



ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

22 Group, Carlisle

Autumn 2015

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Dates for your diary

23rd November – Eden Valley Cluster Christmas meal at the Lowther Castle, Hackthorpe

6th December – Christmas Lunch – Solway Lodge Hotel, Gretna

April 2nd/3rd 2016 – weekend get-together

April 23rd – Threlkeld Post Open Day

Subscriptions

We now have 94 members and 92 have paid their 2015 subs, 2016 subs will be due in April! Don't worry if you have forgotten, it's not too late. Please make your cheque payable to **22 Group ROCA** and send it to:- Mrs June Archer, 8 Netherby Drive, CARLISLE, CA3 0DL.

Sunday 6th December – Group Christmas lunch at the Solway Lodge Gretna, names to Jim Anderson a.s.a.p.

April 2nd-3rd 2016 – 22 Group overnight event at Shap Wells Hotel, a deposit of £20 per person to Fiona MacDonald before 15th January please.

April 23rd 2016 – First Open Day of the year at 51 Post Threlkeld.



90th Anniversary cake made especially for the Annual Reunion.

(Made by our very own highly talented Sylvia Ramshaw)



Our ex DGC examines the Group Standards in the Crypt at St Clement Danes.

(Photo thanks to Steve George 4Grp)

Please note your newsletter has a new editor, please bear with me if the quality isn't up to Roy's previous fine work.

Royal Observer Corps Association Reunion

Southport 2015

This year's ROCA reunion was again held at the Prince of Wales Hotel, Southport. Most people arrived during the course of Friday afternoon although some early birds took the opportunity to extend the weekend by coming on Thursday. The first event of the weekend was the Chairman's welcome which took



place after dinner on Friday evening. John Sharpe welcomed everyone to the weekend explaining that there had been some doubt about holding the reunion because of the major event being held at St Clement Danes Church later in the month. He was particularly pleased that almost 100 people had felt able to support the Reunion. During the course of the evening people took the opportunity to look at the various stalls, including one packed with ROC related items crafted by Sylvia Ramshaw, and the various displays relating to the heritage and history of the Corps. There was also time to buy raffle tickets with 34 prizes having been donated this year. 5 prizes were won by 22 Group

members and almost £380 was raised for ROCA funds.

Annual Delegates Meeting Saturday morning

The Chairman's report for 2014 giving information on all ROCA activity during the year had previously been circulated to Groups.

Dave Arnott, the Treasurer, then presented his report. A comprehensive set of papers relating to the 2014 accounts had been circulated. There had been a slight fall in affiliation fees which might be expected as membership numbers drop. Dave explained that the focus in the 2014 accounts had been the purchase and dedication of the Memorial Stone at the Arboretum but despite this there had been a small increase in funds. In 2015 the focus will very much be on the relocation of the ROC Banner to St Clement Danes and the subsequent reception. It is expected that as a result of this income will fall slightly.

The Chairman then reported that our President, Air Marshall Spink, had expressed his willingness to continue in the role for a further 12 months. However, Norman Greig, one of our 3 Vice-Presidents has decided to stand down after many years. Terry Giles has agreed to take on the role of Vice-President and to join continuing Vice-Presidents Joyce Shrubbs and Hilary Daniels.

The next few items on the agenda were routine business relating to appointment of Area representatives and National Committee officers – all will be fully reported in Snippets.

Copies of all reports are available on request if you would like to read the detail.

Finally in the formal part of the meeting there was a vote on the resolution put forward by No 23 Group which would remove an anomaly on voting procedure for Area Representatives. Delegates voted to accept the amendment.

Delegates Forum



The scene before the National Standard was paraded in at the start of the Annual Delegates Meeting.

The floor was then opened to those attending the meeting to raise any issues of interest of concern. There was some discussion about possible venues for future reunions in order to alternate between locations in the east and west of the country to balance the distance that members had to travel. The Chairman pointed out that the National Committee are willing to consider any venue suggested by members. However moving from west to east would not significantly reduce distances for those travelling from the north or south of the UK.

Lawrence Holmes and Jenny Morris referred to those people who were not members of the ROC but who are now restoring posts and opening them to the public. Their activities are really appreciated.

A number of Group Standards had been brought to the Reunion and were displayed at the ADM with the National Standard. All Standards would also be displayed at the Gala Dinner. Groups were thanked for bringing the Standards along.

Finally in the Open Forum the Chairman updated members with arrangements for the service at St Clement Danes to mark the relocation of the ROC Banner. The Banner will be carried by a serving RAF officer and the escorts will be Terry Giles (who carried the Banner when it was first dedicated) and Frank Alexander (who carried the Banner when it was lodged at RAF Cranwell). The National ROCA Standard will be carried by Tim Kitching. As many Group Standards as possible will also be paraded including our own.

