



**MINUTES OF THE SUMMER AREA CONFERENCE HELD AT  
THE HERRIOTS HOTEL SKIPTON ON JULY 26<sup>th</sup> 2008  
HOSTED BY THE SKIPTON BRANCH**

For what must be a first in the Area's history its summer conference was opened by the Town Crier resplendent in his robes of office at our host branch in Skipton. Without resorting to the aid of a microphone Mr Griffiths asked the meeting to be upstanding for the Mayor of Skipton, Councillor Carol Manley and her consort. Welcoming the delegates to Skipton the Mayor said she was very proud for Skipton to have us here today, and although the town was practically in the middle of England we do have She hoped the delegates would be well looked after in the venue, and also wished the delegates a successful conference. The President thanked Councillor Manley and her Consort not forgetting the Town Crier for welcoming us to Skipton and presented her with a copy of our Area magazine. The civic party then departed.

The Chairman resuming called on the meeting to remember those shipmates who had crossed the bar since our last meeting; S/m John Smith (Bolton) S/m A Ward (Wrexham)

Apologies were entered for; S/m Steve Caulfield (Area PRO) Birkenhead, Buxton & High Peak. Crewe, Congleton Deeside & Whitehaven Branches

The minutes of the last meeting held at Blackpool on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2008 were accepted as read: Proposed by S/m T Halliday (Leyland) and Seconded by W Roberts (Crosby)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

30/08 There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

31/08 The Secretary reported there had been little correspondence from the branches this quarter ; although events nationally have been gathering pace. Our London HQ's has now been sold, and HQ should be moving into their temporary premises in Pompey dockyard sometime in September. Delegates attending the national conference in Dundee last month voted overwhelmingly to endorse the National Council's "Memorandum of Understanding" between ourselves and the RN. Exactly what this understanding means is rather hazy, although the National President did say It has gained the Association 30,000 extra members from the active service. He neglected to say however, they will not be liable to pay subscriptions.

An application from the Hazel Grove Branch for Life membership for their President s/m Alan Warrington has been passed direct to the NCM I received a further application from the Whitehaven Branch relating to a S/m James Park who is their Vice Chairman. These applications have been processed by our National Council member.

The Oswestry Branch write to thank the Area committee for organising another successful reunion weekend

S/m Alan Mercer from the Runcorn Branch has sent me correspondence relating to the Armed Forces Pension Group. This is the movement that is petitioning the government to allow equal pension rights for those regular ex service personnel who completed three or more years service, but less than 22 and were discharged prior to April 5<sup>th</sup> 1975 To date, they have over 121,500 signatures on their petition which is increasing daily. This organisation is most active: a recent rally on April 3<sup>rd</sup> attracted over 1,000 members. If you require any further information they have a website: [www.afpg.info](http://www.afpg.info)

S/m Mercer also poses the question do the organisers of ships Associations discourage their members from joining the RNA.

The Secretary of the North Manchester Branch tells me that their Associate member S/m Donnelly has been writing to the General Secretary regarding a Tank Landing Craft (LCT 7074) at present lying in Birkenhead

where to date, no berth can be found for it. He believes that LCT 7074 should be an integral part of the envisaged historic maritime attraction.

North Manchester's Branch Secretary also informs me S/m Donnelly has been in touch with somebody at the Birkenhead Woodside Ferry terminal Museum who had expressed an interest in finding a suitable berth for LCT 7074, once they found out there was funding to move the vessel.

Francis Sheridan, General Manager at the Savoy Hotel in Blackpool, has written to me hoping we had a good weekend at the hotel, and that everything was to our satisfaction. He has extended an invitation for us to repeat the exercise next year on the same format as this year. The only difference would be in the price: they are quoting £109.00 for the weekend. Other than that, the format will be the same as you enjoyed earlier this year.

I feel this would be a hard price to beat for the service we get from this hotel. The Area committee recommend this offer to you for our reunion next April.

Following the election of S/m Ron Fielding as our National Council member, the position of deputy National Council member is currently vacant. Therefore, nomination forms will be sent to all branches in this area seeking candidates for this position. It is hoped to announce the successful nominee at the October conference on October 25<sup>th</sup>. If there is more than one nomination, a ballot will be held and the result will be confirmed to the branches as soon as possible.

