

The Royal Naval Association



82nd Annual Conference
& Annual General Meeting

Minutes

Wyboston Executive Centre
Wyboston Lakes
St Neots

Saturday 8 JUNE 2019

Charity Number 266982

BRANCH	DELEGATE
Ashford	Ronald Dorey
Aylesbury	Glen Beck
Birmingham Central	George Barbrook
Belfast	Jim Lyons
Bromley	Frances Halifax
Bloxwich	Christine Mawhinney
Bridport	Jane Barraclough
Christchurch	Christine Payne
Chester	John Arnold
Crosby	Noel Williams
Cork	Tom Steele
Chatham	Colin Rickard
Deal	David Fagg
Dublin	Nigel Brislane
East Antrim	Robert Loughran
First Garden City Letchworth	Gus Gudgeon
Greenford	Ann Foley
Gosport	Valerie Gleave
Hartlepool	Pete Reddick
Inverness	June Coburn
Huntingdon	Bill Small
Huddersfield	G Horner
Leighton	Ken Brown
Lee on the Solent	Paul Watson
Llandudno	Mathew Shields
Londonderry	Robert Buchanan
Lichfield	James O'Hagan
Limavady	Chris Batten
Maidstone	Stephen Champion
Mansfield	Wesley Pierpoint

Margate	Michael Cox
Monmouth	John Clarke
Newton Aycliffe	Elizabeth Lewarne
Nottingham	Tom Rotherham
Oswestry	M Evans
Portsmouth	Rosalie Atack
Peterborough	John Lallyette
Pendleton	John Coxon
Portland	A Cartwright
Paddock Wood	Susan Rickard
Plymouth	Arthur Gutteridge
Rhonda	Graham Warner
Royston	Geoff Apperley
Royal Leamington Spa	Alan Fletcher
Rosyth	Bernard McPhillips
St Neots	Maureen Ridley
Forth Valley	Andy McDonald
Spalding	Terry Day
Spennymor	Chris Lewarne
Scarborough	Shaun Brosnan
Trafford	Peter Barlow
Warwick	David Butler
Tewkesbury	Peter Godwin
Tyne	Roslyn Hastie-Murray
York	Pat Harrington
Wrexham	D Furber
Wythenshaw	John Smith

Present

Shipmate Vice Admiral J H S McAnally
CB LVO
Shipmate Commodore M Slawson OBE RN
Shipmate K Ridley
Shipmate P Stephenson
Shipmate N Purkis
Shipmate I Irvine
Shipmate J Rooney
Shipmate S Caulfield
Shipmate R Lock MBE
NCMs representing

National President and Chair of Annual
Conference
Deputy National President
National Chairman, NCM 6
National Vice Chairman, NCM 12
Chairman, Standing Orders Committee
National Honorary Treasurer, NCM Scotland
National Clubs and CORCA Advisor
National Events Co-ordinator
Vice President/National Welfare Adviser
Areas 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11

In attendance

The Ven M Gough QHC
S/M W Oliphant
Mr K Cornelius
S/M A Christie
S/M N Huxtable
Mrs M Bainbridge
S/M S Clewes
S/M A McGrath
S/M P Watson
Mr L Ford

Chaplain of the Fleet
General Secretary
Accountant
Deputy General Secretary
Assistant General Secretary
Financial Controller
Projects Officer
Branch Support Officer (North), Volunteer
Central Office Volunteer
Sound Engineer



Note:

1. A full sound recording is available of Conference, it is held in Central Office for historical archive purposes. Copies may be obtained by Areas and Branches if required.

