

Freedom of Weston Parade

BOROUGH OF WESTON-SUPER-MARE

Dear Group Captain Blair-Oliphant,

Freedom of Entry to the Borough

I am pleased to inform you that the Council, at their Meeting on Monday last, unanimously confirmed a recommendation of the appropriate Committee that a Special Meeting of the Council be convened, on a convenient day to be decided by the Mayor, to confer upon the Royal Air Force Station at Locking, and subject as necessary to the concurrence of the Secretary of State for Air, 'the liberty, honour and distinction of marching through the streets of the borough upon all ceremonial occasions with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, colours flying, drums beating and bands playing.'

I feel sure that you yourself will welcome the proposal and I hope that the Secretary of State for Air will grant his consent to your accepting this honour on behalf of the Station at an appropriate ceremony. I should be grateful if you would kindly arrange for the necessary approach to be made to the Secretary of State so that the preliminary arrangements for the ceremony may be made between us.

After consultation with the Mayor, it is suggested that the ceremony be held on Friday, the 19th October next, commencing in the morning, or if that date should be inconvenient to you, then Friday, the 12th October, would be suitable to the Council.

Your sincerely,
Town Clerk.

Group Captain D.N.K. Blair Oliphant, C.B.E., B.A.,
Officer Commanding No.1 Radio School.
Royal Air Force,
Locking.
Weston-super-Mare



The March Past



Taking the Salute

For the first time, on 12 October 1956, RAF Locking exercised its privilege of marching through Weston-super-Mare with 'swords drawn, bayonets fixed, colours flying, drums beating and band playing'. It did so after the Mayor conferred upon the Station the Freedom of Entry to the Borough.

Bond

Over one year earlier an article had appeared in the 'Mercury' suggesting that RAF Locking be added to the Roll Of Honorary Freeman, as this was the highest honour that could be conferred by the town and that it would serve to strengthen the bond that existed between the Station and town's people.

In the parade was 'No 252 Leading Aircraft Apprentice Ian Bruce Arthur Hamish McCrackers' the brown and white pony mascot. He wore his blue ceremonial suit for the occasion and brought applause as he lead the March Past.

The scroll, which gave freedom of entry into the town, was presented by the Mayor, Mr HJ

Holcombe, to the Station Commander Gp Capt DKN Blair-Oliphant in a ceremony in the Town Hall after he had signed the Roll as an Honorary Freeman.

The scroll was in turn handed to the Scroll Bearer who, flanked by two sergeants with bayonets fixed, carried the vellum scroll in a cylindrical transparent case on a tray slung around his neck. He later displayed the scroll to the men on parade in Station Road before it was marched through the town.

In the parade was an escort squadron, composed of permanent staff, who escorted the Queen's Colour of the Royal Air Force, which was being seen for the first time in the West Country. The No 5 Regional Band RAF played as the parade passed by the Saluting Platform. In the parade were the No 1 Apprentice Wing Pipe and Drum Band, No 1 Escort Squadron, No 2 Squadron composed of Airmen Trainees, No 3 Squadron composed of Aircraft Apprentices and the No 5 Regional Band.

Crowds turned out to see the parade and



The Scroll is presented to Gp Capt Blair-Oliphant



Signing the Roll

children were let off school early to attend. People filled every vantage point outside the Town Hall where the route was lined by airmen with fixed bayonets. Many shops had special displays and bunting and flags were hung out for the occasion. The Mayor took the salute at the Town Hall as the parade of more than 700 officers and men marched past on a route through the centre of the town. After the parade more than 400 people sat down to a lunch in the Winter Gardens Pavilion.

The Mayor said: '*This is one of those traditions which is truly of significance only in the administration of local affairs. It is a tradition which we are indeed concerned to keep in being because of its direct association with the local democratic institutions of this country - and I may say that it adds to that touch of colour and distinction that we like to have in our local affairs and which in turn does so much to preserve a strong local interest.*

What does this ceremony mean and what is its significance? It has become customary in this country to honour those who have distinguished themselves in the service of their

fellow beings. In the sphere of local government, for the past 70 years, this has been to confer on them the Honorary Freedom of the Borough. Alongside this has developed the practice of conferring the Freedom of Entry

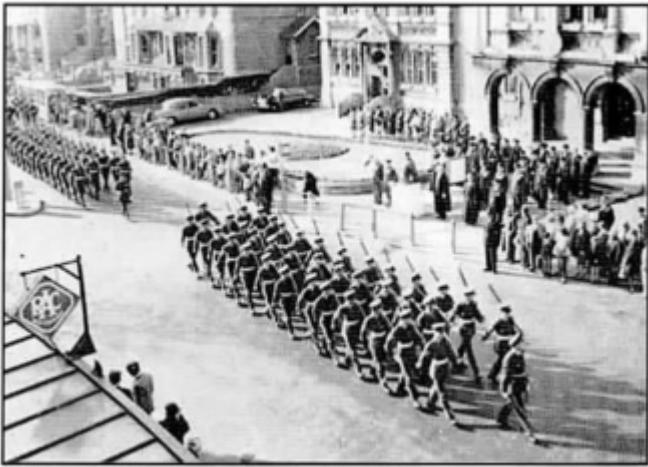
as a corresponding recognition of the conspicuous service given by Her Majesty's Armed Forces. This honour, which in these very pleasant circumstances we meet to confer on Royal Air Force Locking, is the highest honour we, as a Borough, can bestow on anyone.'

The resolution moved that 'in recognition and appreciation of the worthy record and services of the Royal Air Force Locking and of their close association with the Borough of Weston-super-Mare to which it is desired to give further

encouragement, the Council of the Borough do confer upon the said Royal Air Force Locking the liberty, honour, distinction and freedom for all time of marching through the Borough on ceremonial occasions with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, colours flying, drums beating and bands playing and that the name of the Station be duly inscribed on the Roll of



The Scroll displayed in the Officers' Mess



In Front of the Town Hall in the 1960s

Honorary Freemen.'

WO Reid, now retired, has recalled that 'the parade was quite an endurance test because



The Parade in the 1980s

of the distance involved and the fact that the troops were carrying the heavy Lee Enfield rifle and 18" bayonet'.