



### EDITORIAL

There has been a gap in our events since April, but now there are two coming up in short succession. Firstly is the **Mess Guest Night** when our Principal Guest will be **Chief Constable Jo Shiner** of Sussex Police. This will take place on **Saturday 1st July** at the Hove Club, details of which are included with this Newsletter. Secondly there is the **Curry Lecture/ Lunch** which is scheduled for **Saturday 15 July** when the Guest lecturer will be **Mr Harry Ferguson, a retired spook whose topic is 'The true story of MI6'**.

Calling notices for both events are attached.



### OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of **Cdr Neville Dutton RD\*RNR**. He died on Saturday 20th May after a long illness. Neville was a member of our association for very many years going back to the time when we were known as the Sussex RNR and RNVR Officers' Association.

He was an active member of the group and had served, prior to illness, on the Executive Committee. Dates of the funeral arrangements will be known in due course and we will of course inform the membership.

### VISIT TO THE NAVAL HISTORICAL BRANCH

On Wednesday 19 April, 11 of our intrepid members visited the Naval Historical Branch (NHB) in Portsmouth harbour followed by a value for money lunch at the wardroom, HMS Nelson. The NHB provides historical perspectives on current issues for Naval Staff, the Ministry of Defence and Central Government. It hosts the Admiralty Library collection that has been built up over the last two hundred years and contains at least 160,000 volumes and is possibly the best collection of naval books in the country. The archive dates back to the founding of the Historical Section by Winston Churchill in 1914. The official repository for the Royal Navy's Corporate Memory (including Royal Marine and RFA papers), it also holds around 120,000 operational records.

The team were hosted by the Deputy Director and historian Kate Brett and also by Aedan, a historical analyst. A number of books and papers were laid out for inspection with documents of interest relating to the county of Sussex in general and the various ships named after Sussex in particular. Aedan provided a number of interesting anecdotes and the members were allowed to study the exhibits which included a masterful and colourful book of charts from the 1500s which had been drawn up to help plan the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

After a short break for tea, muffins and a browse through the contents of the open library the team were then invited to enter the vaults where historical documents were stored under en-



vironmentally controlled conditions. Amongst the various items that we were privileged to sight and handle were French Chart portfolios captured at the Battle of Trafalgar. One showing the South Coast of England around the approaches to Portsmouth which contained details of the defensive installations, but misspelt Portsdown Hill. A further vault contained more contemporary documents including reports of proceedings of ships in which some of us had served in the last century.

The branch was able to come up with details of the action in the Western Approaches in which Jean Wright's father was awarded a Mention in Dispatches whilst serving in HMS Duckworth. It was interesting to note that some of the most colourful and artistic charts from the Napoleonic era were acquired from the French. Kate explained that the Admiralty library collection was created by the goodwill of a handful of retired Admirals who saw the benefit of recording and passing on collective RN wisdom and was then formalised as a national asset by Sir Winston Churchill. Various gaps appeared due to documents being taken by the National records Office at Kew or loaned to various libraries; much worse was a decision in the 1950s to destroy the majority of WWII records to save on storage costs. Several of the members were, however, able to find later records relating to their own Service or that of family members. All would happily have lost themselves for several more hours browsing the vaults! Lunch was taken at the Wardroom, HMS Nelson.

Roger Martin and Ray Wright

## **ABANDON SHIP**

### The Real Story of the Sinkings in the Falkland War

Paul Brown, ISBN 978 1 47284644. Osprey Publishing (available WSCC Library Service)

I read this book with mixed feelings. Very well researched and, after legal conflict, drawing upon the Boards of Enquiry Reports, it is disturbing to have laid out for all to read what we knew but did not widely discuss; that the Navy was suffering from too long a period of peace and the budget constraints that prevented optimum ship and weapons systems design and performance. I deplore the naming of officers who would have been court martialled for negligence but for the Government's desire to keep the victory euphoria running into the General Election. That having been said, I recommend reading such an authoritative analysis. The book gets to the heart of the decision to sink the **Belgrano**; so much political debate would have been unnecessary if the actual sequence of events had been quickly available but that would have revealed GCHQ's capabilities in an era when they were not widely known. Finally, I doubt that one ennobled CO will be entirely pleased with the account of the loss of his ship.

Philip Sherwin

## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

DATE	TIME	EVENT	VENUE	SPEAKER	TOPIC
Sat 1st July	1830	Mess Dinner	Hove Club	Sussex Police Chief Constable Jo Shiner	
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> July	1100	Curry Lunch/ Lecture	Hove Club	Mr Harry Ferguson (retired spook)	True story of MI6
Thu 7 <sup>th</sup> September	1200	Visit	Shoreham Fort	Followed by lunch at the Sussex Yacht Club	
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup> October	1830	Trafalgar Night Dinner	Hove Club	RA James Parkin CBE	
Sat 25 <sup>th</sup> November	1100	Lecture/ Lunch	Hove Club	Bill Paterson	MET Police/FCO

Key dates:

28<sup>th</sup> August Summer Bank Holiday, 25<sup>th</sup> December Christmas 26<sup>th</sup> December Boxing Day.

### TAILPIECE

*Whilst on patrol in the Atlantic, an officer of the watch (OOW) asked a lookout what he would do if a man fell overboard. He replied that he would yell 'man overboard'. The OOW then asked what he would do if an officer fell overboard. The sailor looked perplexed and then said 'which officer, sir?'*

( Thanks to Pat Saunders)

Best wishes, Bob