

Living far flung to the North I promote ROC Heritage not only in the capacity of being a member of the ROCA Heritage Team, but also via The Arbroath Post Museum Project which I set up as a Not for Profit Organisation in 2008. I hasten to add I have a team of former Observers and ROCA Associates who support me with their ever willing commitment to this Project.

We focus on incorporating the awareness of ROC Heritage and The Benevolent Fund into our programme. Now ROCBF has merged with RAFBF we will continue to support the cause as appropriate. We now have an additional pop up stand supplied by the Heritage Team dedicated to information about the Benevolent Fund and this is a good way of letting former Observers know that we still care about them, and can help them, and their dependants in time of need.

I now give a report on just a few of the Arbroath Posts events and happenings of 2017 as follows:-

We were approached in the Autumn of 2016 by the Curator and Manager of The Scottish National Museum of Flight at East Fortune. They are setting up a Cold War Facility at 'Flight'. Could we come to Arbroath to see and hear first hand how the ROC had operated. You bet you can! They were amazed by what they learnt. Neither had been down a Post before so an eye opener. Come March I received an official request from National Museums HQ in Edinburgh to advise they were featuring the Cold War for the first time in their War Experience Day in May - would we like to exhibit - Oh yes!

With logistical help from 22 and 24 Groups we ended up with a massive display of ROC kit displayed over several long tables with 9 former Observers mostly in uniform in attendance. John Sharpe also came along to support us and to talk to interested folk and he persuaded a former 25 Group Observer to sign on the dotted line to join ROCA!

We were situated in Hangar 4 which houses Concorde. Our backdrop was a BOAC fuselage. Travel started at 0500 for some and finished at 2230 by the time all kit was home and dry. A very successful day which also resulted in Stirling Amateur Radio Club visiting us at Arbroath and Doug and Brenda the new ROCA member and his wife also, later in the year. Doug and Brenda also attended the annual ROCA BBQ at Arbroath in August.



Our wonderful nearby Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre promote various weekends during the year opening their doors for free. In August they threw their hangars open for a Squadron Scramble Family Day and Plane Fly in. A Lovely atmosphere as usual – a place of such charisma including the ghost of a pilot. 60 small planes and microlights flew in during the weekend to the adjacent air strip. With pilots and passengers visiting The Arbroath Post Museum Stand. Again our exhibits had been loaded into vehicles and set up in one of the hangars. So many interested people stopped by and we managed to enrol another two members for 28 Group ROCA. All too soon the weekend was over and packing up time again.



Our main display area is of course the Post itself which is in an unusually large compound of land which also houses the portable buildings for top sides exhibits, storage containers and a car parking area.



We applied for Listed Building Status for the Post a few years ago and this was Awarded.

We have Open Days during the summer months for the general public and also run dedicated tours for Groups of people such as Rotary Clubs, Youth Clubs etc.

The annual BBQ is well known in Scotland and we usually have former ROC bods from all the Scottish Groups attending – re-acquainting friendships and recounting past memories.

September sees us taking part in The Angus Heritage week when we participate in the Doors Open Weekend. This is always over booked long before the event.

Our 'star' this year was a 93 year old lady – Flora Davidson. As a teenager at school she was taught aircraft recognition which she then taught her father! He, James Spence then joined the ROC and became Group Officer for this area. One of our Team – Bill Petrie used to sneak up to his local above ground post at Inverkeillor as a 13 year old and unofficially help out as his elder cousin was a member of the post. Bill was aircraft daft. He often had to hide in the sand dunes when word was out that Officer Spence was on the prowl! When Bill came of age he joined the Corps and later became Group Officer for the same area! This lady has since sent some marvellous photos to me of personnel of local wartime posts annotated with names and of a uniformed contingent marching down Arbroath High Street. Also a social occasion at Ops Room Dundee showing senior officers – unfortunately I have found little information about those present as yet.

Flora was so pleased to see the Post Instrument and other artefacts of the day. She quite thought the ROC aircraft recognition days of the ROC had long been forgotten.



Another encounter this year was meeting a chap who had visited the Post a few years back. He told me an ex RAF friend of his had an RAF greatcoat in his attic would I like it? Yes please! We met in a local hostelry with his friend. As we chatted about RAF and ROC matters he said in passing 'my father was in the Corps' he was in a special department know as Seaborne!! I now have copies of the documentation sent to his father with his orders to present himself at Greenock to join SS Thomas Wolfe to sail south and other related papers of his father's service.

These are just two instances of the many interesting things that come to light whilst we promote our former Service to young and old. To locals who are always amazed they knew nothing about our activities 'up the farm track' and to visitors to the area. With a number of fruit farms in the area employing workers from Eastern Europe we have also had a number of visitors who learnt a different side and it is interesting to hear their stories.

We look forward to another busy season of Open Days and outside Venues during 2018.

The Dundee Courier who ran extensive coverage of Cragiebarns HQ in the local paper and online last Autumn are interested in doing the same for Arbroath Post thereby linking Post and HQ operations. We are fortunate to have Peter Blockley as the Team's Secretary and his presence at Press events is always welcomed with his wealth of knowledge from 'both sides of the fence' from his former position of DGC with 28 Group.

We are currently looking into obtaining funding for solar panels. The ageing Team are finding generator maintenance becoming more and more difficult and to be able to flick a switch will make life much easier.

The ROC Associates at Cragiebarns HQ Dundee will be fitting resurrected comms for us. They have worked so hard on this and many of the refurbished Posts now have comms in situ and by using modern methods Cragiebarns can talk to the Posts via their TeleTalks which are being revamped by David 'Boots' Shaw as many of them have suffered from lying in the damp for so long. The comms will also allow us to demonstrate the Attack Warning Red alert to visitors from the WB1400 rather than me replicating the wail on my mobile and shout AWR x 3.

We are planning a 'rescue from underground' by the local Coastguard. This will serve as a confined space rescue exercise for them as well as giving us a confidence that they know first hand the location and layout of The Post in case of emergency. We may get the local ambulance service involved in the exercise too.

As you see we are well postured to continue spreading the word about the former Service of the ROC in the capacity of both WW11 and The Cold War and it's continuing support to its past members.

We remain busy in promoting the Corps in many ways - keeping our history alive.

Cheryl Stewart – for: The Royal Observer Corps Association Heritage Team
&
The Arbroath 'Royal Observer Corps Post' Museum