



ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION No.10 AREA

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

www.rna-10-area.co.uk

MINUTES OF THE SUMMER AREA CONFERENCE HELD AT BOLTON LABOUR CLUB ON JULY 28th 2007

The Mayor of Bolton Councillor Mrs Barbara Ronson escorted by the RNA Area President, Commander H Harley officially opened the 2007 Area summer conference at the Deane ward Labour club at 1200 on July 28th. The Mayor, in her welcoming address said she was happy to see the local branch of the SCC unit outside the venue waiting to greet her, and pipe her 'aboard'. She was also pleased to note that a strong local RNA branch exists in Bolton. Although Bolton is some distance from the sea, the town has always been proud of their adopted ships namely, *HMS Dido*, and then *HMS Beaver*. Having been presented by a bouquet of Flowers by a member of the Sea Cadets, the Mayor and her consort departed the meeting.

The Chairman, Mrs B Jones asked the meeting to remain standing during the silent tribute to the following shipmates who had crossed the bar since the last meeting in April:

S/m John Dixon (Area Chairman & Secretary of the Salford Branch).
S/m George Allum (Bolton) S/m Roy George Founder Member (Chester)_
S/m V McKeown (Deeside) S/m Wyn Knott (Hazel Grove)
S/m Mrs R Garner (Trafford) S/m Ted Jones (Wrexham)
S/m W Millett (Wythenshawe)

Apologies had been received from; S/m W Carruthers (Area Vice President, S/m A Brocking (Area Treasurer) Beaumaris Deeside Liverpool Preston Rhyl & South Liverpool Branches.

The previously circulated minutes of the Area conference held on April 28th 2007 were taken as read. Proposed by; S/m J Kelly (Hazel Grove) and Seconded by S/m Mrs J Webber (Ellesmere Port)

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

42/07 **There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.**

CORRESPONDENCE

43/07 The Secretary reported, he had received from the General Secretary late last month a summary of the decisions taken by National Council at their March meeting. I have circulated these for your information. Although this is a step forward into what Council discuss, it falls far short of who said what and how they voted. Motion 9 at this year's national conference sought to have a summary of the minutes of Council meetings circulated to the Area secretary's. Unfortunately, due to poor representation from this Area, and strong opposition from other Area's, the motion was lost.

Letters received to date include a letter from S/m Ron Abraham of the Wigan Branch in response to an Area committee invitation for him to consider the post of Area Ceremonial Officer. Unfortunately, Ron has declined due to age reasons, but thanks us for our interest. Incidentally, volunteers are still welcome to apply for this position.

Harry the Area President has sent me a copy of a letter he has sent to the deputy Commander in Chief, -Fleet whom he met at a recent RM band concert in Liverpool. The Vice Admiral expressed an interest in the RNA, to which Harry has responded in his letter. He has also taken the liberty of sending him copies of the Area magazine which should give him a fuller insight into the Association, as well as showing the flag for this Area

CORRESPONDENCE (cont)

43/07 Harry was somewhat nonplussed, at Area conference that this committee had not discussed the possible appointment of a deputy NCM to deputise for Ron Fielding should Ron be absent for whatever reason at future meetings of Council. However, problems could arise if we appointed a deputy to stand in for a deputy. Nominations for a National Council Member for No.10 Area will be sought from the branches early in the New Year.

He also raises his concern in his letter about rumours circulating that the deputy President [Commodore Nance] is being groomed for the job of General Secretary when Paddy McClurg steps down. If this is correct, it once again shows that the ruling for this appointment which must be advertised; will be ignored; or most likely it will be presented in such a way, to the members of National Council they will be expected to approve the appointment. Or in other words they will be used as a rubber stamp. I have been informed, this is only a rumour, we shall have to wait and see the outcome when Paddy McClurg steps down sometime next year.

A further example of the wishes of National Council members not being respected comes from S/m Ivan Hunter NCM for No12 Area. This concerns the appointment of the RNA webmaster to succeed the present one, S/m Stuart Thorne who resides in New Zealand and has stepped down. Despite the proposal from S/m Fred Atkinson at his last meeting he attended of Council, that the appointment to oversee the Headquarters website should be advertised throughout the Area's. The General Secretary however, appointed a shipmate Hoare from No.4 Area apparently without further reference to the National Council members.

As a result of three successful raffles, one on the Saturday Evening and two on the Sunday at the Area reunion, we have been able to donate £300 to the Rainbow Trust at Francis House a Children's Hospice, and the same amount to the Christie Hospital in Manchester.