Nomination forms for those members of the Area committee who are required to stand down having served two years on the Area committee will also be included with the minutes of this meeting.

Two branches in the Area have changed their meeting venues: they are Bolton and Rochdale. Details are contained in the HQ's Circular Letter to Branches, the Area website and the forthcoming minutes of this conference.

S/m Steve Hawkshaw of Southport is organising a Veterans Ball at the Floral Hall in Southport on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October There will be a champagne reception followed by a meal and entertainment. Tickets are £30.00 Further details can be obtained from Steve on 0791 491 8381

I reported to you last year that the Llandudno branch club had ceased trading as an RNA club. I can now confirm that the club is now officially closed. as of July 14<sup>th</sup>.

Finally shipmates, for those branches who did not collect their copies of the spring edition of the Area magazine in April, I have further copies with me today.

There were no matters arising from the Correspondence.

#### 32/08 **TREASURER'S REPORT.**

Having previously circulated copies of his report covering the financial activities of the Area for the period April – June 2008, (copies of which are available from the Treasurer or Secretary) S/m Brocking gave an account of the income and expenditure generated by the Area reunion weekend in April. The raffles during the reunion weekend were successful, realising just under £1800.00. This more than covered the cost of the artistes at £1,200. 00. During the reunion weekend there were ongoing collections for the "Help for Heroes" which of course is the designated national charity. A cheque for £488.19 has been sent to that cause. As a result of a collection taken at Cartmel races on July 17<sup>th</sup> a further cheque of £526.00 has also been sent to the same charity. In total, this Area has now collected over £1,000 for "Help for Heroes".

There were no matters arising from the Treasurers report.

#### **NCM's REPORT**

33/08 S/m Fielding said he had little to report since the last meeting of the National Council was immediately prior to the Dundee conference. What was discussed at the previous meeting of the NC was also discussed at the conference. He did stress however, following a motion raised at conference regarding subscriptions [capitation fees] if the conference had supported the motion it could have led to an increase in subscriptions. National Council have suggested as an alternative to urge branches to support the gift aid scheme. If the numbers of people signing up to gift aid could be increased significantly, NC would consider refunding to the Area's 50% of the total raised by this scheme. This could work out more than is remitted back to the Area's

via the present capitation fees.

The Chairman added, that our branches should make every effort to support the gift aid scheme.

There were no matters arising from the NCM's report.

### **AREA TOTE DRAW**

- 34/08 It was explained by the Treasurer that due to the Rhyl Branch closure earlier this year, they had returned the £100 prize they had won. This would now be entered into today's draw as an extra prize. The results were as follows; In May No. **134** (Pendleton) £25.00 For the month of June; No **94**. (Deeside) £25.00 For July; No. **169** (Leyland) £100.00 and the extra prize of £100.00 was won by No. **122** (Liverpool)

### **PRESIDENTS APPEAL**

- 35/08 The Presidents appeal realised £90.00 donated by the following branches.

Atherton	£5.00	Millom	£10.00
Chester	£5.00	North Manchester	£5.00
Crosby	£5.00	Oldham	£5.00
Droylsden	£5.00	Peel	£5.00
Leyland	£5.00	Runcorn	£5.00
Liverpool	£5.00	Skipton	£10.00
Llandudno	£10.00	Trafford	£5.00
Wrexham	£5.00		

### **PROs REPORT**

- 36/08 In the absence of the PRO [Navy Days] the Secretary read S/m Caufields following report:

“I am unable to attend the Skipton Conference because I will be attending the Meet Your Navy Event at Portsmouth from the 24-7 to 27-7. It was reported at Conference in Dundee that the move to the Semaphore tower was now well advanced and the proposed move should take place over September — October

If you remember from Blackpool, I questioned the Vice President about the shop front idea in the Heritage dock yard as the semaphore tower was behind the wire. Access will be restricted and this was the whole idea of the move to Portsmouth to make the RNA more accessible. I am glad to advise you that negotiations are under way with the Heritage Dockyard Agreement has been reached with the National Council that in principle this has been agreed and costs approved.

