

Sussex Branch OMRS Annual Report 2011

The Sussex Branch has 26 members, an increase of four on last year. Sadly Branch member Bert White died in September 2011, a founding member of the Sussex Branch and veteran of WWII. Bert served with 3 Para in North Africa and Sicily. He was captured in Italy, wounded while trying to escape and taken to Germany. He escaped once more and joined the partisans in Czechoslovakia until the war's end.

At the Branch AGM in December there was a change in Chairman and Secretary; Roy Mills stepped down as Chairman replaced by David Slade, and Meurig Jones stepped down as Secretary replaced by Jeff McKenna. Roy and Meurig have led the Sussex Branch for five years, they will continue to serve on the Branch Committee. We wish David and Jeff well in their new roles and thank them for volunteering their time and experience to the Branch.

The main activity of the Branch is the monthly meetings, with an average attendance of 18 this year's programme has provided much of interest. Our speakers have been really good value.

Talks from members covered the siege of Wepener, tunnelling VCs, a Czech pilot of the Battle of Britain, Sutlej and post-independence medals of India and Pakistan. Guest speakers included the author Kevin Patience with the true story of the African Queen – the expedition to Lake Tanganyika in 1916. Chris Hill – Benin 1897 and Paul Wood on the siege and relief of Tal 1919 (3rd Afghan War). The Member's Own meetings provided the usual wide ranging and interesting medals supported by excellent research.

Next year's programme is shaping up well with the usual mix of guest speakers and members. The quarterly newsletter, distributed by e-mail and at meetings, keeps everyone in touch.

In September eight members of the Branch attended a day at Firepower, the museum of the Royal Artillery. They were hosted by Curator Mark Smith and Librarian Paul Evans who showed off the museum's extensive medal collection and research facility. In November the Branch (with a fellow enthusiast from the Salisbury Branch) visited the Naval Museum at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. We started with a tour of the store rooms to see a fantastic array of items not on public display or only recently received. This was followed by a medal handling session involving five VCs, the unique DSC and three bars and a host of fabulous medals, right down to a QSA to Domestic M'zee, HMS Widgeon. Many thanks to Curator Richard Noyce and his staff.

The Branch meets at The Castle Inn, Bramber on the last Tuesday of the month starting at 7:30pm with refreshment from the bar. Everybody is most welcome, if you find yourself in deepest in Sussex and feel the need to chat about medals then don't hesitate to contact the Branch Secretary.

Meurig Jones
Branch Secretary
Sussex Branch
OMRS