



ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION No.10

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

www.rna-10-area.co.uk

MINUTES OF THE AUTUMN AREA CONFERENCE HELD AT DERBY WARD LABOUR CLUB BOLTON. OCTOBER 25th 2008 HOSTED BY THE BOLTON BRANCH

The Mayor of Bolton, Councillor Anthony Connell officially opened the Autumn Area conference at 1200 in the Derby ward Labour club on Saturday (October 26th) with 19 delegates representing their respective branches. The Mayor in his welcoming speech paid tribute to organisations such as the RNA in upholding the traditions of the service. He also welcomed to the meeting two young persons, brother and sister connected with the Bolton branch. Rachel had recently as part of a four strong team rowed across the Atlantic, whilst Brother Charles had cycled from Lands End to John O Groats in aid of charities. He ended by wishing the conference every success. The President thanking the Mayor for opening the conference presented him with the latest copies of the Area magazine.

The Chairman resuming called on the meeting to remember those shipmates who had crossed the bar since our last meeting; they are: Shipmate Mrs Nora Ball, (Congleton) and Charles Howell (Oswestry)

Apologies were entered for; S/m F Dobie (Area Committee) and the Crewe, Deeside Peel Oswestry and Southport branches.

The minutes of the last meeting held at Skipton on July 26th 2008 were accepted as read: Proposed by S/m T Cope (Trafford) and Seconded by S/m F Brown (Atherton)

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

44/08 There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

CORRESPONDENCE

45/08 The Secretary reported; following the overwhelming vote at conference to return to the Savoy hotel in Blackpool for next year's reunion, I have signed the contract with the hotel. At present they are offering 120 rooms, with hopefully, more if they can manage to do this. I now have the booking forms. You can collect these from me today, but copies will also be included to all branches with the minutes of this meeting. Because of the expected demand for next year's reunion, I suggested they accept bookings via the official booking forms only: not via the telephone. This will be on a first come first served basis.

The General Secretary has copied a letter to me he received from an ex Shipmate expelled from the Association last year. The General Secretary has told me he does not intend answering it. I do know for a fact that this person has been attending meetings at a Manchester branch and I have informed the Secretary there that this practice must cease.

I received a letter from Harry our Area President recently, he raises several interesting

points. With the official attendance of delegates at the Dundee national conference given as 108 which is just slightly over 25% of those entitled to attend, Harry asks what is the official Quorum for a National Conference? At what point is the required number checked and who gives the green light for conference to proceed. Harry raises these questions because of the distances involved in the next two conference venues, and the costs involved in travel and accommodation.. I have raised these points with the General Secretary, and I received a reply which posed more questions than it answered on this subject. It would appear there is no hard and fast rule on the question of Quorums; the General Secretary is of the opinion that the National Council would have to decide whether there would be sufficient numbers of delegates attending a National Conference to allow it to proceed. In order to clarify this question, I wrote to the Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee on September 29th seeking his opinion on the matter. To date, I have not received a reply.

Skipton branch informed me they received an unexpected bill from the hotel for the hire of the public address equipment used at the July Area conference. This amounted to well over £100 additional to their other expenses in using that particular venue and, is stretching their branch funds. They asked could the Area help towards the cost. The Area committee has decided in view of the unforeseen bill for the hire of the PA equipment falling on the branch, it was agreed to award the branch an ex -gratia payment of £100 to help defray some of their expenses. The Skipton branch has written to the Area thanking us for our help. They would like the opportunity to host another Area conference in Skipton, but they are currently experiencing difficulty in securing a suitable venue.

I regret to announce, that S/m Jan Thomas has tendered his immediate resignation as Area Welfare Advisor citing his increasing workload with SSAFA and the Royal British Legion as a Welfare Case Worker. Jan is of course remaining as the Secretary of Bolton Branch, and hopefully, we can still call on him for advice on Welfare matters.

Nominations for the post of Deputy National Council Member closed on September 12th. Of the 55 Branches in the Area, only one (Crosby) submitted a candidate: S/m Stirling Simmons. Therefore, S/m Simmons assumes the role of DNCM with immediate effect.

I have been in contact with S/m Mrs Lily Robbs Secretary of the Whitehaven branch. She informs me that due to dwindling branch membership, sadly, they have decided to decommission the branch on December 31st.

