

From RSM Robin Tarr to Exco:

Good day Ian.

I am writing to you today to provide The Rhodesian light infantry Regimental Association Executive Committee with my very firm view on the proposal to relocate the Trooper Statue from its current position at Lord Salisbury's Hatfield Estate to a site at the National Memorial Arboretum {NMA}. Firstly, I must say that I was simply astounded to learn that there is a move afoot to relocate the Trooper Statue from its current position. It is imperative for me to express my opinion on this matter and to make it very clear that I very strongly oppose such a decision.

I am led to understand that the reason put forward for moving the Statue is because it is feared that there is the risk of the Statue been desecrated in one way or other by those simple minded elements in our society who are opposed to anything Colonial or issues that don't meet their beliefs. You know what I mean. However, in my view, unless The Association, Lord Salisbury's Estate or anyone else for that matter has received direct threats indicating the Statue will be targeted for desecration by these elements, and/ or if there has been evidence of some form of attempt to damage the statue, the "fear" that it will be desecrated is simply not strong enough reason to relocate the Statue.

I have never been to the NMA site, I in fact don't even know exactly where it is, however in view of this most concerning development I have made it my business to find out what the site is all about and what it comprises of. From my enquiries I understand the NMA site is a very large area near Burningham in central England, reserved for the sitting of memorials, monuments, plinths, plaques, statues and the likes of. Apparently there are an abundance of these on this site, my information is that there are in excess of 400." Our Trooper" would then become insignificantly one of so many. I believe that the BSAP, RAR and RhAF have some form of Memorial on this site, I respect that and certainly hope they do not encounter in anyway problems. The site area I also believe at certain times of the year gets extremely busy with the shops, cafes and other forms of businesses and entertainment activities, where large crowds made up of tourists and visitors converge. In light of the foresaid, if our Statue is mounted there, are we not ADVERTISING ITS PRESENCE, " yes we obviously are and that could well become problematic for the very same reason for wanting to move it from Lord Salisbury's Estate in the first place.

At its present site, Hatfield Estate, I couldn't imagine a better location, quiet and peaceful in tranquil surroundings in that beautiful country side on the banks of the river. What a wonderful place for RLI members, family and friends to visit and reminisce on those wonderful and very proud years and of course to pay respect to our fallen. In my opinion, in the absence of a specific real threat, I feel the Statue would be far safer at its present site for the following reasons:

1. The likely hood of the statue been detected by people who would be offended by it, in my opinion is considerably greater at the NMA than at its present location.
2. The statue is obviously in the main for the benefit of the RLI family. However I do understand that the general public do have access to the area where the statue is positioned on the estate during certain times of the year. As a suggestion, if the threat of desecration is real, Lord Salisbury could be consulted with a view of moving the statue to a more private place on the Estate, where the general public are not permitted, consequently out of the public eye. A system then to be devised where by ONLY RLI

members and family would be permitted to visit the Statue with prior authority. If permitted this move would also drastically reduce the exorbitant costs required to move the Statue to the NMA. If this is not possible then the Statue must remain in its present position.

3. I understand, for reasons for which I am not familiar , this could well result in restrictions been imposed with regards to members / numbers been permitted to visit the Statue at any one time and, the visiting periods during the year considerably reduced. This obviously will be very unfortunate but in the interests of the Statue it will just be a case of conforming and adjusting.

4. An additional very salient point is that the Colours are housed in the Salisbury Family Chapel which is in very close proximity to the Statue. Furthermore, the RLI Museum is a short distance up the road to Bedford. This means that all three sites can easily and conveniently be visited in a day, as I and my son experienced in June 2015. This would also be a considerable saving in terms of time and finance for overseas visitors and, I have no doubt for UK members as well.

This whole situation has come out of the blue and obviously appears to be an arbitrary decision made solely by the Executive Committee, which is frankly totally unacceptable. A fundamental decision relating to a matter as important as the security of the Trooper Statue should have initially been communicated to all Association members at the outset and the appropriate level of consultation sought.. The requirement for this level of communication reminds me of a very important issue in the history of the Regiment, in 1967 there was a proposal to remove the crown from all our Regimental badges and replace them with the bugle knot. This you will recall was because of the very sensitive and serious situation that existed at the time between Rhodesia and UK Governments. The entire Battalion was informed via meetings, Messes, Cpl Club and all the Sub – Units, every soldier was given the opportunity to consider and vote on the issue. I can recall the situation very clearly as I was very involved. This present important issue I feel should have been addressed similarly.

It will be a great pity to give up the present Statue site for the NMA site, in my opinion it will be a grave mistake. So I wish to place on record that I strongly object to the relocating of the Troopie Statue from its present site to the MNA site. While I appreciate and I am extremely grateful for the very hard work and efforts of the Committee , at times under very difficult circumstances. I would also like to state that in my opinion the whole unfortunate issue has not been managed effectively nor professionally and that any decision made should be immediately overturned or put on hold, until it has been appropriately risk assessed with the required level of consultation.

I hope you and Liz have been able to avoid the Covid sustained fire, take care.

Kind regards

Robin.

My Post, Regarding the NMA Policy on Management Memorials

With regards recently announced decision by the RLIRA ExCo to relocate the statue to the NMA, and irrespective of the claim of better security at the NMA, about which I remain unconvinced, I just read the NMA Memorial Management Policy document SOP44, and am deeply concerned by such.

This document, which can be found at the below link, includes the following statements:-

Memorials with individual names will not be approved.....

and further states.....The memorials will honour organisations and causes but not individuals either specifically or named on the memorial.

To my mind, this clearly indicates that for placement at the NMA the ExCo have to agree to the the Roll of Honour being first stripped of the Troopie plinth.

This seems to me to be a gross disservice to the memory of RL's fallen, to whom the Troopie was originally constructed to honour.

https://thenma.org.uk/docs/default-source/memorial-documents/memorial-application-and-alteration-policy-june-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=982c11c7_2

Surely a better solution to the Hatfield House issues can found?