

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROC

ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS

1925 was founded following successful trials carried out in 1924, when temporary observation posts covering the Weald of Kent, were linked by a communications system, to an operations room located above the telephone exchange in High Street, Cranbrook, Kent.

The post crews successfully tracked aircraft of 32 Sqn from Biggin Hill.

The first two Groups to be formed, were No. 1 with its Headquarters in Maidstone, and No 2 with its Headquarters in Horsham.

New groups continued to be formed, and by the outbreak of the Second World War most of Great Britain was covered. The Observers on these Posts identified and reported all aircraft flying overland and the sea belt adjoining the coastline, to their respective Observer Corps Centres. As in the early days, radar tracking ceased once inbound aircraft had crossed the coastline.

1941 In recognition of the sterling service given by the Observer Corps during the Battle of Britain, his Majesty King George V1 conferred the title ROYAL, and during September women were enrolled in the Corps.

1944 796 members volunteered to man the Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships during the D-Day Landings.

These volunteers were temporarily seconded to the Royal Navy in the rank of Petty Officer/ Aircraft Identifier and wore 'SEABORNE' flashes on their uniform.

1945 In May the Royal Observer Corps was stood down.

1947 On January 1st the Corps was reformed in response to the 'cold war'.

1953 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11 assumes the appointment Air Commodore-in-Chief

1955/60 The Corps was given a Nuclear reporting role, passing the information to Military and Civil Authorities.

1991 The reduced 'nuclear threat' to the United Kingdom resulted in the stand-down of the majority of volunteer members of the Royal Observer Corps on September 30.

1995 The decision was finally taken to stand-down the remaining elements of the Corps on December 31, completing 70 years of outstanding voluntary service at the forefront of the defence of the Realm.

To quote Air Vice Marshal 'Johnnie' Johnson when in the presence of a number of ROC members at a parade, and referring to its Battle of Britain service:-

“What would we have done without you”