Changes have taken place at Southport where they have a new Secretary, S/m Keith Blackburn. And at Fleetwood where their new Chairman is S/m Brian Wellings who has previously held this post. They have also reverted to their former meeting venue at the SCC Headquarters on Princess Way, Beach Road just off the Promenade. Meeting frequency remains unchanged at the 1st Sunday of each month.

There were no matters arising from the Correspondence.

46/08 **TREASURERS REPORT.**

S/m Brocking reported that the past quarter had been a fairly quiet period on the Area financial scene. Income for the period realised £3331.81 and expenditure totalled £1,175.00 giving a balance of Expenditure over Income of £843.19.

Copies of the Treasurers report are available from the Treasurer or Area Secretary on request.

There were no matters arising from the Treasurers report.

NCM's REPORT

47/08 S/m Fielding commenced his report by saying the most important matter was the move of Headquarters from London to Portsmouth was now complete. New appointments to the staff in HQ were now in place following the retirements of the Assistant General Secretary, S/m Tony Sattin and Mrs Noeline Lee Data Base Manager.

At the recent meeting of National Council held in London on September 13th representation for overseas branches was discussed including the eleven options tabled to resolve this issue. It was decided to adopt option 1 which will have a newly appointed Vice President to represent their interests. For the present, VP Hayhoe will continue to represent them.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the RNA and RN has now been signed between the Second Sea Lord and our national President. Very little change is evident at the present time due to various circumstances.

The Relocation Working Party is still actively seeking premises in Portsmouth which can be used as a permanent base for our Headquarters. One premises which is of interest is the old Dame Agnes Weston building on Edinborough Road.

Restructuring has taken place of the various committees of the National Council.(NC) In effect, there will be two main committees: one will be Management, and the other known as Finance. The upshot of these changes will mean that the President and the deputy President will have less influence on these committees. The running of these committee's will be the responsibility of the elected members of the NC. The national Chairman, will chair the Finance committee and the Vice Chairman will chair the Management committee.

S/m David White (No.4 Area) was re-elected as National Chairman, and S/m Dovey (No.8 Area) as National Vice Chairman.

NCM's REPORT(cont 47/08)

Appointments of NC members to the two sub committees were announced at the meeting.

Also debated at the meeting was the appointment of S/m Tony Sattin former AGS, as assistant to the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) Following a vote on the matter, he was elected by 11 votes to 4 against.

Various reports from the advisors ie, Charity & Welfare, Ceremonial and PR etc were received at the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE NCM's REPORT)

48/08 S/m Ney (Wythenshawe) asked what was the costs involved in the move from London to Portsmouth?

S/m Fielding said at the moment he did not have the true figures. The sale of the London property had realised £465,000 which had been 'ring fenced' in an investment account for the purchase of a future property in Portsmouth. He hoped to learn within the next week what the total cost of the move would be.

49/08 S/m Ms. S Jones (Llandudno) enquired about the wellbeing of the Harare branch as reported in the August issue of the Circular Letter to Branches. "Was there any further information about this branch" she asked.

Both the NCM and the Chairman responding, said this was a sad case. The Harare branch HQ's had been looted, and aid parcels sent to them had been intercepted and 'confiscated' At present they have no meeting place and individual branch members have been advised to adopt a low profile until such time as matters improve.

At this point in the conference the Mayoral party left the meeting.

AREA TOTE DRAW

50/08 The result of the Area Tote Draw was as follows; For the month of August, No.91 (Runcorn £25) For September, No.67 (Leyland £25) and at this meeting; No.171 (Runcorn £100)

PRESIDENT'S APPEAL

51/08 The President's appeal realised £75.00 donated by the following branches.

ATHERTON	£5.00	LLANGOLLEN	£5.00
CHESTER	£5.00	NORTH MANCHESTER	£5.00
DROYLSDEN	£5.00	RUNCORN	£10.00
LEYLAND	£5.00	OLDHAM	£5.00
LIVERPOOL	£5.00	SKIPTON	£5.00
LLANDUDNO	£10.00	TRAFFORD	£5.00
WREXHAM	£5.00		

PROs REPORT

52/08 S/m Caulfield began his report by referring to the Association's agreed main charity for the current year was "Help for Heroes". This charity has been well supported by this

Area. However, one or two of our branches who have remitted money to this charity have yet to receive an acknowledgement for their donations. He asked if any other branches in the Area had had a similar experience.