There has been a delay in new publicity materials posters etc, until the final details of room numbers and telephone numbers are released

The Area attended the July meeting at Cartmel as advised we were the main charity for this meeting

This was well attended by Pendleton, and Runcorn branches, and representatives from Salford and Trafford the weather was not too great but a great day was had by all. I would like to thank all the hard work from Diana Hutton and Ron Fielding for helping with the collections and setting up the displays. Diana spent most of the day out in the rain collecting money for Help for Heroes and collected £520.00

On a more negative note I regret to inform you of the following what I consider as bad communication

We still did not get any approaches from Liverpool, with the city of culture This was rather disappointing especially as the Navy was represented at the Tall Ships Event last weekend I did try and at one stage, did make contact with the organisers but they still never came back with anything positive

With regard to the Veterans weekend in Blackpool

I was approached the week before asking why we were doing nothing via the Veterans central office in London

I explained that this was also the weekend of the RNA Conference so it would be impossible at this late stage to get involved

I explained that planning committees had already been set up but again we were not included

They came up with a statement that we should have contacted the organisers but I stated this should not be the case they should have a list of all the Ex service organisations who they should contact

The veterans day events towards the end of June was brought up in conference and it was suggested and agreed as the 27th of June looks like to be the Chosen National Day for Veterans Events

This weekend should be avoided in future for National Conference.

S/m Fielding [NCM] commenting on the PRO's report regarding the veterans week in Blackpool, said a member of the Blackpool RNA branch had told him that despite several efforts by his branch to obtain information from the organisers they were unsuccessful.

### **AREA PRESIDENT**

37/08 S/m Harley began his address by thanking the Skipton branch for the organisation of this Area conference. Continuing, the President recounted a tale involving a trip to the Forest Moor unit in Harrogate along with several other members of the RN. On the return journey, they stopped in Skipton for "refreshments" Having slightly overstayed their welcome in the town, the Skipton constabulary decided enough was enough, escorted them back to the bus and advised them never to return. So said the President, 47 years later he had returned! S/m Harley said he would also like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who had sent messages and get well cards to his wife Joan. He was very grateful for all the good wishes that have poured in to buoy up her spirits. Today was her first trip out in nine weeks since her operation.

He recalled, whilst waiting in a post office queue recently reading the account of the Dundee conference in the Circular Letter to Branches; and in particular the Lord Provost of Dundee's address to the conference. He was pleased to see the Lord Provost had paid tribute to the Crosby branch who had been instrumental in locating and maintaining the graves of two sailors who had lost their lives in *HMS Barham*.

Reading further into the conference report he had noted that the word 'Trustee' had been used no less than 17 times in the text of the President's address. His concern was he did not want to see the National Council "Trussed up like turkeys" because that was how the President's speech came over. S/m Harley said the speech went on to say that National Council members were not 'delegates' but 'representatives' of their Areas. Quoting from the dictionary S/m Harley said a delegate "was chosen or elected to act to represent others" A representative is a "person who represents others, representing constituents in deliberative legislative executive decision making governments". S/m Harley reminded the meeting that this Area had chosen its NCM as our delegate to represent our interests and he should not be afraid on insisting that his views, comments etc are recorded at the meetings of Council.

The President agreed with the National President's remarks concerning communications. Over recent years communications within the RNA have been appalling. Because of lack of communication said S/m Harley could anyone wonder why the profile of the RNA was as bad as it is? Why asked the President, with an organisation over 50 years old is our profile so little known? One of the reasons for our poor showing could be traced to the Circular Letter to Branches. Whatever we are trying to sell no one will buy it with such a bland publication as the Circular Letter. Unfortunately, for many members of the RNA that is the only publication (apart from the Year Book) that most shipmates of the Association ever see.

Concluding, the President referred to the publication 'Broadsheet' issued by the RN Quoting from an article in the publication he read the following; "Previous assumptions that routine tasks could be delivered from irreducible spare capacity no longer hold good across the range of likely demand of our small fleet. "We are entering an era where high intensity conflict demands a defined number of highly capable platforms yet global instability requires that higher levels of routine global presence must be maintained with the capability to serve as events dictate". [Translation- we aint got enough ships].