The Chairman also informed the meeting that to mark the occasion of the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the Observer Corps the National ROCA Standard will be paraded at the Festival of Remembrance in the Albert Hall.

Reports from Portfolio Holders

The next part of the meeting was given over to specialist portfolio holders reporting on their particular areas of interest.

Mick Marks, Chairman of The Way Forward Sub Committee reported that only 5 Groups had responded to the discussion paper which was circulated last year. As a result it was felt that there was no impetus to change the way the organisation is administered in the foreseeable future.

Mick Marks, Webmaster, reported on the success of the ROCA website in raising our profile. There have been 54 membership enquiries which have all been passed on to the appropriate Group.

Edwina Holden, the Heritage Officer, reported briefly on events that the Heritage Team had been involved with over the past year. She then introduced each member of the Team and

individuals were able to provide an update on activities in their own area. The Heritage Team have their own website and it provides a wealth of detail which is worth a look if you have access to a computer

(<http://www.roc-heritage.co.uk/>).

Edwina also passed on a message of thanks from Gavin Saxby who is restoring the Sector Control in Dundee. A recent catastrophic flood has undone much of the restoration work and Groups across the UK have sent donations to enable the damage to be rectified.

It was pleasing to note that at the service in St Paul's Cathedral to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain extensive reference was made to the role of the Observer Corps.



ROC Benevolent Fund

Terry Giles, Vice-Chairman & Secretary of the Trustees of the ROC Benevolent Fund, explained that although the Fund had paid out more in grants so far this year than in the last 2 years the number of new cases was the lowest for 10 years. There have been a number of Outreach activities including press releases to newspapers in the North West and South West of England and also in Scotland. For the first time there has been paid for advertorial items in Scotland and one case has already been dealt with as a result of this. The Fund has also paid for information to be inserted in The Enquirer which is the magazine for Citizens Advice Bureaux. All of this activity is crucial to raising the profile of the Fund. Additionally there is a pop-up banner located in each area to be used at local events as appropriate. Terry stressed that the work of the Heritage Team is crucial in terms of publicity and a joint flyer has been produced with the Heritage Team. Social media is also very important for raising the profile of the Fund.

Looking at other aspects of the work of the Fund – proof of service is critical as a case cannot proceed without it. Everyone was urged to make sure that they know their service number and that their dependents also know it. Over the course of the year the Fund has dealt with applications from 3 war time Observers and also with people who were relatively young at the time of Stand Down. Some people who have made contact have not been in need of financial help but have wanted to be able to talk about their time in the ROC to others with that experience. Terry pointed out that RAFA have now split their role into 2 separate aspects – Benevolence and Welfare. This may be something for us to think about and ROCA

could play an important role.

Other Business

It was proposed and agreed that a donation of £250 be made to the Benevolent Fund from ROCA funds. Neville Cullingford, Curator of the ROC Museum, made a plea for people to send him as much information as possible relating to the names of former members whether this be on lists of post or crew members or copies of photographs with names added.

David Shaw urged members to become involved with helping out at their local post. He also advised that the Heritage Team are hoping to open all UK restored posts in 2016 on the weekend nearest to the 30th Anniversary of Stand Down, 30th Sept-2nd Oct.

Lawrence Holmes advised the meeting that a few Groups had complied and published a history of their Group. He urged all Groups to consider doing this as soon as possible while it was still possible – something for us to think about?

Gala Dinner Saturday evening

Those of you who came along to the 22 Group AGM this year will remember the amazing cake baked and decorated by Sylvia Ramshaw. Well she did it again for the Reunion! The cake was cut by our President Air Marshall Spink and everyone had a piece after dinner. While we were enjoying the cake a number of awards were made. President's Certificates of Commendation were awarded to Chris Shire of 12 Group and Bruce Bonham of 7 Group. The Jock Burnie Trophy was awarded to the Heritage Team and the John Simmonds Trophy to Lawrence Holmes. After the presentations our President spoke to us saying that 90



years of history was really something to celebrate. Also the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain for which we have been given due credit at a number of events. As part of the Battle of Britain celebrations it had been a great achievement to have 40 Spitfires and Hurricanes together at Goodwood with 37 of them being airborne at the same time. The Air Marshall said it had been a great privilege to be part of that event. He concluded his speech by proposing the toast to the Royal Observer Corps.

It was a really enjoyable weekend. We don't know where we're going next year but we'll definitely be there.

Kathryn Little

N Ireland, Scotland and England representatives of the ROCA National Heritage team with the Jock Burnie Trophy.

ROC Benevolent Fund – Can you help?

