civilian police: they were investigating a group of RAF men who were operating an illegal printing press, producing fake railway tickets and selling them to other RAF personnel and they needed someone from the RAF to assist them. We were waiting to be drafted to the far east, but I was one of twenty who were sent instead to the USA. We sailed from Southampton to New York on the Queen Elizabeth. I was told that I was to act as a steward for the voyage, and when I protested was told that it was a cushy number and that I would have the run of the ship's crew's deck, so I agreed. From New York we went by train to Montreal, thence via Miami to the RAF station in the Bahamas and later to the BOAC seaplane base in Bermuda, where I was employed on typing duties.

In 1947 I was flown home in the bomb bay of a Liberator via Montreal, Gander and Shannon (where we were not well received) to Prestwick. My final posting was to the records office at RAF Innsorth. I now had the choice of staying on in the RAF or going to Teacher Training College in Birmingham; I opted for the latter, which led me finally to teaching in Maiden Newton, where I joined the ROC Post in the late 1950s. The very day I was demobbed from the RAF, in Cirencester, I looked at daily routine orders and saw that I had been promoted to corporal, but of course no stripes and no extra pay. I eventually put on RAF blue for a final time, but now with the RAF Volunteer Reserve (T). I think I must have been the oldest Flight Lieutenant in the RAF when I retired.

ON THE NET

Basil Wright has drawn attention to an interesting web site, which shows pictures of several ROC sites, including Southwoods. See www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article/2876325/-last-cold-war-relics-britain-s-secret-nuclear-bunker

BEREAVEMENTS

Mike Barnes died in November at the age of 87 after a long illness. He lived in Witheridge in later life, but previously lived at Tiverton and served on the Bampton Post. By trade he was a motor mechanic on heavy goods vehicles and during the war he worked on aircraft in a civilian capacity. He was a member of the Association from 1989 until his death, of which, sadly, we were unaware, until his widow received the January newsletter, whereupon she contacted us with the sad news.

John Dagg died in 2013. He was a long serving member of the Corps and was the Head Observer of the Holford Post. This Post was distinguished by having in the compound a fallout detector, in the form of a net, which was set up and monitored by nearby Hinkley Point nuclear power station. John was a founder member of the Association and was for some years a member of the committee. His was yet another instance where we were unaware of a member's death until some time afterwards.

John Simmons, died unexpectedly in Bridport on 17th February after breaking his hip in a fall. He was in his 80s. He was a Warning Officer in the Southwoods Ops Room. He lived in Dorchester and had worked at Winfrith Atomic Research Establishment.

John Hoare, who died on 1st March aged 85, was a whole time officer, rising to the rank of Observer Commander. The places where he served included Bristol and Lincoln Groups and Metropolitan and Western Area HQs. On retirement in 1997 he moved to Chard and joined Yeovil ROCA and was a regular attender at our lunches until failing health overtook him. His wife, Dorothy is suffering from dementia, but was able to attend his funeral with the help of her carers. Also present were Hilary Daniel, Pete and Jill Carter, Basil and Jean Wright and Bill and Mary Anderson.

We offer condolences to the respective families.

SICK PARADE

It has become invidious to mention just the names of those whom we know are poorly, when there are probably many more of whom we are unaware, so let us just wish everybody well.

2014 COUNTRY FAIR

Kathie Underwood's 2014 Country Fair raised £1,928 for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

NEW MEMBER

We welcome Roland Millbank, who served on the Marston Magna Post in the 1950s. He worked at Westlands but emigrated to Australia in 1965, served in the Australian Army, retired as a Major and became a Justice of the Peace. He now lives in Merewether, New South Wales.

AIRBORNE HEADACHES

Gerald Hill's Airborne Headaches, sent with the January newsletter, disappointingly attracted no entries. However, the answers, supplied by Gerald are:

Modern; Mig 29 Fulcrum, BAE Hawk, South Korean A1750B,
Dassault Rafale, Avro Vulcan B2, Saab Gripen,
Aero L39C, Typhoon FGR4 Eurofighter, Tornado 2.
World War I: Camel, Fokker Eindecker
Camel, Camel,
AMC DH 2, Fokker Dreidecker 1, Hanover CL 111 A.

Gerald recommends a visit to the Classic Air Museum in Newquay, where the aircraft on display include Anson, Devon, Chipmunk, VC10, Harrier, Canberra and Lightning.

SOCIAL NEWS

The Valentine Lunch, held this year actually on St Valentine's Day, at the Great Lyde attracted 21 members, who were rewarded with an excellent carvery and a good choice of puddings, all for £10, a tribute to Ann Smith's negotiating skills. The usual display of daffodils along Lyde Road were worth coming for alone. The raffle raised over £30 for Group funds.

For the Spring Lunch sixteen of us returned to the Rose and Portcullis in Butleigh, which seemed to meet with approval, although some had difficulty in finding the pub.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

GROUP

Saturday 16 May, Survivors' Lunch, Virginia Ash, Henstridge, 12 for 12.30. Choose and pay on the day.

Tuesday 9th June, Committee Meeting, 7.30pm, Butleigh

Wednesday 24th June, Midsummer Buffet Lunch, George Albert Hotel, Wardon Hill., 12 for 12.30. Pay on the day. The hotel has asked us not to contact the hotel ourselves, but communicate through John Norman only.

Thursday 16th July, Barbecue, West Harptree Post, 7-00 pm. Just turn up.

Saturday 8th August, Country Fair, Spetisbury, near Blandford.

Saturday 19th September, Reunion Lunch, Great Lyde (advance notice).

See separate sheet for booking forms.

OTHER LOCAL

Saturday 11th July, Yeovilton Air Day.

Friday 17th-Sunday 19th July, Air Tattoo, Fairford.

Sunday 6th September, 2pm, Double Hills, Paulton, memorial service for those killed in the Glider crash in 1944.

NATIONAL

Saturday 16th May, 12.00, ROCA Day National Arboretum, Alrewas, especially remembering the 90th anniversary of the formation of the Corps and the 20th anniversary of the standing down of the NRC Teams.

Sunday 7th June ROC Open Day, Newhaven Fort.

REMEMBER

The Royal Observer Corps Benevolent Fund is still there for those who are in need. It may not be you, but it could be someone that you know - for more information go to:

www.rocbf.org.uk

Amounts distributed in recent years:

Year	Total grants		Cases
2010	53	£82,000	£82,000
2011	58	£45,000	
2012	43	£40,000	
2013	38	£27,000	
2014	9 to date		

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subs for 2015/16 fell due on 1st April; they remain unchanged at £5 for full members and £2 for associates., the lowest subs in the Association. Thanks to those who have already paid, those who have not are invited to send a cheque, made out to 9 Group ROCA to W.Anderson, Rocklea, Butleigh, Glastonbury, BA6 8UA or hand it to him at one of our lunches.