The Area Treasurer reported he had received official acknowledgement for the monies he had remitted. Runcorn branch reported a similar acknowledgement.

S/m Caulfield commented on the recently agreed 'Memorandum of Understanding' mentioned in the NCM's report earlier. He was of the opinion this had not been well communicated with the RN due to leave etc. On a recent visit to Faslane, many ratings he spoke to were unaware that they were now automatic members of the RNA.

Referring to the new committee structures mentioned in the NCM's report, he had by default, gained a place on the management committee which should give him a little influence on this committee. He appealed to the branch delegates present to let either himself or the NCM or the Area committee know what events etc, appertaining to their respective branches were taking place.

Turning to a previous question raised by a shipmate concerning the fortunes of the Harare branch, he recalled that both the RNA and this Area had sent parcels to the branch some time ago. It is understood they were intercepted by the Customs authorities in Zimbabwe and items were taken from them.

S/mCaulfield concluded his report by mentioning the problem of relatives of individuals who had 'crossed the bar' and who were not members of the RNA, requesting an RNA presence at the deceased funeral. This sometimes has caused embarrassment. The Area committee's view is to let the local branch affected decide whether to attend the funeral, but he would appreciate feedback on this subject.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PROs REPORT

53/08 S/m Woods (North Manchester) mentioned his branch would be hosting a concert in aid of 'Help for Heroes' in January or February (date to be advised) His branch Secretary would be writing to branches with more information.

54/08 S/m Thomas (Llandudno) advised that his branch was about to make a donation to 'Help for Heroes' He had been in touch with a person called Mark Elliot (markhelpforheroes.org) It is hoped to make the donation to local officials of the charity, and to obtain publicity for the Area and of course his branch.

Referring to the misfortunes of the Harare branch S/m Thomas suggested a possible source of communication with them via the internet if such a link existed with any of their members.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

55/08 S/m Harley began his address by thanking the Bolton branch for the excellent facilities laid on for this Area conference, not forgetting those two very wonderful young people Rachel and brother Charles we met earlier.

The President continuing said; "Welcome aboard HMS RNA Shipmates!! You all remember how the "Andrew" operated, Killicks, P0's & Chiefs managed the day to day requirements, caused the system to work ...and officers made all of the decisions!! So, welcome aboard HMS RNA.!!

Consider how your Association operates today--you provide the money and manpower, whilst 5 unelected Naval officers make all of the decisions.. One Admiral, one

Commodore and three Commanders... 5" fixture cards" dealt direct from the retired officers Job Centre.

Shipmates, if you were in a mess-deck poker game (only playing for matches Master at Arms!!) and drew those 5 "Feature cards" then your next run-ashore would be fixed, AND I DO MEAN FIXED!!

On Sept. 13 two more "Fixture cards" were shuffled into the "Oscar Madison" pack, one Lt. and one Lt. Cdr. Now, there are 7 "Fixture cards" and only one of them was elected!

Oscar Madison? A Neil Simon creation, for his excellent play & film;: "The Odd Couple". Oscar hosts poker game for his chums and in one scene he states "hold your cards higher fellahs because I can't see where I marked them"! Oscar would feel at home attending an RNA "Cabinet" meeting. Cabinet Meeting! Yes, that is how S/M Mc'Anally refers to your National Council when operating his unelected dual role of National President & Chairman. In his absence control passes to another unelected officer, the Deputy President. All very secure and tight.... like a pair of handcuffs.

From speaking regularly with Area 10 Shipmates I know how disturbed many of you are by the imbalance existing within the decision making processes of your Association. Every Shipmate has good reason to be disturbed because that imbalance is of hideous proportions. HMS RNA has a dangerous list, back aft!!

The RNA exists because of ex matelots. Subscriptions from ex-lower deck members provide the financial buoyancy which has kept the RNA afloat for over 50 years. That irrefutable fact casts a harsh and questioning spotlight upon the existing manner of management.