I have been in contact with the Prince of Wales Hotel in Southport in connection with next year's Area reunion venue. Several points needed to be addressed with the hotel management, mainly single accommodation charges, and bar subsidies. A meeting with them however, did not take place when a better proposal emerged from the Savoy Hotel in Blackpool (same group) and it has been decided to take up their offer. I will give further details on next year's reunion venue later in the meeting.

A Secretary change has taken place at Deeside, due to the ill health of the present shipmate. S/m G Butler the Vice Chairman has combined the duties of Vice Chairman and Secretary.

I have received information from the Branch and club Secretary, that the Anglesey RNA club ceased trading on 11th June due to lack of support, and their inability to cover their normal overheads.

Also on the clubs scene, on Friday June 29th I received a copy of a letter sent by the Association President to the NCM and the Area Secretary of No11 Area requiring them to look into the affairs of the Wythenshawe RNA club, also its relationship with the Wythenshawe branch. They were also charged with investigating any breaches of the Association rules and they were to report their recommendations to the President not later than July 16th. I find this letter rather hurtful as neither, the Area Chairman or the DNCM were informed of this action. The Area President wrote to the Chairman of the Wythenshawe branch requesting information on a number of points in relation to the standing between the club and the branch. They have responded and have assured Harry that the branch continues to function; a branch report has been submitted to Headquarters, together with subscriptions to date. Although the Wythenshawe club no longer operates under the name of an RNA club, the branch meets there each month. Our Area President has conveyed this information to the Association President who instigated this enquiry.

S/m Alan Mercer of the Runcorn Branch has written to the General Secretary about recruitment, having attended the National Conference in Torquay and listening to the debates on this subject. He recalls a past General Secretary who encouraged liaison between the various ship Associations and the RNA. This now appears to have fallen by the wayside. He suggests that the present General Secretary contacts his counterpart in the Federation of Naval Associations, with a view to restoring the link. He further suggests, instead of further increases in subscriptions, the Association might consider a reduction of say 25% as a means of attracting more members. This would be of some help to many of our members who are on fixed incomes.

The Morecambe branch submitted an application for Life membership for one of their members, direct to the General Secretary without first seeking approval from this Area and endorsement from the D NCM. Headquarters returned this application to me, and I have in turn returned it to the branch requesting further information and advising they re-apply for the life membership via this Area committee.

CORRESPONDENCE (cont)

43/07 May I take this opportunity to remind branches who are seeking Life Membership for any of their members to apply to me in the first instance for the appropriate form to make the application? It should then be forwarded to me, for Area committee approval, and endorsement by the NCM before it is referred to National Council for consideration.

May I remind those branches who did not attend the spring conference in Manchester on April 27th and consequently did not receive the latest issue of the Area magazine, you can collect them for your branch after this meeting.

To end, two letters thanking this committee. And in particular John Dixon for the efforts put into organising the last Area Reunion weekend. I thank both the Oswestry and St. Helens branches for those kind words.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE

There were no matters arising from the correspondence.

AREA TREASURER

44/07 The Secretary reported that due to the unforeseen absence of the Treasurer, no report was available. However, copies of his financial report covering the period from May until July were available from the Secretary at this meeting. Delegates requiring expenses for attending this meeting, were requested to contact S/m Brocking direct.

NCM's REPORT

45/07 S/m Fielding (Deputy NCM) announced he had very little to report to this meeting, as the last National Council meeting took place on the morning of National Conference and was taken up with the business of that conference, and in particular one motion submitted by a branch which consumed most of the meeting.

The only other item of importance was of course the re-location of Headquarters which received the go ahead by the delegates at Torquay. "We shall have to wait and see about further developments on this subject in due course" said S/m Fielding.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE NCM's REPORT (next)

There were no matters arising from the DNCM's report

AREA TOTE DRAW

46/07 The winners of the Area Tote Draw for the month of May was; No 1 (**Atherton**) for June; No.203 (**Wrexham**) and at this meeting No.188 (**Salford**) who win the main prize.

PRESIDENTS APPEAL

47/07 The Presidents appeal realised £75.00

PROs REPORT

48/07 S/m Caulfield listed the various events which had taken place both locally and nationally during the recent months. Locally, the Falklands 25 parade and commemoration in Southport was well supported with many shipmates taking part in the parade. Unfortunately, the location of the displays and stands were located were rather isolated from the town centre. Otherwise it was quite good day with the RNA marquee in attendance.