Agenda Number	Item	Discussion and Decision
Annual General Meeting		
1	March on	The national Standards of the RNA and No 6 Area were marched on. The National Standard was transferred from outgoing National Standard Bearer S/M Bob Coburn to new NSB S/M David Corrigan during the Conference.
2	Opening Prayers	Conference opening prayers were said by the Ven Martyn Gough QHC, the Chaplain of the Fleet, on his first attendance at Conference in his official capacity.
3	Tribute	All present, at the invitation of the National President (NP), stood to remember Shipmates who have crossed the bar.
4	Opening Remarks	The NP welcomed all to Conference and commented on S/M Bob Coburn's excellent 12-year record as National Standard Bearer. He also thanked 6 Area for organising "what looks like a splendid conference in a magnificent facility." He alerted delegates and observers to three workshops to be held after Conference, on branch finances, recruitment and retention, and welfare.
5	Greetings	The General Secretary read out the Patronal greetings from Her Majesty the Queen
6	Opening of Conference Cllr Thorpe	<p>NP introduced and welcomed the Mayor of St Neots, Cllr Gordon Thorpe, who joined the RAF in 1960 (ironic groans from the audience) as a ground radar technician and finished his military career as a squadron leader communications specialist. Cllr Thorpe is an Honorary Welfare Officer for the RAF Association, and NP noted "I think you are one of our own – despite some misgivings from the audience!"</p> <p>Cllr Thorpe spoke of the history and growth of St Neots, and the attractions of living in the town, and also recalled his own family history and Naval links – his father worked for the Admiralty in Portsmouth when the Mayor was a boy.</p>
Cont	Keynote Speech	<p>The keynote speech was given by Rear Admiral Mike Bath, Naval Secretary, 32 years on the Active List. He served in HM Ships Bristol, Birmingham, Fawn Turbulent, Tireless, Westminster and Fearless, and saw operational service in the Middle East (Iran-Iraq War) and the Adriatic (the Balkans Conflict).</p> <p>The Admiral then gave a 'state of the nation' summary of the Naval Service, which he said is experiencing something of a renaissance at the moment after a period of land campaigns.</p> <p>Admiral Bath is also Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Personnel) and Flag Officer Reserves, responsible for all Naval and RNR Reserves personnel matters, as well as President of the Conference of Naval Associations; NP noted that "I think I can say, for the Royal Naval Association, he is our Admiral."</p>

Admiral Bath's stated that the shipmates gathered are "the lifeblood of this iconic and hugely-relevant Naval institution."

The future is exciting, with a nuclear deterrent, aircraft carriers, F-35B aircraft, Type 26 frigate and maritime patrol aircraft. He then showed shipmates a map of where Royal Navy, Royal Marines and RFA units are operating around the world, from under the Arctic to the Antarctic, and how unmanned craft and artificial intelligence are playing an increasingly important role in the transformation of the Navy.



"While operations define the Navy, people make it happen," he said, noting that the force is expanding and competing with industry for the best candidates. However, potential recruits today are more mobile, and have a different expectation for quality of life and welfare needs, so the Navy has to meet those expectations, while unpredictability is a major factor in people leaving the Service.

Admiral Bath described the RNA as the eyes and ears of Naval charities, providing valuable intelligence on those whose lives can be improved with judicious support, particularly amongst the age groups who regard self-reliance as a strength and who might not dream of seeking help.



He also spoke of the value of the RNA's mentoring programmes at HMS Raleigh and at Portsmouth Naval Base/Collingwood/Sultan, and the Shipmates and Oppos project. "I commend you greatly for what you do," said the Admiral. "The Navy is in strong support of the RNA."

The Personnel Liaison Team then demonstrated to shipmates part of the presentation given to Naval personnel on the benefits of their service, using a live interactive voting system to find out the audience's opinions on various aspects of Navy life.

RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant, used the system to gauge the Conference's mood on crucial questions about the Association, including the format of the Conference itself.

