

AREA CONFERENCE AT DIDSBURY MANCHESTER MAY 13th 2006 SUMMARY

The meeting at the Britannia Country house hotel formed part of the annual Area Reunion weekend which this year visited Manchester, - a departure from the normal seaside venue favoured in recent years.

Although numbers attending for the weekend were smaller than usual, (104) the delegates who actually attended the spring conference on the Saturday afternoon were disappointingly smaller. Of the 56 branches in the Area, only 23 were represented at the meeting. Millom, the newest branch to commission in No.10 Area sent a delegate and was made welcome to their first meeting.

Conference commenced at 1400 with the usual one minute's silence for those shipmates who have crossed the bar since our last meeting in January.

In matters arising from the winter conference, discussion turned once more to the question of the appointment of the Executive Officer following the meeting of National Council in December 2005. It soon became plain that the person appointed, was in no way criticised for his ability to perform his duties: it was method the Council adopted in making the appointment that was called into question,- indeed, several branches who have dealt with Commander Mc'Clurg since taking his appointment, have been impressed in the manner he has dealt with their queries.

Not so understanding, was the general consensus of those branches that had written to the National Chairman and General Secretary on this subject. The replies they had received to their letters (or lack of) had in the main been condescending, and in some cases they had been accused of being offensive to the National Council.

The question of Chairmanship at present exercised by the National President at conference and certain committee meetings of the national council was debated by the delegates in view of the proposed motions to be discussed at annual conference in Aberystwyth in June. Motion 5 which aims to make the National Chairman responsible for chairing these meetings in future, is being backed by most branches in this area.

Both the Area President and the Chairman appealed to the branches in the Area; if they wished to support this motion, the way to do it was by attending at Aberystwyth on June 17th and using their vote accordingly.

Correspondence. This period had followed the usual pattern of branch changes of committee's and address details etc. The new branch at Millom featured large in the correspondence, and was now commissioned and holding regular meetings.

As discussed earlier, many letters sent to the National Chairman and also the General Secretary had been repeated to the Area Secretary for information purposes.

The Area President has replied the National President following protracted correspondence concerning the association as a whole. Their views differed on several points, but they have agreed there would be nothing further gained by continuing the discourse.

Kirkby branch is pursuing the question of seeking smaller club premises in view of declining membership. They have sought the advice of the Area NCM who is also a member of the RNA club's committee.

Correspondence has been entered into with several local Councils and the Imperial War Museum (north) regarding national Veterans Day on June 27th. It would appear as the government, in conjunction with the MOD has only recently introduced this event, the main activities will be confined to the London area this year. Holders of the VC and George Medals have been invited to a reception in the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth, and exhibitions will be on display in nearby Lambeth Park. The museum's counterpart in Trafford Manchester, is hoping to mark the occasion with a tour for ex service veterans followed by refreshments. The city of Manchester is planning to hold a get together in the city's Albert square.

Bolton Branch will be assisting with the forthcoming reunion for ex members of *HMS Dido* Bolton's adopted ship sometime in June. Further details from the Bolton Branch Secretary.

Macclesfield Branch has highlighted an address error in the application for the award of the Artic Star Emblem. The correct address is given in the May Circular Letter to Branches.

The Treasurer reported a healthy balance sheet for the period bolstered by the recent addition to the accounts by the Area capitation cheque received from Headquarters. Interest from National Savings has also added to the funds.

The National Council Member reported he had very little to add from Council matters that had not been discussed in Matters arising. One item was of interest however, that did emerge from the recent meeting of Council was the annual grant of £1,000 to Broughton House in Salford had been secured for the next few years at least. He ended his report on a pleasant note by inviting the Area President to present to the Millom Branch delegate their Commissioning Certificate from Headquarters.

Area Welfare Matters were reported on by S/m Jan Thomas the recently elected Welfare Advisor. Since election, he had dealt with three welfare cases. However, S/m Thomas said there were many more cases that deserved investigation. He urged all branches to give the welfare of their shipmates the highest priority. Welfare is important said S/m Thomas. In particular Branch Welfare officers should play an important role in any branch. It means more than sending a get well card to a shipmate who is ill. They should know where to obtain help for their shipmates who needed it. Basic pensions do not always cover household emergencies such as a washing machine or fridge breakdown. There are agencies such as SSAFA the Royal British Legion and our own Central Charities fund on hand to help when shipmates find they cannot cope. He concluded his report by saying whatever else you forget about in today's committee reports he hoped they would remember that there is help on hand for our less well off shipmates and we should all do our best to help our less fortunate shipmates.

In Any Other Business. The South Liverpool delegate referred to the present situation regarding the Historic Ships Preservation Trust in Birkenhead. The outlook was bleak especially for those persons employed by the trust. The Area President concurred. He told the meeting that earlier this year he had attended a crisis meeting on board one of the preserved ships [*HMS Plymouth*] and he was not encouraged by what he had heard. The owners of the site [Peel Holdings] had earmarked the land and berths for building. Wirral Council had refused to become involved, and he had written to Peel Holdings seeking some answers but to date he had received no reply.

S/m Kember of the Rochdale branch thanked the Area President for his interest in this matter. He made a further point about this government's indifference to the efforts of various bodies to preserve for the nation and our heritage, warships that have served the country. He compared this country's attitude with that of the USA in this matter

S/m Kelly (Hazel Grove) gave information regarding widow's pension entitlement percentages. Having initially contacted the General Secretary requesting this information, the answer to his query was provided by S/m Paddy McClurg who gave a comprehensive and detailed response to his enquiry. S/m Kelly said he was very pleased with the response from the Executive Assistant but it begs the question what is the role of the General Secretary?

S/m Stubbs (Llangollen) asked would it be possible to either loan or give a donation to the new branch at Millom to enable them to purchase a branch Standard.

The Leyland Branch was the only volunteers to host the summer Area conference on July 29th 2006. Several delegates questioned this date, because of its clash with the afternoon performance of the Manchester Military Tattoo. The Chairman said he was reluctant to frequently changing the dates of Area conference, he would consult with the Area committee and announce the date in the forthcoming minutes of this meeting.

It was agreed in committee at a later meeting, that the Summer Area conference would take place at Leyland Conservative Club, Towngate Leyland on July 29th 2006 at the earlier time of 1100.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 1540.