The Manchester Tattoo unfortunately, was once more poorly attended. THE RNA marquee was again in attendance and although the turn out from the RNA Branches was disappointing, a few enquiries about the association were received. The actual event relied very heavily on the cadet forces, with little if any, support from the three services.

Manchester Cathedral was chosen for a further Falklands 25 commemoration, which was represented by the SAMA (South Atlantic Medal Association).

Cartmel races will once again be visited by the RNA Publicity tent during the August bank holiday weekend during the two days of the meeting. This will cost the RNA £90 per day as the marquee will be classed as a trade stand. The Area committee have agreed to pay for one of the days we shall be represented, which will also be treated purely as a recruiting day. S/m Caulfield went on to explain that on previous occasions, the RNA marquee had attracted quite a number of shipmates inside the tent, although welcome, it gave the impression to the public, the gathering was a private function, when the emphasis was to recruit members to the RNA.

PROs REPORT(cont)

- 48/07 S/m Caulfield said it was unfortunate he was unable to attend the spring conference when details of the RNA bi-annual parade in London which is due to take place in September, were announced. It was his intention to organise a coach or coaches for that weekend to convey members from this area to take part in the parade in London. Overnight accommodation had been arranged on a provisional basis with a visit to a nearby RNA club on the Saturday evening and also possibly on the Sunday following the parade. However, due to poor response the trip has had to be cancelled. He did appreciate it was a long way to travel for such a short period.

Referring to an item in correspondence given earlier in the meeting, S/m Caulfield reiterated S/m Mercer's comments concerning recruitment from other ship associations etc, with the aim of speaking as one body in RN matters. S/m Caulfield said Headquarters were well aware of this potential, and the General Secretary was actively pursuing this theme in letters to various ex RN and ship associations. He mentioned a recent meeting he had attended of the RN warrant officers. He was rather shocked to discover that many of these senior rates had never heard of the RNA many were under the impression that Seafarers UK (KGFS) were the main Naval Charity. He appreciated that doubts were expressed at national conference regarding the free membership offered to serving personnel whereas, the ordinary member of the RNA was expected to pay £10 per annum.

AREA WELFARE ADVISOR

- 49/07 S/m Thomas said he had a lot of admiration for many of the shipmates present at today's conference. Whilst he was attending school during WW2 many of these shipmates were serving in the north Atlantic Arctic etc, being either shelled or bombed. Although he had little to report on the Welfare front, he could relay some information that emerged from a recent meeting of the RBL Greater Manchester County annual conference it emerged, that the Board of Trustees be requested to approach HM government to hold an independent review of health and care services for serving personnel who are discharged injured from the services. This has been initiated by recent media reports of poor standards of health care for our servicemen. Likewise, it was his belief that the RNA should be making similar approaches to the government via the National Council, and he hoped our Area NCM would be raising this issue with regard to our own naval personnel at the next meeting of Council. S/m Thomas, through the Chairman requested the delegate's endorsement for this. It was agreed by a show of hands to request the DNCM to raise this matter at the next National council meeting.

The RBL convalescent home in Southport is in the process of refurbishment, and is not expected to be completed until May 2008. At present, guests are being accommodated in the Royal Clifton Hotel nearby.

An association called Independence at Home exists to help people with severe disabilities and long term illness. They provide grants to help with the cost of goods and services not already covered by statutory provision. These are mainly provision of equipment to enable persons to live in their own homes.

There is also the National Benevolent Fund this is a charity that provides free holidays for persons existing on a low income. In his work in the welfare field S/m Thomas said he has come across many people in this category. This offer is open to people who are over 60 years of age, live on a low income and have not had a holiday for over 3 years. They do need to be able to assist themselves without help in accessing steps stairs etc.

Further details of both these organisations are available from S/m Thomas.

S/m Thomas ended his report by announcing he would be attending an Area Welfare Officers seminar in *HMS Nelson* on October 6th.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE AREA WELFARE ADVISOR'S REPORT

- 50/07 S/m Gaskell (Rochdale) referring to S/m Thomas's proposal to involve the National Council in seeking care for injured RN personnel said he fully supported the move. He had in his possession, articles relating to how the veterans were treated in America compared to this country. He would be willing to share this information with the Area Welfare Advisor.
- 51/07 The DNCM (S/m Fielding) said the NCM for No.12 Area was in the process of compiling a dossier on this subject. He intends to raise this matter at the next meeting of National Council.
- 52/07 S/m Pickering said he had received a letter from a lady from one of the southern branches who was in the process of circulating a petition protesting about the proposed disposal of RNH Haslar. If other branches have received this petition, it is up to them get their members to sign it in the hope that this hospital can be saved.
- 53/07 The Area President remarked where RNH Haslar was concerned, he had a personal interest in the hospital having served there as the Supply Officer in 1981 -82. Sixth months ago he had received a letter asking for his support to save this institution. He would encourage anyone also to give their support in an effort to avert its demise. Whilst he was there, he had witnessed the marvellous work carried out at this hospital. S/m Harley went on to speak about the support persons receive when leaving the service.

