

ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS

No. 5 Group, Watford

---

The crest of the Royal Observer Corps, featuring a crown at the top, a central shield with a cross, and a banner at the bottom with the motto 'WARD IS BEST'.

THE  
CLOSING DOWN  
CEREMONY

BY

Air Commodore D. F. Rixson, O.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C.

Commandant, Royal Observer Corps

---

Saturday, 28th September, 1968

## No. 5 GROUP ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS, WATFORD

Originally designated No. 17 Group, the Watford Group was formed in 1933 with the Operations Room over the General Post Office in Market Street, moving to the present site in 1943. No. 17 Group was redesignated No. 5 Group in 1953.

The role from 1933 to 1955 was that of tracking all aircraft, Hostile and Friendly. The reports being received into the Operations Room from Observation Posts sited approximately 5 miles apart in the London Area, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, parts of Essex, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. Home Office Warning Officers were on duty in the Operations Room passing "Air-Raid Warnings" to the civil population from the displays. During this period the Corps. was "The Eyes and Ears of the Royal Air Force".

In 1955 the Role of the Royal Observer Corps changed, No. 5 Group together with 28 other Groups became a part of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation. From reporting and tracking aircraft (using the minimum of instrumentation), to the detection of Nuclear Explosions and monitoring of Radioactive "Fall-out" with many sophisticated instruments. New "Protected" Posts were built below ground level, and in 1961 the new semi-sunk Group Headquarters was officially opened by the Mayor of Watford, Councillor R. J. Hicks. From the information provided from the posts and displayed in the Operations Room, warnings of the approach of "Fall-out" are passed through the "Carrier Warning" System to the General Public.

Watford Operations Room in 1967, together with four adjacent Group's Operations Rooms, was used to successfully prove the "Data Transmission" system of communications, which is now being adopted throughout the Royal Observer Corps.

Operational requirements deem it necessary that No. 5 Group, Watford, be disestablished on the 1st October, 1968. The Posts transferring to Bedford, Colchester, Horsham and Oxford Groups, and the Operations Room closing down.

No. 5 Group, Royal Observer Corps, Watford, now becomes part of the History of the Corps.

## PROGRAMME

---

**1500 hours** Arrival of Air Commodore D. F. Rixson, O.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C., who will be received by Observer Commander, W. J. Gooden, Group Commandant, No. 5 Group, Royal Observer Corps.

Inspection of Guard of Honour.

---

**1510 hours** Inspection of "History of No. 17/5 Group, Royal Observer Corps" Exhibition.

---

**1525 hours** Tour of Operations Room with the last exercise in progress.

---

**1555 hours** Closing Parade and Ceremony  
Addresses by: Air Commodore D. F. Rixson, O.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C., Commandant, Royal Observer Corps.  
His Worship the Mayor of Watford, Alderman A. Merryfield.

Observer Commander W. J. Gooden, Group Commandant, No. 5 Group, Royal Observer Corps.

---

REFRESHMENTS