

# “A PLAQUE FOR SEABORNE OBS W J SALTER”

By Lawrence Holmes

At the 10 Group AGM on 17 March 2019, under AOB, Chairman Lawrence Holmes asked the Group committee if, in the 75th anniversary year of D-Day, they wished to recognise in any way the death of Seaborne Observer Bill Salter from Exmouth. Exmouth was in the 10 Group ROCA area and Bill was only one of two observers killed on active duty in WW2. The committee agreed that something should be done and Exeter Branch Chairman Dave Flower was asked to look into the matter and explore options in the Exmouth Town area. In mid March, Dave went to Exmouth and looked generally at the town for ideas but quickly found that the best option was a plaque at Holy Trinity Church on Rolle Road. He informally spoke to the Church Wardens and found they were agreeable in principle to such an idea.

On 25 April Dave and Chairman Lawrence Holmes met with the Church Wardens and discussed ideas and agreed that a suitable memorial could consist of two plaques placed on a wooden panel in the walling of the church. There were already several military plaques in this wooden panelling wall so the ROC memorial would fit in very well. It was felt appropriate to use the brass Salter Plaque already held by Hon Vice President Tony Child. In addition it was proposed to provide an ROC Shield plaque recording the placing of the Salter plaque in Holy Trinity Church by 10 Group ROCA in the 75th anniversary year of D-Day. The Church Warden advised us that an Archdeacon's Faculty was required before any work could proceed. Total memorial project budget cost was in the region of £350 and 10 Group decided to self fund, then



Above is the impressive Holy Trinity Church, Rolle Road, Exmouth.

raise as much monies as they could afterwards.



By 31 May Lawrence Holmes had the brass Salter plaque from Tony Child and on 1 July he purchased an ROC Shield Plaque from national Secretary Jenny Morris. In early July the Faculty fee was paid to Exmouth Church. An application for financial help was made to the National Committee and on 11 July a generous grant was given to the project, which was much appreciated. A small plaque recording the giving of the brass plaque to Exmouth Church was affixed to the ROC Shield and the Shield and brass plaque were positioned on a template so the exact positioning could be determined when fixed in the church.

Above shows the Obs Bill Salter Memorial on the wooden panelling in Exmouth Church. The ROC Shield records the giving of the plaques to the Church in 2019, the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the brass plaque records the death of Bill Salter on SS Empire Broadsword on 2 July 1944 in the Seaborne Operation.

There followed a lengthy wait until the Faculty was approved on 19 October. Lawrence Holmes met the Church Warden and handed over the two plaques for fixing on 27 October and these plaques were fixed in place on Monday 28 October. The Church had wanted the plaques in place before Remembrance Sunday on 10 November and this was achieved. The Obs Salter Memorial can now be seen by any visitor to the Holy Trinity Church Exmouth. A formal Dedication Service is being planned for the Spring of 2020.

In addition Lawrence Holmes is to provide the church with all the background information on 'The Life and Death of Obs Bill Salter' so that they can compile a detailed booklet to be lodged in their Library at the Church. This will allow visitors to learn more about this brave observer who gave his life in the D-Day Operations.

**Footnote** - Dave Flower, John Heywood and Steve Williams of the Exeter Branch ROCA went to Exmouth after Remembrance Day on 10 November 2019, to place a special poppy cross Dave had made on the town's war memorial. The cross remembered Seaborne Obs Bill Salter. There were 119 wreaths laid around the base of Exmouth War Memorial and one of them was for the ROC with a card from MPS Glass & Window Centre, Exmouth.



Remembrance Cross to Seaborne Obs Bill Salter placed on Exmouth War Memorial by members of the Exeter ROCA branch.