AREA WELFARE ADVISOR (cont)

- 53/07 He cited an example of a recently discharged rating that had left the RN for medical reasons and had settled in Congleton. The Congleton branch Secretary had visited this person after being notified by the Area Secretary and spent some time chatting to him about the local branch and what it could offer. This person had no idea about the existence of a local RNA branch, or indeed what the RNA was. The fault for this breakdown of communication cannot be blamed entirely on the RNA the Royal Navy must share the blame for this lapse in communications. They appear to be not concerned with our existence. The Area President said he could quote countless examples from the ships he visits, when he mentions the RNA he is met with a blank stare. "We are told that every ship and establishment will have a liaison officer dealing with RNA matters." Let us hope" said the President that they perform better than their counterparts who are charged with liaising with our Sea Cadet units. Unless, said S/m Harley the RN take seriously, "and run with it" the liaison between them and ourselves, the whole exercise will be a waste of time.
- 54/07 S/m Mrs S Haigh (Skipton) reported as Secretary of the Skipton branch she too, had received a petition to keep the RNH Haslar open. She had served there during her RN career. This hospital opened in 1753 is the last of the British military hospitals. She urged the delegates to go back to their branches and request their branch Secretary's to ensure these petition forms are made available for their members to sign. This would be one way of helping our serving personnel.
- 55/07 Before conference moved to the item Any Other Business, the Area President addressed the meeting. He began by calling for a round of applause to the Bolton branch for hosting conference here today. He was pleased to note that 30 branches were represented at this meeting: a big improvement on the attendance at previous conferences; that in itself is a tribute to our late Area Chairman, S/m John Dixon. Indeed, his last act was to mail over 40 branches urging them to make an effort to become involved with the Area, and to attend Area conference. He suggested, if shipmates are intent in becoming involved with the RNA, remember charity begins at home, and support your Area.

He described a pre national conference meeting in his own branch (Liverpool) when the motions for the Torquay conference were discussed. Every motion rejected by Liverpool was approved at Torquay: which does not bode well for those delegates who attend National conference and expect a democratic debate. He cited the opening address by the Flag Officer Sea Training to conference." He certainly did not write that speech" "what on earth was a guest speaker doing asking the delegates to vote wisely and support the HQ's move to Portsmouth". This speech was planned beforehand. "We had the Association President spending about twenty minutes building a wonderful picture of the proposed move to Portsmouth, also a presentation about the move. At no time, did it mention how much the move would cost" No one asked this question, no doubt had they been asked the reply would most likely have been: the figures are not available." "Strange to say, within five days of conference I received the figures through various contacts." What has emerged, the conference delegates voted carte –Blanche to support an uncoded and unseen move to Portsmouth. "To put it bluntly shipmates, you have voted to give them a blank cheque." No one asked about the £40,000 deficit on last years accounts, so no matter what further debts they run up, Council can always say, you, as delegates approved this.

The President then paid tribute to the late John Dixon the Area Chairman. "We shall all miss John's presence in this part of the world." he said. Nominations to fill the Area Chairman's position will now be sought.

The President then presented to the Chairman of the Leyland branch a Dutch plate which was given to the Runcorn branch for safekeeping after presentation to the Area some years ago. With the imminent closure of the Runcorn club, the Area committee decided to request the Leyland branch to undertake the responsibility of its continued safekeeping. S/m Martin gratefully accepted the plate on behalf of his branch.

A further presentation was made by the President to the Bolton SCC unit of a painting on behalf of the Bolton RNA branch. This was also, gratefully accepted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 56/07 S/m Donnelly (North Manchester) speaking as an Associate member said he would like to speak on two issues. The first concerned an article which appeared in the June edition of *Navy News* and gave news of the continuing loss of RNA members at an average of 1,700 per year. Next year this figure would be higher. Should this loss continue, in ten years time there would not be an RNA.