### **AREA WELFARE ADVISOR**

38/08 S/m Thomas apologised to the meeting for his late arrival having misread the directions to the meeting venue. Commencing his report S/m Thomas referred to the many firms shipmates had worked for since leaving the navy. Many of those employers had welfare funds, and although many of these firms had now closed the funds may still exist. Many of these funds are lying idle but still gathering interest and many of you could be entitled to help via these.

S/m Thomas said there are also people of an age who are on low pensions who need help to decorate their homes but cannot afford to do so. This is just one of many services which could be met by getting in touch with the Royal British Legion, SSAFA [Forces Help] or the RNBT "You are entitled to this help" said S/m Thomas and the funds are there for this.

People who have been ill and require convalescence can apply to Byng House in Southport which is run by the Royal British Legion. This home has recently undergone a complete refurbishment and is due to reopen in October, although a nearby hotel is providing temporary accommodation until Byng House is ready to reopen. He explained that applying for places at Byng house was not difficult, and the forms were simple to complete. S/m Thomas ended his report by urging those who needed help not to be afraid of asking for assistance. The money is there for these purposes.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 39/08 The Secretary, referring to his earlier report said he had neglected to seek approval from the meeting to agree the terms of the Savoy Hotel offer for next years reunion in Blackpool. It was Proposed, Seconded and agreed overwhelmingly by the delegates to hold next years spring conference and reunion at the Savoy hotel in the resort.
- 40/08 S/m Donnelly (North Manchester) spoke about the efforts of a member of the Birkenhead branch to save LCT 7074 for the past 7 years. LCT7074 was a Tank Landing Craft which saw service in WW2. He was concerned as to why the branches in this Area had not, in the last 7 years been geared to help the Birkenhead branch members to help save this craft. At present, said S/m Donnelly the vessel which took part in the Normandy invasion lies rotting away and unloved on the banks of the River Mersey. A brochure advertising a multi million pound ferry terminal shows the preserved German U boat 534 which lies close to the rotting LCT7074.. He could not imagine any other country in the world where they would allow this to happen. He urged the branches in the Area to work together and press our Headquarters to draw up a list of ships similar to LCT7074 that could be preserved.
- 41/08 S/m Wilkie (Atherton & Area committee) said he was also Vice Chairman of the LST and Landing Craft Association, he was also Secretary of the North West region of the Association. LST7074, said S/m Wilkie, has never been forgotten. In fact this vessel had been the bane of his life for the past 14 years. There is nothing new in the history of this vessel, it has never been forgotten; although it is literally falling apart. His Association had for a number of years been trying to do something about it, in fact when the submarine U534 was transferred to the Birkenhead Woodside ferry he had written to the chief executive of Mersey travel expressing the association's disgust that they had never considered LCT7074 for preservation purposes in place of U574 which was being considered for return to Denmark. The reply from Mersey travel was, to say the least, unhelpful, and they considered U534 more appropriate for preservation. Unfortunately, said Shipmate Wilkie, no one or any organisation has come forward with the necessary funding to help restore LST7074 despite the efforts of his Association and that of the local MP Frank Field. He doubted, because the vessel was in such a dilapidated state, if any funding would be forthcoming. He had not forgotten LST7074; he continues to write on behalf of his Association and at present he is in correspondence with his local MP - who is Secretary of State for Culture, in an attempt to involve him in the issue and also in a further vessel *HMS Stalker*, at present lying in a scaperyard in Portsmouth.
- 42/08 S/m Halliday (Leyland) gave information concerning his branch Charity night in aid of "Help for Heroes" It had been a very successful night, and the branch had raised £1,650.00 The cheque was presented at National conference in Dundee to a representative of the Charity. He thanked all the branches who had supported his branch.

### **VENUE FOR THE AUTUMN AREA CONFERENCE (October 25th 2008)**

- 43/08 Bolton branch were the only contenders to host the autumn Area conference on the above date. Therefore, the conference will take place at their headquarters, The Derby Ward Labour Club, Deane Road Bolton BL3 5AH commencing at 1200

The Chairman closed the meeting at 1350.