You will have read in the report of the ROCA Reunion that the Trustees of the Fund have been working to extend the Outreach programme with activities such as paid advertising, an improved web site and some press coverage. However, local activity is just as important as national publicity and may have more chance of reaching those in need and their families. This is where we need your ideas. I have a pop-up banner which gives information about the ROCBF. Although it's quite tall when it's put up it folds down very neatly and is easily portable. So far it has been displayed at our AGM in Thursby where some of you might have seen it. It was also used in Carlisle City Centre on Armed Forces Day. This banner needs to be out and about, not taking up space in the corner of my dining room! If you can think of anywhere it could be used in your locality – in a community centre, library, or village hall or at a local event, please let me know. I'll be happy to deliver it to you. The other publicity tool we have is a double sided leaflet with information about the Benevolent Fund on one side and about the Heritage Team on the other side. Again if you have any ideas about how these can usefully be used please let me know. There is a cost attached to producing them so they need to be used wisely. Only you know your local area so the Trustees need your help with this. Thank you in advance.

Kathryn Little

22 Group R.O.C.A. at St. Clement Danes Church



22 Group R.O.C.A. (with Group Standard) after the Service.

From all five Areas we travelled, seventeen Standards and hundreds of R.O.C.A folk, all gathering at the R.A.F. Church of St. Clement Danes in London. The occasion? another very special and important day in the history of the R.O.C and R.O.C.A.

The special event was the laying up of the Royal Observer Corps Sovereign's Banner. Presented to the Corps by Her Majesty in 1991 it has been held at R.A.F. Cranwell since the stand down of the Corps in 1995. It had been agreed that this was the right time to transfer the Banner to its final resting place in St Clement Danes where it joins the first Royal banner which was laid up in 1991. In it's new home it will now be available to all who wish to view and by laying it up 20 years after stand down, and 90 years after the Corps foundation, many of those who can still appreciate that meritorious history could attend and boy did they so do.



**The Royal Observer Corps Sovereigns Banner
laid up on the Altar after the service.**

I think it's worth noting, with pride and gratitude, the whole occasion reinforced the still close relationship which exists between our former administrators, the R.A.F. and today's R.O.C.A. Evidence of that relationship is the plethora of Air Marshall's who attended (which included the most senior serving R.A.F. Officer, the Chief of the Air Staff, who read the first lesson, and our own President, Air Marshall Cliff Spink Rtd. who read the second lesson) Also involved were the band of the R.A.F. regiment, R.A.F. servicemen (acting as guides and ushers) and the Chief Chaplain of the R.A.F. who delivered an accurate and eloquent address about the R.O.C. during the service.

Also present were many eminent guests who had gladly accepted invitations to attend the very special event. Appreciated though their attendance was, the most important people attending were the HUNDREDS of ex R.O.C. current R.O.C.A and their friends and relatives. It was all of them, who brought memories, emotion and pride, to the day. It was they who gave an exceptional service its resonance and depth and ensured the Banner was laid up with the respect and honour it deserved.



The R.O.C.A. National Standard and the Sixteen R.O.C.A. Group Standards carried into St. Clement Danes for the Service of Laying up the R.O.C. Sovereigns Banner. (22's 5th from the right) Photo courtesy of Sue Aram 3Grp.

Whilst the Church service had emotion, dignity and due ceremony the rest of the day had camaraderie along with emotion and delight to the ton (or should that be tonne now). Many happy memories were shared and recalled, old friendships revisited and new ones established, and the glorious spirit of the R.O.C. (and now R.O.C.A.) was evident. The hundreds at the Church transferred to a sit down reception, enjoyed a hot lunch and made full use of the opportunity to roll back the years. Laughter filled the air as, too quickly, the time to say farewell arrived.

I think it only right to say a heartfelt thank you to all those involved in organising the special day. Their hard work ensured it went well. Thanks also to Dane Murdoch of 24Grp who kindly stepped in and carried our Group Standard on the day.

There have been many special days in our history, all memorable for different reasons. This day will, rightly, take its place amongst them. It was an honour to be there as one of 22 Group's representatives.

Harold Archer

TO THE THOUSANDS WHO SERVED ----- OUR THANKS!

An article inspired by a comment by one of our Group members suggesting we could, and should, acknowledge and remember those who served before us. So, here goes.

Thursday October 29th. An apparently normal day, a week since our arrival in London for the St. Clement Danes Service (now another, very moving, R.O.C. memory) and a day to catch up, stock up and, maybe, rest up. Until, that is, a Face Book post drew attention to a significant event ninety years previously.

THE FOUNDING OF THE OBSERVER CORPS OCTOBER 29th 1925

That date saw approval granted, by the Imperial Defence Committee, for the creation of an Observer Corps following successful trials by Major General Ashmore based on the scheme used for air defence towards the end of the 1st World War

To man up the first 44 Posts, covering Kent and Sussex, 300 certificates of enrolment were issued and those Special Constables became the first of many thousands who served Crown and Country over the next 70 years.

