

“SERVICE FOR SIGNS AT SEATON”

Saturday 19 October 2013 saw the Unveiling and Service of Dedication and Remembrance at Seaton, East Devon, of two unique road signs. Local former ROC Officer Irving Roberts and Seaton Town Councillor Sharon Bruce had been working on the project for over two years to provide the signs commemorating the Royal Observer Corps, on the access road to a new Tesco Store at Seaton. Funded by the Town Council with the full agreement of Tesco's, the signs were originally erected in November 2011. The new road was called 'Royal Observer Way'. Another sign placed beneath the road name, was added in the summer of 2013. This



sign unusually explained that *'This road is named Royal Observer Way in recognition of Seaton's Observer Corps volunteers who manned the above and below ground posts from World War 2 until the end of the Cold War in 1991'*.

Entry of the seven standards at the Seaton Service on the Tesco Public Realm Area.

Irving Roberts and Sharon Bruce had worked tirelessly with Jenny Morris, national ROCA Secretary, and Murray Whitcher, national ROCA Vice Chairman, on an official unveiling and dedication service to take place in October 2013. An historical display was to be provided by 10 Group ROCA depicting the work of the ROC and on the Seaton Post in particular. Tragically Murray was to pass away before the Dedication Service took place. The weekend started on Friday 18 October when Jenny Morris, Sharon Bruce, Irving Roberts and Lawrence Holmes of 10 Group, met at Tesco to go over the details of the Saturday Service. A pleasant meal with much ROC chat followed at nearby Winston's pub.

The forecast for Saturday 19 October was for showers and a strong wind but it was to be mild. All the participants gathered by 1100hrs in the Tesco Public Realm area on Harbour Road, Seaton. Two gazebos were erected by the Royal British Legion to hold the ROC display and also the two road signs which had been temporarily removed from their permanent location especially for the dedication. The signs were covered by the ROC Flag. The Group standards from Nos 9, 10, 12 and 14 Groups, two ATC standards and a Royal British Legion standard were present for the occasion. 10 Group's standard bearer was Paul Hingston. The historical display boards were erected with much difficulty due to the high wind and it was a continuing problem keeping the boards upright and in place!



Hon Vice President of ROCA Hilary Daniel with former Ch/W/Obs Christine Trott of Seaton Post. Her husband Alan was also the Ch/Obs on the post.

Local man Phil Armour provided the PA system complete with microphone and by 1345hrs some 80 people were seated or were standing in the Public Realm Area. Included were the standard bearers and about 25 ROCA members and their partners.

Nine 10 Group members and partners attended including Tony Child 10 Group Chairman. Seaton Town Council was represented by Town Mayor Gaynor Sedgwick, the Town Crier Mr David Craner, Sharon Bruce and other members of the Town Council. Also in the assembly were former Seaton ROC Post members Ch/W/Obs Christina Trott and W/Obs Chris McDonald. Last, but not least, was Hilary Daniel, Honorary Vice President of ROCA who had an important role to play.

Standards formed up at 1350hrs, those from Nos 9 and 10 Group stood either side of the Road Signs, and the Mayor took up her position. The ceremony commenced at 1400hrs with the Town Crier David Craner ringing his bell loudly, welcoming all and then reading the very evocative 'Eulogy to the ROC' by Dilys Allen of 16 Group. The Mayor of Seaton, Gaynor Sedgwick, gave a short address in which she said that she was delighted to honour the members of Seaton



Left to right John Heywood, Lawrence Holmes, Sharon Bruce of Seaton Town Council, Ken Algar, Steve Williams, Dave Flower and Tony Child, all of 10 Group ROCA.

Post and paid tribute to the life of Murray Whitcher. She then unveiled the 'Royal Observer Way' road signs. Hilary Daniel, the Chaplain to the ROCA, then gave an expression of thanks to Seaton Town Council for all their enthusiasm and help with the project. He related his experiences as 9 Group Commandant and the 'disappearing post'. Hilary continued with the Dedication and Act of Remembrance to the former members of the ROC and members of Seaton Post ending with the ROC Prayer. The Last Post was held and the Exhortation with Jenny Morris speaking the words 'We will remember them'.

The closing prayer was made by the new lady Chaplain to Seaton Town Council, Kay D'Albertson. Perhaps suitably she was a former 'observer' in the RAF and this was her first job on entering the ministry. She made an excellent job of this prayer mentioning the words '**Remember – Commemorate - Celebrate**', several times. She referred to the ROC and the ROCA and the friendships that had been made in the two organisations. The national anthem was sung and Hilary Daniel closed the proceedings. After the service quite a few people looked at the displays particularly the one showing the demolition of the Seaton Post and the subsequent rebuilding. It was good to see Christina Trott and Chris McDonald looking with great interest at their former post.

Then came the task of taking down the display and gazebos, still in the high wind, before retiring to Winston's for a buffet reception provided by Seaton Town Council. At the end of the buffet the last ceremonials took place. Hilary Daniel presented to the Mayor of Seaton Town Council a suitably inscribed ROC Plaque Shield, and an ROC ceramic dish to Sharon Bruce and both received bouquets of flowers. To round off the day Irving Roberts was presented with the President of ROCA's Certificate of Commendation for all his hard work in facilitating the provision of the ROC road signs in Seaton. By 1600hrs members of the ROCA and other guests were departing to homes and guest houses after what had been a great and meaningful day for Seaton and for the ROCA.



Left is the sign at the layby at Seaton Down Hill Picnic Area. The nuclear post was some 100m to the west in the farmer's field. The post was finally demolished in the mid to late 1990s. The sign was erected in December 2012.

Right is the original sign put up on the access road to the new Tesco Store in November 2011. Unusually the road was called 'Royal Observer Way', the only one so called in the whole of Great Britain. The siting of the sign at Tesco's has no historical significance since the nearest ROC post was some 900m away off Beer Road, near the seafront, Seaton.



Below is the original sign with the additional sign explaining why the road was called 'Royal Observer Way'. This additional sign was added in the summer of 2013.