7	Adoption of Standing Orders	<p>The Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee (SOC), S/M Nick Purkiss, briefed that there was one small point to note, that voting would be carried out under Rule 22, not Rule 20.</p> <p>He then moved that the Standing Orders be adopted.</p> <p>Proposed: Warwick Seconded: Riders Branch</p> <p>Passed unanimously</p>
8	NP address	<p>The NP then addressed Conference. Key points of his speech were:</p> <p>NP thanked delegates and observers for attending, particularly in view of some difficult travel conditions. He thanked the Chaplain of the Fleet for his support at his first Conference in his role as Honorary Chaplain of the RNA; the Venerable Martyn Gough had had a busy week with the D-Day commemorations, but had devoted his weekend to Conference. NP thanked 6 Area for organising the Conference, and to the Organising Committee of 6 Area and St Neots Branch, particularly to Geoff Apperley, the chairman and project manager.</p> <p>NP then paid respects to shipmates who have crossed the bar, mentioning in particular Ivan Hunter, the “highly energetic and committed” NCM for 12 Area, who also took the role of Chairman of the SOC.</p> <p>Admiral McAnally welcomed the new Chairman of the SOC, S/M Nick Purkiss, and National Treasurer, S/M Ian Irvin, and said that the new General Secretary, S/M Bill Oliphant, has made a flying start – noting that he has big shoes to fill after the departure of former General Secretary Paul Quinn.</p> <p>Highlights of the past year include Project Semaphore, which won the Soldiering On Awards earlier this year, and has been driven forward by Sarah Clewes – 760 iPads have been issued or reissued to date, and NP thanked Sarah for her “focus, energy and dedication to this valuable project.”</p> <p>The Jutland Wood planting event in March was deemed a huge success, in collaboration with the Woodland Trust – and NP thanked Sir Donald Gosling for the significant financial backing that allowed the project to take off.</p> <p>In December the RNA hoisted the International Maritime Confederation, including a service afloat at Spithead to commemorate the centenary of the end of World War 1.</p> <p>The RNA strategy is being updated to try to address a slide in membership, reflecting the status of the RNA today and its strong links with the serving Navy. Indeed, two other initiatives look towards serving sailors – Shipmates and Oppos, funded by Greenwich Hospital, which puts an arm round the shoulders of those leaving the Service (including the outgoing First Sea Lord), and the Culture, Ethos and Values mentoring schemes at HMS Raleigh and the Portsmouth area (Portsmouth Naval base/HMS Collingwood/HMS Sultan). The RNA, said the NP, has a great story to tell: “We are a small charity with a big brand and an even bigger heart. We look after our shipmates and oppos, our projects are relevant, and we lead the Naval veteran community in engagement with the serving Navy.</p>

		<p>“So please feel free, proud to go out and tell that to your local community and encourage Naval folk of all types to join us and the chance to enjoy comradeship, sense of worth and the joy that membership of the RNA brings.” NP also mentioned that Bill has signed up for the RNRMC London to Paris cycle challenge, and shipmates will soon be encouraged to support him with donations...</p>												
9	NP awards	<p>The NP awards for recruiting were made:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Sword of Honour</td> <td>3 Area</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Briggs Dirk</td> <td>Waterlooville</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brigg’s Rose Bowl</td> <td>Horsham</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tasker Bowl</td> <td>8 and 9 Area</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Overseas Certificate for larger branches</td> <td>Torrevieja</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Overseas Certificate for smaller branches</td> <td>Japan</td> </tr> </table> <p>Tasker bowl jointly for 8 and 9 Areas</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>NCM3 receives the Briggs Dirk for Waterlooville</p>	Sword of Honour	3 Area	Briggs Dirk	Waterlooville	Brigg’s Rose Bowl	Horsham	Tasker Bowl	8 and 9 Area	Overseas Certificate for larger branches	Torrevieja	Overseas Certificate for smaller branches	Japan
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10	Standing Orders Committee Report	<div style="display: flex;">  <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>Chairman SOC also paid tribute to his predecessor S/M Ivan Hunter, saying what a fine mentor he was and remarking on his dedication to the job – even in the hospice, S/M Hunter insisted on having his laptop with him to carry out a full handover with his successor. Chairman SOC announced that there were 72 delegates present for the session. A number of elections for National Council Members (NCMs) and Deputy NCMs had been held, all uncontested. The results were:</p> <p>Area 2: NCM Victor Allen, DNCM Steve Champion. Area 6: NCM Keith Ridley, DNCM John Boddrell. Area 7: NCM Gordon Williams, DNCM Graham Warner. Area 8: NCM Peter Godwin, DNCM George Barbrook Area 9: NCM Keith Crawford, DNCM Mike Williams Area 11: NCM Ian McQueen, DNCM (contested) Roslyn Hastie-Murray elected Scottish Area: NCM Ian Irvin, DNCM – ballot being re-run. SOC: Selwyn Davies (Merthyr Tydfil) is appointed to the Committee.</p> </div> </div>												