In addition to that hideous imbalance which places a severe potential breaking strain upon RNA credibility, the question most asked of me, since the actions of September 13 is "what are the RNA Areas for.?" Your money is required Shipmates but when the President Chairman gathers his "Cabinet" around him the opinions and wishes of Area Chairmen and Area Committee members quite clearly count for nothing!

I quote." Area National Council Members are not delegates expected to slavishly follow instructions of their Area - they are representatives tasked by Areas with using judgement, intelligence & experience for the good of the RNA as a whole" unquote. The words of the RNA National President; Chairman at the Dundee Conference.

That selective description of Area NCM's is not contained within the RNA Handbook Shipmates, nor will you find such a convenient, but inaccurate, comparison between delegates and representatives in any decent dictionary. However, that Dundee speech paved the way for what took place on September 13th The "Cabinet" met, disregarded the wishes of two Area Chairmen and their Committee's and forged ahead with a vote to alter the decision making processes of your Association without any of you knowing the details involved.

Some of us learned of that Sept. 13 "Divide & Conquer Coup" via the web site, courtesy of a Shipmate who attended that Cabinet mtg. That web site report, of 8 brief lines, end with a brief statement, worthy of a Court Martial sentence, "the new structure was accepted and is now in place". All very neat and precise, but it fails to tell the full story. No mention of two Areas lodging complaints and refusing to vote because Area Committee members were unaware of the details involved. Apparently the author of that web site report was unconcerned about the woeful lack of pre vote discussion and readily accepted the indecent haste which the Association President Chairman insisted upon. I find that surprising and very disturbing.

Many of you have made it known how unimpressed you were with that Dundee speech.

Personally I refuse to accept lectures on trusteeship, trustworthiness and trust from a Shipmate who has repeatedly treated Association procedures in a cavalier manner, behaving as if RNA procedures did not apply to him; .for example. The Proposer of a Conference motion is allowed to speak for 5 minutes Max, and the seconder is allowed 3 minutes. Thereafter, and this is the important, legalistic item, .Any Shipmate speaking on that motion is allowed a maximum of 3 minutes. In that case why was S/rn McNally allowed to speak on a motion for over a quarter of an hour at the Aberystwyth Conference? Put aside the matter of a clear as crystal conflict of interest which existed, (the motion named his position!! why was he allowed to abuse Conference procedures in such a manner in excess of 15 excruciating minutes?

As ever, the Conference platform was packed to the gunnels with the “ever presents”, attending because of their capacities of knowledge of the standing orders, rules and procedures of our Association, yet not one had the wit to speak up and act in protection of RNA procedures from such outrageous abuse. (Who marked their cards Shipmates?)

At Aberystwyth, S/rn McNally harangued Conference with threats of resignation and veiled hints about the RNA becoming bereft of any Senior Officer, etc, etc. It was all very, very embarrassing and contrary to Association procedures. Long before it ended it had become unforgettable, like the Bates Motel in ‘Psycho’.

A year later the Torquay Conference became memorable for a mixture of incompetence and further abuse of procedures. Events went into free fall farce whilst debating the Overseas Branches Motion and when a worthy Shipmate attempted to correct the shambles whilst exercising his right of reply, he was prevented from restoring sanity to the chaos created by the National President Chairman, who ordered that Shipmate to “sit down”!.

When I challenged the offender regarding that “sit down” statement he replied that he could not recall saying such a thing. There are several Shipmates in attendance today who heard that comment and like me, they all know that DENIAL is not a river in Egypt!

Comments of dissatisfaction regarding the management of our Association continue to reach me, accompanied by many questions which concern Area 10 Shipmates. Sadly the “Open Forum “held in Liverpool in March could only be described as a launching which failed to reach the end of the slipway. Following a promising start, with your Area Committee welcomed by three unelected Shipmates, each of the them looking as relaxed as long tailed cats in a room full of rocking chairs!. Thereafter, progress was hard to identify.

Of the 10 elected Shipmates present only 3 contributed to the period of discussion which lasted 90 minutes. The event disintegrated into a Speakers Corner venue for 2 unelected Shipmates, both of whom had a great deal to say, most of it so verbose that eventually time ran out. Outstanding question; examples include: Detailed accountability of Association Finances

Cost of Devauden legal advice dossier? Who approved such costs? When was it approved?