The second issue concerns the a subject he had raised in correspondence with Headquarters and *Navy News* about the institution of a system whereas the National Chairman is rotated between the various area's of the Association to ensure the democratic future of this Association. If this was implemented it would go a long way to stop "the tail wagging the dog" as is the present case. S/m Donnelly also put forward the idea of National conferences being held over a two day weekend which would allow the business of conference to be debated more fully.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (cont)

- 57/07 S/m Kelly (Hazel Grove) spoke about the Area President's earlier remarks which referred to the figures quoted for the proposed Headquarters move from London. In the proposal contained in motion 1 it stated that any such moved had to be carried out on a cost neutral basis. Already, it would appear over £100,000 has been committed to this project. He asked that the DNCM requests access to these figures, and to take to task the re-location working party should it prove the exercise is not cost neutral.
- 58/07 S/m D Tollerton (Crosby) referring to the remarks of the speaker from North Manchester said his own branch were in sympathy with the idea of rotating the duties of the National Chairman between the Area's. He had intended to raise this point at the Torquay conference. Due to an oversight on his part, it was too late to submit the motion for discussion.
- 59/07 S/m Cartwright (Bolton) raised the issue of a local Remembrance Day parade which was threatened due to road closure charges announced by the police and the local authority. If these charges are imposed, the local ex service organisations in and around Horwich, would have to cancel their Remembrance Day service and parade. This has come about due to Health and Safety issues, due to a case of a road traffic accident in the midlands on a similar parade involving a child.
- 60/07 S/m Gaskell (Rochdale) said the responsibility for Remembrance Day services rested with the local authority.
- 61/07 S/m Le-Clere (North Manchester) mentioned the anomaly of those personnel who left the service before 1975 and consequently did not qualify for a pension. It seems said S/m Le-Clere that the only way to reverse this situation was for all those affected by this rule, is to petition their MP's in attempt to change the law on this.
- 62/07 The Area Secretary gave the following details of the next years Area Reunion conference in April 2008 It would take place at the Britannia Savoy Hotel Queens Promenade, Blackpool on April 25th – 27th (inclusive). The cost per person will be £99.00 which includes Dinner Bed & Breakfast, with a Gala dinner on the Saturday evening. A subsidised bar would operate throughout the weekend with Bitter, Lagers etc, costing no more than £1.50 per pint. The usual entertainment on the three nights would be provided by the Area. Both the late Area Chairman and himself had visited the hotel and found the facilities on offer were very good. Booking forms for individuals use, would be available to branches shortly.
- 63/07 S/m Howard (St Helens) said he had heard negative reports about the hotel facilities, but was unsure how long ago. The Area Secretary responding said this was not his impression. On his recent visit to the hotel, all he had been shown was to a high standard and refurbishment was still in progress to enlarge the car park.

VENUE FOR THE AUTUMN AREA CONFERENCE (October 27th 2007)

- 64/07 Two branches made bids to host the Autumn Area conference. They were Bolton, and North Manchester. The resultant vote was; Bolton 8 votes and North Manchester 15 votes. Therefore, North Manchester will host the Autumn Area conference on Saturday October 27th 2007 commencing at 1200.

The Vice Chairman closed the meeting at 1356

BRANCH AND MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS
Area Address List

Deeside Branch New Secretary S/m G Butler 64 Dee Road Connah's Quay Deeside
Flintshire CH5 4NY Tel. 01244 813 560

Fleetwood Branch New Secretary S/m L Wright 51 Mount Road FLEETWOOD
Lanc's FY7 6QZ

Salford Branch New Secretary: S/m Mrs J Tunnicliff 81 Gerald Road Salford M6 6DH
Tel. 0161 736 7017

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.

BRANCH AND MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS(cont)

- Visiting Ships** The latest information concerning ships expected to visit this region, are enclosed with these minutes
- Vanguard Magazine** The closing date for contributions or letters for the autumn 2007 edition of the Area magazine is September 2nd 2007
- Area Reunion**
conference As announced in Minute 62/07 (page 6) the 2008 Area Reunion and spring weekend will take place at the Britannia Savoy Hotel Queens Promenade Blackpool FY2 9SJ from Friday April25th until Monday April 28th 2008. Cost for the weekend is £99 per person. Booking forms for the weekend will be issued to branches later, but those shipmates who wish to book with the hotel now, may do so by telephoning 01253 352 561 or writing direct to the hotel quoting No.10 Area RNA reunion weekend
- Conference Refreshments** The present levy of £2.00 which was last increased several years ago is now inadequate for branches that cater for Area conference refreshments. The Area committee has therefore decided to increase the levy with immediate effect, to **£3.00** for each person who requires refreshments at Area conferences.
-

Area Secretary Aug 2007