

'A SPECIAL NIGHT FOR DENIS'



On Wednesday 13 May 2015 a combined meeting of Cornish Aviation Society (CAS) and the Royal Observer Corps Association Truro Branch (ROCA) was held in the Shackleton Mess at RAF St Mawgan, Cornwall. Some 25 people attended the ordinary meeting of the Aviation Society but the evening was far from 'ordinary' for Denis Ellery of Fowey and former Chief Observer on the local ROC Post at St Columb. Denis is also a long serving member of ROCA and is Vice President and founder member of CAS. It was also Denis's 90th birthday on 4 May which coincided perfectly with the celebrations which were taking place to mark the 90th anniversary of the formation of the ROC way back in 1925. In fact Denis was born within a few weeks of the very first trial exercises being undertaken by the newly formed Observer Corps.



ROCA Chairman Tony Child presenting Denis Ellery with the President of ROCA's Certificate on 13 May 2015 at RAF St Mawgan.

The first surprise for Denis took place right at the start of the meeting when the Chairman of 10 Group ROCA (covering Cornwall and Devon), Tony Child, made a very humorous address and then presented Denis with the President of ROCA's Certificate of Commendation. The presentation of this national award is very rare and only two have been given in Cornwall and Devon in the last 30 years. The President of ROCA is Air Marshal Cliff Spink who was a former Commandant of the ROC and for many years has flown a variety of vintage aircraft including the Spitfire and Mustang. This was very apt for Denis since he is an aircraft enthusiast and an acknowledged authority on aviation in Cornwall.

To say Denis was surprised was an understatement but his surprises were not yet finished! After the aircraft memorabilia part of the meeting and just before coffee was served, Chairman of the Truro Branch ROCA, Lawrence Holmes, came into the main room with a very special birthday cake for Denis. The cake bore the combined logo for ROCA and CAS (quite an artistic task!) and consisted of an Armada Beacon Lighter and an Avro 504 aircraft, to represent the two societies in which Denis had played such an important part.



Members of ROCA and CAS gather round Tony Child and Denis Ellery at the Certificate Presentation Ceremony on 13 May.

To allow for the lack of 'puff' for a new ninety year old, the cake bore only two lit candles. One candle was a figure '9' and the other was figure '0'. As the sung lines of 'Happy Birthday' died down Denis had no problems in blowing out the two candles. The cake was cut and Denis had the first slice! So ended a very memorable evening. Well done.

Lawrence Holmes