11	Minutes of the 2017 Annual Conference	<p>There were no suggested amendments to the minutes of the 2018 Conference.</p> <p>Motion: To accept the minutes of the 2018 Conference.</p> <p>Proposed - Portland Seconded - Monmouth</p> <p>Carried on a unanimous show of hands</p> <p>Matters arising – None raised</p>
12	Annual Accounts for FY 2017	<p>Honorary Treasurer S/M Ian Irvin started his first report to Conference by saying he was not planning on matching his predecessor S/M Ray Barraclough’s record of 30 years – though he planned to stick around for the foreseeable future. S/M Irvin described himself as “an accountant by profession and an entrepreneur by inclination”, with his principal business interests in the Far East, notably in Vietnam and Taiwan, and although he travels there frequently he is firmly based in Edinburgh, having never relocated to Asia.</p> <p>He served in the Royal Navy in the 1970s, in HMS Bulwark and Jupiter – a tremendous experience and one he wouldn’t have missed; when he went into business he needed a ‘hobby’ – the RNA, which helped reignite the esprit de corps he experienced in the RN in his youth.</p> <p>S/M Irvin said his approach to accounts is systems based – “if I have confidence in the system, then I have confidence in the numbers and information produced by that system.” Not that he doesn’t check the figures, but he carries out a sanity check, using his experience to know what should be there, and if it isn’t then he questions it. “But by and large I have every confidence in the way the accounts are put together, and it is not my intention to go through everything,” he said. He pointed out that these are trustee accounts, rather than business accounts, and that the accountant’s review “gives us a clean bill of health.”</p> <p>Two points he wanted to raise:</p> <p>Firstly, HMRC and the RNA’s position in the Third Sector as a charity – although there were no plans to do so, S/M Irvin said the reserves held by charities would be an easy hit for the Chancellor for new sources of tax revenue, and it was something he was watching.</p> <p>Secondly, is the concept of corporate sponsorship, whether from a major corporation or a corner shop, and he urged observers to get out and seek sponsors.</p> <p>S/M Irvin finished by thanking Michelle Bainbridge, Financial Manager at RNA Central Office, and accountant Kevin Cornelius, of Broom Professional Services, for all their efforts. He also noted the gradual Scottish takeover of the RNA, with his presence and that of new General Secretary S/M Bill Oliphant.</p>

		<p>Motion: To approve the Trustee Report and Financial Statements for FY2017</p> <p>Proposed Worthing Seconded Horsham</p> <p>Carried on a unanimous show of hands</p>
13	<p>The National Council's Annual Report to Conference. – National Chairman</p>	<p>National Chairman (NC) S/M Keith Ridley paid tribute to S/M Ivan Hunter, with whom he served in Borneo and Brunei. He also thanked shipmates at Area 6 for organising the Conference, in particular S/M Geoff Apperley, who suffered a heart attack in recent times but bounced back to finish the job.</p> <p>He also thanked new General Secretary Bill Oliphant for “hitting the ground running”, and who managed to attend Conference in Dublin last year to see how the land lay while still being on duty attending to the needs of HMS Queen Elizabeth back in Portsmouth.</p> <p>NC spoke of the working group set up by last year’s Conference to look at central membership, and said delegates would hear a report on the group’s work later in the day. He also pointed out the Annual Trustees’ report which was handed out to delegates in their Conference paperwork, and he urged them to share the detailed information with their branch members. National Council was content with the financial performance of the RNA in 2018, he said, and that funds lodged with the RNRMC yielded interest of £65,500 last year, and that the National Council has decided “in the light of good financial housekeeping” there was no need to consider increasing annual subscriptions, which would remain at £14 per annum.</p> <p>NC said that those who considered the subscriptions to be too high should bear in mind the annual subscriptions for the RBL (£17), RAF Association (£23) and the Women’s Institute (£42) – “I consider we get value for money for our £14,” he concluded. Instead, the RNA was looking at other sources of income, such as corporate support.</p> <p>The Association was also most grateful, he said, for the continued financial assistance it receives from external grants, in particular from Greenwich Hospital Trust, represented at Conference by Chief Executive Hugh Player. Their support allows the RNA to undertake projects such as Shipmates and Oppos and Project Semaphore – and S/M Ridley also congratulated Sarah Clewes and her team on winning the People’s Choice category at the Soldiering On Awards.</p> <p>Some branches closed during 2018, but the Association continues to attract new members, mainly online, and while Central Office do their best to promote the RNA “it is our role, within the branches, to get out there and recruit the new members, not them.” He added: “It is important that we reach out, embrace and strengthen the bond with our serving members in the Fleet at every given opportunity. The Shipmates and Oppos programme launched in January 2016 continues to be a great success.”</p>

