

NATIONAL HERITAGE REPORT – JUNE 2023

Paddy and Cheryl have again worked tirelessly to bring our history to the public, their reports are appended separately to this report.

As usual the Team have replied to the many varied enquiries coming to the website appertaining to their expertise. We pride ourselves on a very quick turnaround with all correspondence and are often complemented on this. It is necessary to uphold the professionalism of the Association to others who may have only just found us. Simon is at the forefront of this, he immediately forwards enquiries whether he is in UK or on holiday in Germany!

We were delighted to receive items from the collection of the late Norman Greig, some of which have already been used in John's presentation to a History Group. John and I are currently noting the items which we collected at the Arboretum, Keith will add them to the log, he will send us the labels so that on our next visit to the Archive Andrew can store them.

Following several months of correspondence with the family of a lady thought to have been in the ROC we ascertained that she was a Radar Plotter. Despite this the family wished us to have the book, we now have this, it contains detailed notes and diagrams which in many ways mirror our own wartime plotting. I think it will also help Neville with identifying some artefacts he has which were not used in ROC plotting. Bentley Priory Museum wish to digitise the notes for their archive, some of the material will be used in a talk on July 8th at the launch of the new project to celebrate the new temporary exhibition highlighting the role of women in the Dowding System.

I recently delivered some North London Post history to a volunteer at Bentley Priory for use in a current project. I found him in the Education Centre where he was helping the Museum Director and Learning Officer set up an exercise on the ROC Display A on which John Shere had been the adviser some time ago. This was to be used during a school visit, judging by the amount of chairs set out there were many expected, so good to bring our history to the younger generation.

The Wartime/ Cold War memorabilia given by the family of C/W/Obs M V Grant will be given to the Old Sarum display at the ROC Open Day on 1st July, John Shere will give a presentation which will also include members of the public. This will make a remarkable personal history and should be on display, not hidden away. It is very appropriate that she had served in Yeovil Group. I had previously offered it to Bentley Priory but have retrieved it as we now have the official display. The family of the C/W/Obs will attend the Open Day on 1st July and meet us all.

Jim's amazing newspaper articles on email mentioning ROC, of which we now have paper copies in 12 Lever Arch files for the Archive, cause interest and are forwarded to Groups where appropriate for possible inclusion in their newsletters. Jim asks for no recompense for his considerable outlay on folders etc. Appertaining to this – from Norman's collection came hundreds of newspaper clippings from the 1940s which we still have to investigate further.

We are currently looking into how many Y signalling stations there may have been. We believe there is no conclusive number or how many signallers wore ROC uniform, but John Shere has now received a reply from David Abrutat who wrote the book 'The Signallers'. Interest in all things Wartime is now spanning other organisations.

The Team have been in communication about the ROC Room at Uxbridge which overlooks the Operations Room. Latterly it has contained ROC memorabilia but was in use during Wartime as the communications room for the Royal Observer Corps Liaison Officer, which we knew as the ROCLO. It is good that it is still 'The ROC Room' and used to display ROC memorabilia, Andrew is liaising with the new Curator to give the history and update the contents of the room which was used by the ROCLO. (Thanks to Lawrence for supplying information.)

You will see that we, as a Team, are not happy with 'no badge on the beret' option and felt the need to seek the opinion of others, this is not least in memory of our late lamented Christopher Howard who, in what I discovered was to be his last email to me, urged me very strongly to keep going in keeping the history of the Corps alive.

I was interested to read in some documents recently that the Commander of the ROC based in London in the early 1940s said that if and when an invasion came it would be by glider. This would be by night, he felt that people with the best hearing were blind people and suggested that some should be recruited for the night watch, we have no evidence that this happened.

Again I have to commend the amazing members of the Team for their unstinting work for Heritage, not forgetting that three of them did not serve in the Corps. Thanks are also due to Neville and Lawrence for their very prompt answers to our questions which are much appreciated.

As a Team, we do recognise the input of many others who purchase ROC artefacts at great expense, open Posts and Ops Rooms to the public, attend with displays around the country and generally work to uphold the history of the Corps, they too must be commended. We are all working to the same end – to quote John Shere – 'to keep the flame burning'.

Edwina Holden, National Heritage Officer.
Updated 27th June 2023.