From the very start of our history the Observer Corps had two masters. Manned by Special Constables, under Home Office management, the new organisation served the relatively new Royal Air Force. We now know that, ironically, in later years the roles were to switch as the R.A.F. was to manage the now Royal Observer Corps with the Home Office (U.K.W.M.O.) as customer.

From these early years we only have documents, some narrative accounts and some individual memories passed down through friends and families. As the years pass they have sadly slipped away but what did survive were the standards, the pride, the ethos, the camaraderie and the commitment which inspired those who followed.



Second World War Group Operations Room

Those forerunners created an organisation which saved thousands of lives during the second world war, was the eyes and ears of the R.A.F. before, during and after the Battle of Britain and played a vital role in ensuring our country survived and thus achieved eventual victory becoming the ROYAL Observer Corps as a result. Some of that generation have also now left us but they passed on an effective and vibrant organisation which proved it was more than capable of meeting the challenges posed in the sweeping changes needed to meet the new threat rising from the Cold War.

As the years passed the changes in structure, equipment and tasks were absorbed but the underlying desire to serve friend, community and country continued. The enjoyment of belonging, of friendship, of learning new skills and mastering new equipment contributed to continued success but the essential, vital ethos instilled by those who served before us drove us forward UNTIL. Until it was judged our task was finished, the "war" was won and stand down arrived.

All the thousands who served, at the start, at the end and in between ensured the ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS delivered!

As we celebrate 90 years since the foundation of the Corps, and 70 years of service, let us remember, and give thanks for, all those who went before. They made the R.O.C. special and gave us the chance to also serve.



R E M E M B E R !

The **Royal Observer Corps Benevolent Fund** is still there for those that are in need. It may not be you, but it could be someone that you know – for more information:

www.rocbf.org.uk

Two go Travelling.

It took quite a lot of persuasion but eventually there was success, ex C/Obs David Atkinson was booked to join the Shaw family annual trip to the Cenotaph Parade. We travelled by train from Penrith to Euston, where we were staying in the adjacent Travelodge, arriving late Thursday evening.

Friday morning saw a trip on the tube to Camden Lock Market and then the Science Museum. In the afternoon we went to St Thomas hospital to visit Charlie Tallis of 28 Grp, some of you will know that Charlie had a heart attack on his visit to the Laying Up Ceremony at St Clement Danes. You will be pleased to know Charlie is doing very well and is in good spirits. SPOILER ALERT On Friday evening we went to the Odeon in Leicester Square to watch the new James Bond film Spectre, I can recommend the film even though there are two sections where anyone who knows anything about flying helicopters will spot glaring mistakes, it seems no-one has heard of autorotation. Back to the hotel bar for a quiet beer or three before bed which would have consequences the next day!

Saturday morning saw us back on the tube heading to Westminster Abbey to place a cross on behalf of 22 Group in the ROCA plot of the Field of Remembrance. If you have never visited the Field of Remembrance it is a very unique experience seeing the many plots of crosses. One plot in particular always moves me, that is the Afghanistan fallen plot where all the crosses bear the photo of the person it commemorates. While there this year a couple arrived and placed two crosses, one for each of their sons, that was really hard to see but they were very dignified. From Westminster Abbey we went to visit the freshly laid up Banner at St Clement Danes, the door leading to the balcony where the Banner is was locked but the verger was only too happy to unlock for us. As we were leaving the verger told us how obvious the camaraderie and friendliness of the ROC had been at the service.

Saturday evening we watched the Festival of Remembrance from the Royal Albert Hall on the TV at the hotel, disappointed that the ROCA Standard was not seen on the TV.

Sunday Morning saw us up early, showered, shaved and suitably attired. We left Euston for Horseguards in a Poppy cab with a gentleman from Whitehaven we'd met over breakfast, for those who don't know, the Poppy cabs are driven by cabbies who come in on their days off just to drive those on parade to Horseguards for free, many are ex services and love to talk to those who will be marching. We formed up and marched out onto Whitehall to take our place. Following the 11am silence and the short service we were off! Marching down Whitehall can't be described, it can only be experienced. About 50yds from the Cenotaph a TV camera appeared directly in front of us, there can be no better way of losing all coordination! Once past the Cenotaph the parade continues back to Horseguards where Prince William took the salute, I'm sure his smile widened as we passed. Once we fell out we had our photograph taken



before parting ways. Around 20 of us went to the RAF Club on Piccadilly for an excellent lunch. We hailed a taxi in Trafalgar Square to take us to the RAF Club, when asked how much we owed the driver only wanted a photo of our little group by his taxi to show his mates.

Following lunch we had a guided tour around the RAF Club which is a very impressive building with very nice facilities. A quick visit to the Bomber Command memorial and our trip to London was complete, now to plan next years visit. Who is coming to join us?