		<p>NC also spoke of the successful Welfare Seminar held in 2018, organised by National Welfare Adviser S/M Rita Lock. The next such seminar will be held next year (at the Royal Maritime Club – formerly the Home Club – in Portsmouth on 25 April), and on Rita’s recommendation donations from the Central Charities Fund went to the RNRMC, the Not Forgotten Association and Hosanna House. At the end of 2018 the National Council recommended Life Membership be awarded to former RNA General Secretary Paul Quinn in recognition of his commitment and dedication to the Association – though his efforts Paul brought over £1.6 million into the RNA.</p>  <p>National Ceremonial Officer S/M Mick Kieran stepped down for personal reasons, and his role will be taken by former National Standard Bearer S/M Bob Coburn, while S/M David Corrigan steps up from the role of Deputy National Standard Bearer. Looking ahead, September brings the RNA’s Biennial Parade in Whitehall, including serving Navy and international representatives from Ireland and Belgium. Next year’s Conference will be held at Liverpool, and S/M Ridley urged delegates to attend.</p>  <p>The National Chairman thanked members of Central Office for their support in running the Association, including Saturday shifts to provide admin support for various national committees and councils, and to National Council members and advisers for their contributions (and the forbearance of their “other halves”). He said the National Council also acknowledged the hard work of area and branch committees and all members, all of whom contribute to making the Association the great organisation it is.</p>
14	Brief on Recruitment and Retention	<p>S/M Booth said he has been in role for 12 months, and he was struck by the way that some branches were failing in terms of recruitment and retention. He said the one thing to take away is that if there is a problem, tell someone, and tell them as soon as possible – don’t sit and wait, call Central Office, tell your NCM or ring S/M Booth, and a plan can be implemented. All calls are treated as confidential.</p> <p>Branches are unique – no two cases are the same, so S/M Booth said an action plan will be created, whether it is helping with relevant advice or perhaps looking at fund-raising. It may be as simple as finding someone on the Central Roll who lives near the branch concerned, and one or two new branch members could make all the difference.</p> <p>S/M Booth said the other major point to note is that decommissioning a branch is “the absolute final option” – all other avenues should be explored first.</p>

15	Motions of Urgency	Chair SOC reported that no Motions of Urgency had been received.
16	National Council motions	<p>The Chair of the SOC briefed Conference that:</p> <p>All motions had been reviewed to ensure they were in accordance with the Charter, not time-barred, would achieve the aim of the motion.</p> <p>Amendment to the Supplemental Charter</p> <p>National Council Motion 1</p> <p>To amend Article 7 (1) by adding, ‘A Member, awarded a Certificate of Appreciation’ after Associate Member: (Shift the word ‘and’)</p> <p>And that this amendment shall be subject to such change as may be required by the Privy Council and is agreed by the President of the Royal Naval Association.</p> <p>Reasoning: Article 7 (1) sets a precedence when using ‘Life Member’ as a form of Membership, thus requiring ‘A Member, awarded a Certificate of Appreciation’ to be included.</p> <p>Chairman SOC explained that Article 7(1) of the Charter lists the various categories are for membership of the RNA, and they are listed as Full Member, Life Member, Serving Member, Honorary Member and Associate Member. He continued: “But we do have a category of individuals who have a different badge which is an individual who is an Associate Member – or could be a Full Member – who has a Certificate of Appreciation. “So all this motion seeks to do is to add an additional category of membership, which is for Associate Members who hold a Certificate of Appreciation, because elsewhere in the Rules they are treated slightly differently in that they are allowed to vote on certain things and so on.” The NP described it as a “tidying up” exercise.</p> <p>The National President put the motion to Conference</p> <p>NCM 7 Seconded the motion</p> <p>The motion was carried with one delegate opposing</p> <hr/> <p>National Council Motion Two</p> <p>Proposed by NCM 3 Area (S/M Stewart Maclean).</p> <p>The proposal is to amend Rule 20 (c) to read as follows:</p> <p>The four elected members shall hold office for two years with two retiring each year but they shall be eligible for re-election. Nomination of candidates, who shall be Full or Life Members or an Associate Member awarded a Certificate of Appreciation, of a Branch in the United Kingdom</p>