E-mail comment by S/rn White referring to legal costs. ”How long can we get away with it? Get away with what? Details please; Expense claims for HQ “based” personnel not identified. Details please:

Conference approval for Relocation was sought and granted on the understanding it would encompass one move to a venue with open access and costs would be minimally neutral. Conference caveats have not been met and costs not identified. Details please, including expenditure on the Admiralty Quarter failure.

Evidence indicates that relocation to Chatham was never fully investigated. Explanations: please.

Conduct of RNA employee, the General Secretary, considered erratic, given his behaviour in writing an insulting letter to Atherton Branch Secretary, refusal to apologise and refusal to reply to Shipmates letters. His continued unsatisfactory compilation of Council Meeting minutes and repeated failure to distribute pre meeting briefing papers to Area NCM's to enable sufficient time for discussion with Area Chairmen and Area Committee. Such conduct illustrates inherent ineffective management of your Association Shipmates. Such behaviour smacks of either ultra inefficiency or the practices of a closed shop method of management. Explanations: and improvements please.

The Maritime Federation membership who decided? When? Why? Who approved an absentee French Admiral partaking by proxy in an RNA Conference debate; Explanation: please.

Unelected personnel continue to exercise excessive, disproportionate authority over Elected Area Chairmen and other Shipmates elected by their peers. Explanation please: (All unelected personnel, Area Presidents for example, are invited guests without voting powers, to act strictly in an advisory capacity)

Seven months ago the National President Chairman promised the Area 10 Chairman that OPENNESS would become the watchword of RNA HQ conduct. At the very next "Cabinet" meeting the National President Chairman made a joke concerning the spelling of the word Openness. As Eric Morecambe used to say;" So what do you think of the Openness Show so far folks"? Yes, I agree HMS RNA is overdue a major refit, and a FOST type visit from the Charity Commission "Sea Riders" appears appropriate. It rests with you shipmates, there is a lot that can be done you are the ones with the strength behind the Association you are the reason the RNA exists.

The Chairman having thanked the Area President for his address remarked that he had given the delegates to this meeting much to think about. He then moved on to the next item on the agenda.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

56/08 S/m Donnelly (North Manchester) remarked this was the most corrupt association he had ever belonged too. To him, it appeared more communist than North Korea. Referring to an article in the *Daily Mirror* which concerned an item regarding the sale of *HMS Rame Head* here was a ship placed on what only can be described as 'an internet car boot sale'. "What was the RNA's response when asked what they intended to do about it was": "It was undignified". He feared for the future of this Association----more so having listened to the Area President's speech.

S/m Donnelly raised a second point concerning the true membership figure of the Association. The latest Circular Letter to Branches mentioned 'ghost members' S/m Donnelly asked "Was there anyone here today who could explain what a 'ghost member' was"? He suggested in view of the continuing loss of members, all the maritime organisations should come together and form a coalition of the various organisations.

57/08 The Chairman gave details of the Crosby branch social evening on October 31st. For the Lord Provost of Dundee and 15 relatives of several members of *HMS Barham* who are interred in Bootle cemetery.

VENUE FOR THE WINTER AREA CONFERENCE & AGM (January 31st 2009)

58/08 Two branches bid to host the winter conference and AGM. As a result of the ensuing ballot, North Manchester branch received 12 votes, and Runcorn branch 6 votes.

Therefore, North Manchester branch will host the above conference on January 31st 2009 commencing at 1200.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 1340.

BRANCH AND MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Area Address List Changes have taken place at the following;

Fleetwood Branch Now meet at the Fleetwood SCC unit Beach Road, the Promenade Fleetwood 1st Sunday of each month 1100

Southport Branch New Secretary: S/m K Blackburn Flat 2 45A The Promenade SOUTHPORT PR9 0DX

Wythenshawe Change of meeting venue: Now meet last Wednesday of month (1430) at St Johns RC Social centre Greenwood Road Wythenshawe MANCHESTER M22 9HD

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

Minutes of the 2008 AGM Enclosed with the minutes of this conference, are the minutes of the 2008 AGM which took place at Atherton on January 26th 2008. Secretary's are requested to hand these together with the minutes of this conference to your branch delegate in good time before the January 2009 conference and AGM at north Manchester branch.

Area Secretary November 2008