

**MINUTES OF THE SPRING AREA CONFERENCE HELD AT
DIDSBURY MANCHESTER
ON APRIL 28th 2007**

The delegates were welcomed to the Britannia Country House hotel, the venue for the Area conference and reunion weekend by the Area Chairman, S/m J Dixon. He commenced the proceedings at 1202 calling first for the customary one minute's silence to remember the following shipmates who had crossed the bar since our last meeting.

S/m Roy George (Founder member **Chester**)

S/m Robert Webber (**Ellesmere Port**)

S/m Lawrie Harney (Secretary **Fleetwood Branch**)

S/m Joe Black (**St Helens**)

S/m Fred Atkinson NCM (Wythenshawe)

Mrs Kath Blythe (Wife of the late Harry Blythe, former Area Chairman)

Apologies had been received from S/m S Caulfield (PRO) and the Beaumaris, Blackpool Llandudno, Llangollen, Preston and Rhyl branches.

Having explained the rules of the meeting, the Chairman then asked if the minutes of the last Area conference held at Liverpool on January 27th 2007 could be taken as read? This was agreed by the meeting. Proposed by S/m J Kelly (Hazel Grove) and seconded by S/m D Tollerton (Crosby)

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

24/07 S/m J Kelly (Hazel Grove) referred to minute 05/07 which concerned the venue for next year's Area conference/reunion in April 2008. "Was there any further information on this subject" he asked?.

The Chairman replying to S/m Kelly said that problems had arisen because the area committee, mindful of the city of Liverpool celebrating the European city of Culture in 2008 had approached the Adelphi Hotel with a view to hosting our area conference and reunion in the city in 2008: more so, because it was rumoured that their was an intention to hold a BOA commemoration to mark the event. However, despite promises by the Adelphi to quote a package deal for the weekend nothing has materialised, despite several further enquiries from us. It has been agreed therefore, to look at an alternative offer proposed by the Prince of Wales Hotel in Southport.

25/07 S/m Kelly raised a further question regarding Falklands 25 arrangements contained in minute 13 /07 [PRO's report]. Had the Area committee decided what support to give to this event?.

The Secretary responding said following the last Area conference they had invited the organiser to a meeting of the Area committee to discuss what he required by way of assistance. It was pointed out to the organizer that the public liability insurance for the parade and the other events would be met from RNA funds. As the RBL would also be having a large input into the Southport commemorations, it was suggested that whatever the Royal British Legion offered financially, this area would match up to a maximum of £1,000. A letter confirming the Area's decision was sent to the organiser on February 18th 2007. To date, there has been no reply to it. There the matter rests.

CORRESPONDENCE

26/07 The Secretary reported, that he had received correspondence in late February from the Maritime Steam Restoration trust who are at present attempting to raise funds to save, and possibly restore, the WW2 vessel *HMS Stalker* which was involved in the D Day landings. This type of vessel, led to the original design of the Roll on Roll off ferry. It is also unusual as most of its type were Diesel engined, however Stalker due to the shortage of the American engines was steam driven which makes it unique. If you wish to learn more of the Trust's restoration plans you can access their website on www.maritimsteamrestorationtrust.co.uk

CORRESPONDENCE (cont)

26/07 Several Branch Secretary changes have taken place recently, namely at Atherton, Buxton Blackpool Fleetwood Macclesfield North Manchester, and a Secretary Address change at Rhyl. All changes to date are contained in the amended Area Address list. I do have several copies with me should anyone require them.

The Secretary of the Crewe branch has written to me expressing her member's fears following their delegate's report to the branch after the last Area conference. They have become concerned about remarks made at that meeting regarding views expressed by other branch delegates about this Area breaking away from the Association. I have replied to the branch assuring them that this subject has been around for some time, and for such a move to progress further, it would need a motion to national conference by an individual branch and seconded by another. It would not be supported by this Area committee, and its chance of succeeding at conference if accepted by the SOC in the first place, is highly unlikely. The branch has informed me they are reassured by my statement.

A David Drysdale from Rhos -on - Sea North Wales who informs me of the North Wales Veterans weekend, incorporating; the 25th Anniversary of the Falklands Campaign. This will take place in Caernarfon on the Saturday, and a parade in Llandudno on Sunday July 25th Followed by a concert in the evening given by the band of the Royal Marines in the Theatre. Also in attendance will be the Corps of Drums of the Welsh Guards. The invitation is aimed at all ex service organisations to take part, and is being organised by the RBL North Wales district. All monies raised will be donated to Service charities. The cost of the Sunday evening concert in Llandudno will be £10. Per person if booked via a branch, as opposed to £15 to the general public ' I understand that this information has also been circulated to all the North Wales RNA branches by the No.7 Area Secretary. The Pwhelli Branch have expressed an interest in these events, and I have supplied them with the relevant information.

