**ANNEX C TO**

**RAFOS/SEC/16**

**DATED 24 NOV 16**

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

I’m going to move swiftly on from the introductions to the bit that normally features our esteemed President. Air Cdre (now retired) Dolly Parton can’t be with us today. He has been having a pretty torrid time of it by all accounts having left the RAF in the early summer to take up a role as a senior Civil Servant in the Defence Equipment and Support organisation at Abbey Wood. That has had its challenges but more challenging still has been a round of family illnesses with parents on both his and his wife Sarah’s sides. We wish them all the very best and of course a speedy return to RAFOS activities. Now that he has retired Dolly will be standing down as President and will become another of our life Vice-Presidents – the search for a serving air rank president goes on. I’m told by contacts at Abbey Wood that now he is a civil servant Dolly prefers to be known as Neville – of course all his RAF colleagues have complied with his wishes and now call him ‘Still’ – meaning he’s still Dolly to his RAF friends.

The President would normally say a few words about today’s RAF. Well it is busier than ever. Every single front-line aircraft type is engaged on operations and you can see almost all of them if you go to Akrotiri. The only aircraft not there is the Puma and that’s in Afghanistan. As well as taking the fight to Daesh over Syria and Iraq we’re busy policing our own airspace and helping NATO police the Baltic with Typhoons deployed to Estonia. On top of the operations the full round of exercises continues unabated and we’re just recovering a trail of Typhoons and the Red Arrows from a Far East tour which included China, Japan and South Korea. All of this activity is supported by the full gamut of RAF personnel and I noted the other day that the Global Mobility force (you’d know them as the AT force, No 46 Transport Group or even RAF Transport Command !) are flying more task hours than they did at the height of Afghanistan operations.

Such is the value that the RAF is providing that in the last Strategic Defence Review the government decided to provision 2 more Typhoon sqns, a new Maritime Patrol Aircraft the P8, and extended the out of service date for Tornado and the Sentinel. All we have to now is retain enough folk to run the show and we’ve got some pinch points in a variety of branches and trades from chef to ICT technicians.

So to my task; first of all let me thank you again for coming – it really is good to see the stalwart support we enjoy and while our membership may be bumping along at a bit over a hundred or so it is encouraging to note that in this our fifty-first year that numbers are increasing slightly and the activities of the Society are as interesting and diverse as ever. We’ve supported the citizen science activities of a number of organisations but in particular the BTO where our input is always welcomed and recognised in their publications.

Now as usual I need to formally record some thanks:

Your Committee have worked hard this year and deserve your thanks as usual. Team Knight, despite Dick having been confined to quarters recently, have done a cracking job of keeping us all on our toes and even though not here have had a significant hand in making sure today’s proceedings have all come together. Of course most of the applause for today’s arrangements go yet again to Colin Wearn – as usual his quiet soldiering away behind the scenes has brought together the Messing arrangements and a host of other bits and bobs that all have to be attended to in order to make an AGM work.

I’d also like to thank Naomi Beddows who has done a lot of work to get the new web site up and running and in a state where Ken (I’m a Web Administrator not a Web Master) Earnshaw can take this project forward. All we need now is for the membership to engage a bit more in the web site interactions so that it truly comes alive. Hosting was graciously funded by a donation from Mike Blair last year and will be by Ken himself next and I believe we have a willing donor for the year after that.

There has been some sad news too – and in the Obituary column I have to record the sad passing of Ron Bowers, Dr Watson and of course our founder Frank Walker. All will be missed and our thoughts go out to those they leave behind.

But among the lows there have been some highs too and we’ll hear from Keith Cowieson of some of the successes enjoyed on expeditions various. I took part in WINTER DUCK again this year and planning is well under way for next year’s event. I also made it to ISLAY MIST for the first time – what a fabulous place even if you do have to share it with 50,000 geese! I’ve also had 2 holidays in Africa this year but it was the RAFOS expedition to Islay that produced a lifer in the shape of a Chough – well 40 or so Chough really in the field behind our cottages.

And on that note we’ll get on with business. Normally I’d be handing over to the Secretary Bird to take us through the Agenda but in her absence I’ll try and keep to the running order and ask if there are any comments on the accuracy of the Minutes of the last AGM.