or the Republic of Ireland may be forwarded by any Branch to reach the Council at least eight weeks before the date of the next Conference. Each nomination shall include a statement of support by the Branch in which the candidate exercises his right to vote, a statement of the nominee's willingness to serve and details of his service and experience in the Association. These details shall be included with the Conference agenda; a voting form will be issued to delegates on registration. Changes to membership of the Committee shall take effect at the end of the Conference at which they were approved. And that this amendment shall be subject to such change as may be required by the Privy Council and is agreed by the President of the Royal Naval Association.

The reasoning was to broaden the pool of Members from which nominees could be made. It would add value to the Certificate of Appreciation (CoA).

Motion seconded by NCM 7 Area (S/M Gordon Williams).

The Chairman SOC told delegates that "most of the text is already in the Rules; all this is seeking to do (Rule 20(c)) relates to the Standing Orders Committee, and at the moment only Full Members or Life Members of the Association can be on the SOC.

"Now as you know, for the last few years we have had a vacancy, so what we are seeking to do is to permit an Associate with a Certificate of Appreciation to also be eligible to be on the SOC.

"So all this rule change does is broaden slightly the scope of who can sit – and, of course, they are still up for election, so it does not mean that one member of the SOC *has* to be an Associate, it simply says that one member of the SOC *can* be an Associate with a Certificate of Appreciation."

S/M John Dale (Horsham branch) spoke for the motion, said: "Whilst I deplore the watering-down of the membership, I think this is inevitable, so we are for it."

S/M Chris Lewarne (Spennymoor and Ferryhill branch) said he was not against the motion, "however, I do believe there are some wordings missing, and I call on the National Council to correct the missing words.

"It says here 'Member or Associate Member awarded a CoA.' A member awarded a CoA has to wait a year before they are allowed to come onto their Area or branches, and they also have to wait three years to go further on.

"There is nothing in here about any delay."

The National President suggested the observation should be treated as an amendment to the motion, but after further discussion between the NP, the Chairman of the SOC and S/M Lewarne, and some clarification (including the fact that an Associate Member has to be a member of the RNA for ten years before they qualify for a CoA), no amendment was proposed.

The motion was carried with one delegate opposing.

Proposed by NCM 3 Area (S/M Stewart Mclean).

The proposal is to amend Rule 20 (d) by replacing 'an elected' with 'a' in the first sentence and by adding the following after the word 'Conference' in the second sentence:

The number of Associate Members with a CoA permitted to serve on the Standing Orders Committee at any one time shall be one. This provision does not mean that a place is reserved on the Committee for an

		<p>Associate Member with a CoA. The nomination of an Associate Member holding a CoA in the year a sitting Associate Member holding a CoA is not due for election, shall be declared invalid, unless the sitting Associate Member is standing down for whatever reason. And that this amendment shall be subject to such change as may be required by the Privy Council and is agreed by the President of the Royal Naval Association.</p> <p>The reasoning was that, as for 20 (c) plus if a place was reserved for an Associate Member with a CoA, a vacancy would remain if such a member was not nominated.</p> <p>The motion was seconded by NCM 7 (S/M Gordon Williams).</p> <p>Chairman SOC explained that the changes closed a loophole over preventing membership of the SOC by members of the National Council, and opens a place for an Associate Member but does not guarantee a place for an Associate Member.</p> <p>The motion was carried unanimously. _____</p>
17	Branch Motions	<p>Branch Motion 1</p> <p>Proposed Nottingham Seconded: Lincoln</p> <p>That the 2021 Conference be held in the Britannia Hotel Nottingham, at a date and price to be confirmed.</p> <p>S/M Rotherham (Nottingham) said that the hotel is a large establishment in the heart of the city, which has good links from the motorway and airport. He added that he has been Branch Secretary for 26 years and has not known Area 9 to host the event.</p> <p>The motion was seconded by S/M Mike Williams of Lincoln branch, who spoke of Nottingham’s attractions.</p> <p>NCM for 9 Area S/M Keith Crawford said the proposal is in line with guidelines set by Conference in the past.</p> <p>The National President put the motion to Conference</p> <p>71 Delegates present. None against. Motion carried without a count.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>17.b. Central membership Study Group report</p> <p>Last year Conference voted to set up a study group to investigate the feasibility and implications to the Association of managing membership centrally rather than at Branch level. The Study Group were invited to report back to Conference.</p>