The capitation fee cheque has arrived from Headquarters, it amounts to £1,340. 75. It has been passed to the Treasurer. Compared to last years figure of £ 1367.32. With the continuing loss of members throughout the Area, this figure would have been much lower. However, due to the final phase of the increase in subscriptions to £10.00 this has helped to maintain the status quo for this year.

Harry the Area President has sent me correspondence relating to the previous two meetings of the National Council; where the subject of a letter from the Charities Commission was discussed, and the perpetrator of a letter to the commission was wrongly attributed to the NCM of No.2 Area. It was also discovered, that the minutes of the December meeting were inaccurate. Ron Fielding attending the March meeting of Council, attempted to ask for information about the situation, being his first meeting. He was told to sit down By the President? Harry has asked both John and me to seek the opinion of this committee with a view to writing to the Chairman of the National Council demanding an apology from the President if this was the case.

The committee discussed the contents of the Area Presidents letter, and in particular the alleged treatment of S/m Fielding at the National Council meeting, following his attempt to seek information regarding the proceedings of their previous meeting. S/m Fielding has said this matter was partially resolved, and he did not wish the Area committee to pursue the matter further.

A shipmate Carter of the South Liverpool branch has sent me some photographs of Canada Boulevard in Liverpool showing that the Maple trees there have been cut down by the Council. I think S/m Carter may have got crossed wires on this. In my last report on this subject the Canadian High Commission had stated that the original Maple trees had proved unsuitable, and were to be replaced by a Norwegian variety more suited to our climate. I believe, this is what Liverpool Council has started to do. However, it would be a good idea to keep a check on future progress at the site.

Also from the South Liverpool branch, their Chairman (S/m Charles Crute) has complained that their branch motion to Annual Conference has been amended by the SOC into a composite motion supporting, along with other branches, a re-location of Headquarters to a site somewhere in Portsmouth. This was not the intention of their motion, which sought to create a northern government of the Association.

I have replied to S/m Crute advising him to write to the Chairman of the SOC expressing his concerns on this subject.

The Falklands 25 commemoration service and parade in Southport will take place on Sunday May 20th. The parade will assemble on Chapel Street Southport at 1000. On completion, there will be events in Victoria Park, and the Southport Branch HQ's at the Conservative club in Bath Street will be open from 1200 -1700 for refreshments and a friendly get together. I am informed by the Wythenshawe Branch Secretary, that their club ceased trading as an RNA registered club earlier this month.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE

- 27/07 The Chairman referring to several references in the correspondence relating to moves by some branches wishing to disassociate the Area from the Association, had caused him concern. In his view this was not a practical proposition and would create many difficulties, especially to the many branches within this Area who wished to remain within the RNA. One of the biggest problems he could foresee was the question who would run the breakaway organisation? In his opinion, this matter has been raised many times at past meetings; there is no point in discussing the matter further.

The Secretary reported he had received a letter prior to this meeting from S/m C Crute via a member of the South Liverpool branch. S/m Crute could not attend this meeting due to a recent illness. The Secretary then read S/m Crute's letter to the meeting which complained of the way his branch motion had been dealt with by the SOC. He intended to write to the Chairman of the SOC about this. S/m Crute's letter went on to criticise the lack of support by Headquarters and the mismanagement of its affairs by previous General Secretary's. He gave examples of the poor back up this Area had received during the 2003 BOA commemorations in Liverpool and its subsequent demise due to lack of funding, and also the lack of help in bringing back to Liverpool the WW2 Destroyer *HMS Whimbrel* at present awaiting disposal in Egypt.

The President added to the news regarding the replacement of the Maple trees on Canada Boulevard in Liverpool. Both he, and Commodore Madgewick [NRO] were aware of this project and would be keeping an eye on future progress there.

AREA TREASURER

- 28/07 S/m Bricking reviewed the income and expenditure of the Area finances for the period January to March 2007. He referred the delegates to his previously circulated balance sheets prior to the meeting. As the Secretary had stated earlier, the capitation fees for the Area had been received, which, together with other income for the period gave a total of £5,458.96. The Treasurer explained a proportion of the Income related to deposits received from various branches for our hotel accommodation in Torbay for national conference. Expenditure for the period amounted to £3,011.00. Again, this figure reflected sums already paid as deposits to the hotel in Torbay.

