

DONALD SKEGGS OBITUARY

10 Group Independent member Don Skeggs died on 11 March 2014 aged 87 years at Brixham, Devon. He suffered heart failure. The service to celebrate Don's life took place at the Stockman Service Chapel in Brixham on Saturday 5 April. About 20 people were present including members of the family and friends, some of whom had travelled long distances. Lawrence and Chris Holmes represented 10 and 7 Group ROCA. Don's ROC Long Service Medal was placed on the coffin and the service was conducted by the Rev Peter Williamson. In his tribute to Don, the Rev Williamson dwelt on Don's long ROC service and love of aircraft and aircraft recognition and the impact it had had on his very full life. Fittingly the closing music was 'Spitfire Prelude'. Afterwards there was a reception at the home of Don's son in Brixham.



Above shows the national ROC Aircraft Recognition Team 1954-55. L to R Earl of Bandon former CROC, Obs Nigel Price, Obs Pete Wallace and L/Obs Don Skeggs.

Don was born on 12 July 1927 in St Albans, Herts. When he left school in the Autumn of 1943 he joined the Post Office Telephone Service and so began his long association with communications. During the Second World War Don's father had been an Air Raid Warden in St Albans and he had made contact with the local Observer Corps Post at Park Street, a small village between St Albans and Radlett. So when the Corps reformed in 1947, Don became a member of Park Street post, designated C3 of Watford 17 Group. After a few years he was promoted to L/Obs because of his interest in aircraft recognition. He attended the first annual ROC camp at Thorney Island in 1948 and attended two camps at RAF Waterbeach.

In 1953 Don became interested in aircraft recognition competitions which were being organised and he joined the team from the Park Street Post, now C4 post. Don went on to become a member of the national ROC Team. In 1954 this team became the winners of the Aircraft Recognition Society Silver Hurricane Trophy, the Royal Air Force Aircraft Recognition Trophy, the Victor Trophy and the Gloucester Trophy. The following year the team again swept the board by winning all the competitions for the second year. In the late 1950s, Don also took part in early experiments at Bentley Priory to form 'special teams' which were later to be called NRCs. Don reluctantly decided this work was not for him and returned to C4 which was just going 'underground' and adopting the nuclear role. At this stage he left C4 Post to become the Group Officer of the seven posts of the Charlie and Delta cluster, of Watford Group. But in 1964 he resigned as a Group Officer owing to increased work commitments and returned to the Park Street Post as an Observer. After only a short time Don was promoted to Ch/Obs on the Post and being now expert at communication devices, he constructed an early form of 'teletalk' which worked for many years before the official issue was made. He also built a replica of the Analogue Fixed Survey Meter and BPI which the post used for training.

In the 1968 Reorganisation, the Watford Group closed down and some of the Watford Posts were transferred to adjacent Groups. C4 Park Street Post was made redundant and all post members including Don agreed to resign from the Corps rather than transfer to other posts. In 1959 Don became a Communications Engineer with the CEGB and in 1989 he took partial retirement and started part-time voluntary work with the RAF Museum at Hendon. He was also interested in railways and joined the Festiniog Railway Society, North Wales (Ed – Also in the same society was Alan Pegler former Group Commandant of the Leeds Group). He then joined the workers attached to the Restoration Workshops and Reserve Collection, located at RAF Cardington and there spent 11 years helping with exhibit restoration, learning new skills and meeting many interesting visitors both service and civilians. Around 1998 he became aware of the ROC Association and joined 7 Group Bedford ROCA. In 2000, RAF Cardington closed but Don became a member of the Bletchley Park Historical Society. Whilst with this society Don joined a team which built a replica Colossus Machine which was the world's first electronic computer. In 2001 Don moved to live in Brixham, Devon to be near his son who lived in the town. He then joined 10 Group ROCA as an Independent member. He won the Spitfire Trophy in 2008, the first time an Independent member has done so!

Our thoughts are with Don's family, son Malcolm, daughter Jeanine, and five grandchildren. Don was a great and very clever man, a super aircraft enthusiast and very proud of being a member of the ROC.

(For more reading about Donald Skeggs see 10 Group newsletters No 54 April 2008 and No 69 March 2013)