

## **AREA 2006 SUMMER CONFERENCE AT LEYLAND JULY 29<sup>th</sup> 2006 SUMMARY**

The Area summer commenced at an earlier time (1100) this year, due to the Manchester Military Tattoo being staged on the same day, with an afternoon and evening performance.

Turnout for conference could have been better, with only 21 branches out of a possible 58 being represented. In some respects, the low turnout proved beneficial on this occasion, as the Leyland Conservative club venue could hardly be termed spacious. However, proceedings got under weigh at 1100 with the President of the Leyland branch extending a warm welcome to the delegates, with a wish for a successful meeting.

The Chairman having called for the usual one minutes silence to honour those shipmates who had crossed the bar since our last meeting, especially /m Keith Wagstaffe Chairman of the Wigan branch tragically killed in a motorway accident in May. Formalities were quickly dealt with, and he called on the Secretary to read the correspondence, having first ascertained there were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

### Correspondence

The Secretary reported several branch Secretary Changes and a venue change in one branch. All these would appear on the Area website and also, in the minutes of the conference.

Singled out for praise, were the staff at Headquarters who pulled out all the stops to assist the family of the Wigan branch Chairman, tragically killed in a road traffic accident in May. The Area President, Chairman and Area Standard Bearer attended the funeral in St. Helens.

Associate member status was raised again by a Manchester branch who enquired about their eligibility to fulfil positions on a branch main committee.

The same branch is concerned that the present ship bearing the name *HMS Manchester* may be the last to do so. They have voiced their protest about this in the Manchester newspapers.

Crosby branch with the help of several inmates from the local HMP have restored 13 graves in Bootle cemetery containing the remains of sailors killed on HMS Barham in 1940. A commemoration ceremony will be attended by the Area President, Chairman the Area Standard and other branches who wish to take part in the service on August 5<sup>th</sup>

New conditions were announced concerning the public liability insurance cover held by headquarters. The insurance company advise branches that organise their own events to arrange separate liability cover, or seek advice from Headquarters, - not directly with the Association's insurers.

### The Treasurer

The Treasurer gave an account of the Area's finances for the current period which were contained in his report, copies of which were circulated to the delegates prior to the meeting. Main points of his report highlighted a loss of £1,876.13. which was mainly accounted by a shortfall of income from the Area reunion in May. Because of the low attendance, this had in turn affected the income from the raffles (total £373 50) which normally covered the artiste's fees which this year totalled £1,325.00. A 'free bar' for the ladies on the Sunday evening (£264.25) An RNA goods invoice to Headquarters (£1,939.25) and the Area had also paid Millom branch commission pack (£32.00) had all helped to contribute to the deficit

### The National Council Member

Due to the National Council member being absent from the meeting, (holiday) no report was given.

### PRO Report

S/m Caulfield spoke of a busy last few months on the PR front. He apologised for not being able to attend the spring Area conference/reunion in May. Our attendance at the Cartmel race meeting in late May was quite good, despite the rather indifferent weather, and the Publicity tent had its first outing there. On that occasion the RNA sponsored the last race of the meeting.

As already mentioned in correspondence, we had a publicity stand aboard *HMS Albion* during its visit to Liverpool earlier this month. This was manned throughout the weekend. The Marquee used at Cartmel is a rather large one, (8metre's X 4 metre's) and although it belongs to the RNA as a whole, if any branch has an event or fete and wish to use it, S/m Caulfield asked the delegates to contact himself should they require it.

Although national Veterans Day was a rather small affair this year, mainly because of its short notice by the MOD and the government, plans are in hand for next year's event. Hopefully, they should be known by next January, which should give ample time to plan your own local events.

#### Area Welfare Matters

S/m Thomas recalled when he was PRO several years ago, he was invited to a National Council meeting in London to discuss the production of a video he had suggested as an aid to recruiting. A P.R. officer engaged by the Association at that time said it would be too expensive and the idea was dropped. Some time later, this person produced his own video for the RNA. It would be interesting to see if this was still available. Continuing, S/m Thomas turned to Welfare matters. He said if he was to do his job properly, he needed input from the branch Welfare Officers. If members needed help they should know they have an Area Welfare Advisor. But this will only work if the branch Secretary keeps them informed via the minutes of these Area conferences. "At present" said S/m Thomas he was involved with six cases involving welfare issues from various branches within the Area, - there was much more he could do, via the various welfare organisations such as SSAFA and the RNBT S/m Thomas highlighted a recent case where an ex member of the RN needed urgent help in both household items and money. In this case, having made initial enquiries, it was passed to the RNBT who are in a position to assist by way of a grant, - not a loan. He went on to list the various help that was on offer from these agencies.

#### In Any Other Business

A delegate who had attended national conference complained about the way part of the proceedings were conducted: especially motion 5 which the President appeared to threaten to resign should the resultant vote be in the affirmative. In his [the delegate] opinion, the whole affair appeared to be "stage managed"

Another delegate raised the subject of the use of the white ensign at funerals. He could not see why a shipmate, who had given many years of service to the navy, was denied the privilege of having his coffin draped in the flag he had served under.

The Chairman lightened the proceedings by stating that when the time came for his funeral, his coffin would be draped with the white ensign, - any objections could be referred to him!

The Area President addressing the meeting before its closure said he was pleased to see that 22 branches were represented at this conference - he would have been more pleased if the number had been say 32 or possibly more. Although we are the largest area and often the loudest, we are like a British heavyweight boxer - we never punch our weight.

The President concluded his address by mentioning the commemoration of the graves of those shipmates from *HMS Barham* who are interred in Bootle cemetery, and the work done to restore them by the Crosby branch. He hoped that those shipmates who could make the journey to Bootle on Saturday August 5<sup>th</sup> he would be pleased to see them.

The venue for the autumn conference on October the 28<sup>th</sup> was a surprise one. Bolton branch successfully bid to host it at the Dean ward Labour club, - a first for this branch.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 1225