

“THE SERVICE OF DEDICATION OF MEMORIAL PLAQUE IN MEMORY OF SEABORNE OBSERVER WILLIAM JOHN SALTER”

By Lawrence Holmes

The morning of Sunday 11 September 2022 was warm and sunny in the Devonian coastal resort of Exmouth some nine miles south east of the capital city of Exeter. The grounds and large car park of Holy Trinity Church were busy with cars from the Morning Service and the later Dedication Service. The Church on Rolle Street, Exmouth was built in 1824 by John Rolle, British Peer and MP. Holy Trinity is the Parish Church for Exmouth with Mission Community.

The Morning Service was scheduled to finish about 1100hrs but by 1045hrs some 20 members of the 10 Group Royal Observer Corps Association were arriving. This was their busy day and at 1130hrs the Dedication Service for the Plaque to Seaborne Observer Bill Salter was due to begin. Around 1050hrs, for a while there was an intermingling of people leaving the Morning Service and people arriving for the Dedication Service.



Seaborne Observer 20
year old Bill Salter.

Paul Hingston, 10 Group standard bearer, arrived almost at the same time as the bearer (Mr Dean New) from the Royal British Legion, Exmouth. Representatives of the Royal British Legion arrived and there were Sea and Royal Marine Cadets and Army personnel, The Mayor of Exmouth Steve Gazzard with Consort arrived with the Town Crier. As the Morning Service finally ended the Rector of Holy Trinity Church, the Rev Steve Jones, welcomed ROCA members and guests. There was a very quick rehearsal in the Church for key participants.

Then the prime guest, the Deputy Lieutenant of Devon, Mrs Heleen Lindsay-Fynn arrived. The presence of the Deputy Lieutenant was very welcome because the Lord Lieutenants of Devon and Cornwall are the Joint Presidents of 10 Group ROCA. Lawrence Holmes 10 Group ROCA Chairman welcomed the Deputy Lieutenant with hosting person, Dave Flower Chairman of Exeter Branch ROCA. Steve Jones gave the Deputy Lieutenant a very quick rehearsal for her part in the service and as 1130hrs neared Lawrence Holmes called everyone to go into the Church, everyone except the Deputy Lieutenant !



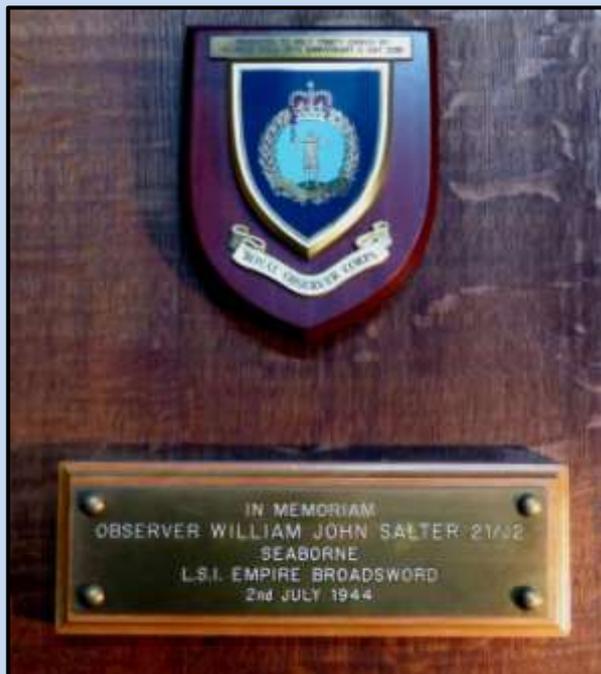
The Deputy Lieutenant of Devon Mrs
Heleen Lindsay-Fynn and Lawrence Holmes
Chairman of 10 Group ROCA.

In the lovely church the congregation now gathered with participants at the front looking towards the altar. The memorial to Bill Salter was off to the left with its own lectern, microphone and lights. The last to enter was the Deputy Lieutenant. At precisely 1130hrs the first hymn, 'Eternal Father, strong to save' was sung. During this hymn the Rev Steve Jones led in the two standard bearers who stood on the steps near the high pulpit. The Rector welcomed all and made reference to the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

Lawrence Holmes was the first participant. He went into the high pulpit and narrated the 'Story of Seaborne Observer Bill Salter'. He described his ROC life, experiences on board a D-Day ship, culminating with his death on 2 July 1944, at 20 years of age. He described the Commemorations for Bill Salter, saying that the memorial in Holy Trinity Church was the only personal one to Bill in the UK.

After another hymn the congregation then moved to the Salter Memorial area. There at the lectern Mrs Heleen Lindsay-Fynn, very clearly gave a Prayer of Dedication saying 'we hereby dedicate this plaque to his memory'. This was followed by 'The Royal Observer Corps Prayer' spoken by Rose Mason, former Crew Officer in the Exeter Control, and now 10 Group ROCA committee member.

A girl cadet from the Exmouth Sea and Royal Marine Cadets then spoke the Exhortation. All said 'We will remember them'. The Bugler Ian Moore then sounded the Last Post from the high pulpit, a very suitable and moving location. The two minutes' silence was followed by the Reveille and Dave Flower Exeter Branch Chairman laid a wreath from 10 Group ROCA at the Salter Memorial. The Dedication (Kohima Epitaph) was given by Mr Neil Gregory the Chairman of Exmouth Royal British Legion.



The Rev Steve Jones then gave the Concluding Prayer and the Blessing. He again mentioned the death of the Queen informing all that she had been the Air Commodore in Chief Royal Observer Corps for 39 years and the Patron of the ROCA for 31 years. The National Anthem using 'King' was then sung. This was followed by the playing of the ROC March 'Skywatch' as the Deputy Lieutenant, standards, dignitaries, clergy and congregation processed out of the church.

After the service most people gathered upstairs in the cafe/lounge for tea, coffee and biscuits. Photographs were taken of the participants and others outside, and by the Salter Memorial. This time was also used to speak to John Salter, Colin and Christine Salter who represented the Salter family. They were particularly proud that their relative was being remembered by the Memorial in Holy Trinity Church. All too soon the Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Heleen Lindsay-Fynn, had to leave for another engagement. Gradually in small groups, almost reluctantly, people made their way out of the Church and homeward.



Participants round the Salter Memorial. Deputy Lieutenant is centre, Rev Steve Jones is far right.

The Dedication Service had gone off perfectly and smoothly. Thanks go to the Rev Steve Jones for his tremendous help, his understanding and patience. To Mike Goom of Exmouth Church who was one of the early local people to help. Thanks go to the Deputy Lieutenant for giving quality and presence to our service and thanks to everyone for attending. The last word has to go to Rev Steve Jones who said 'Your memorial will be safe with us at Holy Trinity Church and members of the Royal Observer Corps will always be welcome'.
(Ed Note ; Use SatNav Post Code EX8 2AB for visit)