S/M Peter Godwin (NCM 8 Area) briefed delegates on the work of a study group that was set up as a result of Branch Motion Number 2 at the 2018 Conference in Dublin, looking at central membership. The study group, chaired by S/M Godwin, was comprised of the delegates who spoke for or against the motion last year, and members of Central Office – the study group was Andy Christie (Central Office), National Vice Chairman, Paul Stephenson, Arthur Gutteridge (Plymouth), Maureen Ridley (St Neots), Geoff Apperley (Royston), Nigel Huxtable and Michelle Bainbridge (both Central Office).

S/M Godwin said: “There was a concern that [the group] was looking at changing the way the membership is run - not true.” They met with representatives of ARNO, the RMA and the RBL, and S/M Godwin said he remembered, as a member of the RBL, the changes to payment methods that caused problems, and current officials believe the main factor was shortcomings in their database. In order to understand the task, S/M Godwin said it was necessary to understand how the RNA operates, and the simplest analogy he found was a comparison with the United States, a federation of independent states with an executive (the president) who has certain powers, but there also elected members in the Senate who make decisions. Similarly, “the RNA is a federation of independent branches – the branches control the membership,” said S/M Godwin.

The benefit of a central membership is the ability to communicate backwards and forwards, from Central Office to members, but currently items such as the Semaphore Circular have to be emailed to branch secretaries, who then distribute it to individual members – there is no database capability allowing Central Office to email directly to individuals. “We believe – we almost know for certain – that in some branches it never gets past the branch secretary,” said S/M Godwin, pointing out that the central membership report itself was distributed to branch secretaries, and some delegates had not seen it...

With a central membership database, when the Semaphore Circular is ready to go, it could be sent directly to every member. Another example was of a veteran who wanted to attend a remembrance event in London; the Deputy General Secretary needed to contact members in that postal area to see if anyone could help him out. The only way he could do that was to go via the Area Secretary and branch officials who trawled through the records, rather than carry out a simple search of postcodes on a database.

S/M Godwin said that the current annual return process meant Assistant General Secretary S/M Nigel Huxtable in Central Office (who is “like a one-armed paper hanger – gets an envelope with paper and cheque(s), he transfers the necessary information (such as branch officers) from the paper to his database, then passes it on to Financial Manager Michelle Bainbridge, who must match the money to the individual. The process could be simplified by branch secretaries having email access and sight of the database, allowing them to transmit the information to Central Office and allow updated information to be registered quickly and efficiently.

“Further down the road it may be possible to offer alternative methods of payment,” said S/M Godwin. “The key thing here is MAY BE possible to OFFER alternative methods of payment.”

		<p>The report was presented to National Council at the end of 2018, it was approved and the group was asked to proceed to Phase 2 – a feasibility statement as to what they want the database to do. A statement of requirement is expected in the next few weeks. None of this, he added, would change the structure of the RNA, but will make it simpler for Association officials to carry out their business. In response to a question, S/M Godwin said there will still be the possibility to contact members by post if they do not have internet access.</p>
18	Conference Raffle	<p>The Conference raffle was held the results were:</p> <p>1st K Richards, Dorchester 2nd G Meredith, Shrewsbury 3rd D Mills, South Wales 4th Derby RNA</p>
19	Closing of Conference	 <p>NP closed the Conference by reflecting on the technological innovations used to test the waters, and looked forward to a great gala evening and church service in the morning.</p> <p>The National Anthem was played.</p> <p>The National Standard was marched off to 'Hearts Of Oak'</p>

W Oliphant
CEO/General Secretary
30 June 2019