There were no matters arising from the Treasurers report.

NCM's REPORT

- 29/07 S/m Fielding gave a review of the Association's finances following a recent meeting of the Association's Finance and General Purposes committee. The total assets of the RNA stand at £1,789,000. Total income was £273,000 of which, £250,000 was by way of members subscriptions. Gift aid, is a means by which the RNA can reclaim tax from the Inland Revenue for those subscription payers who are liable for income tax. Take up on this scheme has been poor to date. Although the Association's income for last year was £273,000 the expenditure for the same period was £313,000 leaving a deficit of £40,095.

The relocation of Headquarters out of London has been studied by a working party set up to oversee the move, under the Chairmanship of the deputy President Commodore Nance. Of the several locations considered, Portsmouth has emerged the favourite for the future Headquarters. It is proposed to locate the new HQ on a site opposite the Royal Sailors Home club which was the former Brickwoods brewery currently being redeveloped. The rent for premises on this site would be in the region of £12,000 pa. This proposal will have to be discussed at National Conference. The disposal of the lease on Chelsea Manor Street should realise about £460,000. However, should the premises be sold as a domestic property, the sale could raise as much as £800,000.

S/m Fielding then informed the delegates about the Strategic Review currently being undertaken by the deputy President. This mainly concerns recruiting of members especially the 45 -55 age groups. Other points covered by the review consider communications within the association. Current postage rates amount to £30,000 Thoughts are turning to supplying individual branch Secretary's with computers which would cost about £120,000 to bring all the branches on-line. It is proposed that Year Book is updated and the Association rules be incorporated within the publication thereby saving having to print a new rule book each time there is a rule change. It is also envisaged that the Year Book will eventually replace the RNA Diary which has become outdated and overpriced.

The NCM ended his report on a sombre note by announcing that the loss of members to the RNA last year stood at 1,709.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE NCM's REPORT

- 30/07 S/m Gaskell (Rochdale) made the point regarding the supply of computers to branch Secretary's that they would not be of much use without a printer.
- 31/07 S/m Kelly (Hazel Grove) said he was appalled at the notion of moving HQ's to Portsmouth, considering the cost of the rent on new premises of £12,000; plus a service charge; as he understood only a peppercorn rent was payable on the premises at Chelsea Manor Street. He was against any move to Portsmouth.

The Secretary queried the decision to relocate Headquarters in Portsmouth. He wondered did the decision have any bearing on the fact that the President, deputy President and the General Secretary all lived in or near Portsmouth.

The President, following the General Secretary's remarks, pondered on the futures of the present London HQ's staff, ie The Assistant General Secretary and the Office Secretary Mrs Noeline Lee. both of these persons live in the London area or thereabouts.

AREA TOTE DRAW

- 32/07 The winners of the Area Tote Draw for February were **Atherton** branch (No. 68) (in March **Deeside** (No.61) and at this meeting; the £100 prize was won by the **Wythenshawe** Branch with No.50

PRESIDENT'S APPEAL

- 33/07 The Presidents appeal realised £65.00 which was donated by the following branches:

ATHERTON	£ 5.00	LEYLAND	£10.00
CHESTER	£ 5.00	LIVERPOOL	£ 5.00
CONGLETON	£ 5.00	NORTH MANCHESTER	£ 5.00
CROSBY	£ 5.00	PEEL	£ 5.00
DROYLSDEN	£10.00	SKIPTON	£ 5.00
		TRAFFORD	£5.00

PROs REPORT

- 34/07 Due to the absence of S/m Caulfield (National PR meeting) his report is given as follows;

S/m Caulfield referred to the last Area conference where he promised to give of costs for the members of the Area to attend the bi-annual parade in London on September 9th. These costs are based on travel by coach leaving the Saturday morning (September 8th) with boarding

points to be decided when bookings are made. Most likely pick up points will be; Liverpool, St Helens Manchester Stockport and Preston, but these are open to further discussion. Dependant on numbers, we hope to run two coaches. Two coaches would increase the number of boarding points and would not lengthen journey times as the two coaches could pick up from different points.

Accommodation in the London area would be centred on Uxbridge, at a Travel Lodge on a Bed and Breakfast basis for the two nights. The accommodation although not yet arranged is next door to the Uxbridge RNA club, and should not be a problem in hosting us for the two evenings. The coaches would be utilised on the Sunday morning to convey those taking part in the parade into London and return to Uxbridge afterwards. We would depart for the North West on the Monday morning. Total cost including travel and two nights B&B would be £75.00 per person.

S/m Caulfield asks all Branch Secretary's to bring this to their member's attention and ask them to support this event. Let us show the southern branches that No10 Area is a force to be reckoned with. All though the hotel and coaches have been reserved, S/m Caulfield needs to know numbers as soon as possible, otherwise he will have to cancel the hotel and transport at the end of June.

S/m Caulfield ends his report by requesting as many shipmates as possible to support the Falklands 25 event in Southport on May 20th. This promises to be a good day out.

AREA WELFARE ADVISOR

35/07 S/m Thomas reported that only two branches had been in contact with him seeking advice since the last Area conference. Many people do need help and advice on welfare; and the RBL and SSAFA Forces Help are there to assist. He urged Branch Welfare Officers to get in touch with him should any of their members require help on the Welfare side. He cited a case of the wife of an ex CPO who had been helped in a number of ways in her home and also on the social security aspects of her situation.

S/m Thomas stressed the help that was available from agencies such as the RBL and SSAFA to all our members.

Before the next item on the agenda, the Area President addressed the meeting.

36/07 S/m Harley informed the meeting he had received a letter from S/m Mrs Joan Webber (Ellesmere Port) thanking everyone who had attended the funeral of her late husband Robert, and the support she had received from various shipmates in the Area. S/m Harley also remarked on the absence of S/m Charles Crute (South Liverpool) who had recently been hospitalised. He had visited S/m Crute in hospital, He found him in good spirits. The President remarked on the fact that a good number of the delegates here today would be making the journey to Torquay for the national conference. "Looking through the proposed motions to be discussed at conference, one particular motion that bothered" him. Motion 10 [proposed by Peterborough seconded by Bletchley] reads as follows; "That conference recognise and applaud and confirm its support for the excellent work and leadership of the National Council in promoting the objects of the Association and in the viewing and developing governance, structure and activities with a view to maintaining a thriving Association for the foreseeable future". The President remarked that when this motion was discussed in his branch it was greeted with mirth. "Was it not" said the President only a few short months ago that members of the National Council were being instructed not speak about Council business outside of their meetings. "What is secret about this Association? "It is an Association of retired seafarers what on earth has confidentiality and secrecy got to do with it". He applauded the motion proposed by the Chatham branch requesting that a summary of the proceedings of Council meetings be published to Area Secretary's within 21 days of their meetings.

He was very pleased with the success of the Area magazine, *Vanguard*; this publication was becoming known far outside No.10 Area. S/m Harley touched on the subject of the national President's letter in the latest Circular Letter from Headquarters. He compared the recent events in the Gulf involving the actions of the service, with what happened 25 years ago in the Falklands. He deplored the decision to allow personnel to sell their stories to the media.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 37/07 A member of the South Liverpool branch spoke about S/m Crute who is the Chairman of the branch. He compared the work S/m Crute does in promoting his branch to several of the full members who just turn up at branch meetings and take no active part in the running of the branch. If it was not for the Associate members, the branch would be in serious danger of closing.
- 38/07 S/m Park (South Liverpool) disputed the Area committee's and other branches decision not to support their branch motion concerning self government for this Area. As an Area we should stand our ground on this matter he said.
- 39/07 S/m Tollerton (Crosby) said his branch was against any move to break away from the Association.
- 40/07 S/m Gaskell (Rochdale) said he had been invited to Manchester to receive the Pingat Jasa Medal awarded by the Malayan government. He felt there were many wives of servicemen who had lost their lives in the campaign who were also entitled to this medal. He also felt very strongly about the MOD ban on wearing this medal alongside other medals. He advised those who wish to wear it to ignore the ban.

VENUE FOR THE SUMMER AREA CONFERENCE (July 28th 2007)

- 41/07 Bolton Branch was the only volunteer to host the above conference. Therefore, Bolton will host the summer Area conference at the Dean Ward Labour Club, Dean Road Bolton on July 28th 2007 commencing at 1200.

The Chairman closed the conference at 1325

BRANCH AND MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Area Address List Branch Secretary changes have taken place recently, namely at Atherton, Buxton, Blackpool, Fleetwood, Macclesfield, North Manchester, and a Secretary Address change at Rhyl.

All changes can be found in the Headquarters Circular Letter to Branches, or from the Area Secretary

No.10 Area Website Don't forget to visit your Area website; www.rna-10-area.co.uk for the latest news of the Area and national news. Keep up to date via the links pages with other areas, branches and ship associations etc.

Vanguard Magazine Details are awaited for a possible extra edition of the magazine, possibly in July. In the meantime, the closing date for contributions for the autumn edition, especially Branch News will be August 27th 2007