

ROCK

TALK

18

**JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS OF
GIBRALTAR HERITAGE SOCIETY 2025**



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Editorial

In this year’s *Rock Talk*, our Chairman reports on some new developments in the Society; and we include the usual overview of annual events (which have also been covered in our regular Newsletters to members).

It is a particular pleasure once again to offer you some personal memories of Friends’ life in Gibraltar, alongside longer pieces of research, which explore individual experiences of military life on the Rock in different centuries.

In 2026 we will be celebrating 40 years since the founding of our Society, and I hope that this occasion may inspire early members to send in their thoughts from those days. We will be contacting you in due course to ask for contributions! With many thanks to all authors, current and future, and best wishes.
Jennifer Scherr (May 2025)

In Memoriam

The Society has been informed during 2024 of the death of the following Friends, which we note with great regret:

- Mr Ian T. Bristow
- Miss Mary Hirst
- Mr Stephen Peliza
- Mr Mike Powell
- Mrs Valentine Ridgers
- Mrs Celia Sheehan
- Mr Maldwyn Williams

Chairman's Foreword

Sir Adrian Johns

Welcome to *Rock Talk 18*!

As I write to introduce this edition, Easter is once again over and 2025 is well under way. Last year was another successful period for the Friends with an exciting visit to the Rock, an excellent seminar in October and a successful Christmas drinks get together to top off the year in December. We also sowed the seeds of a relationship with Ballymena in Northern Ireland which we hope will continue to develop. You can see all this and more in the following pages.



But behind the public events, lies a great deal of hard work and effort aimed at moving our Society towards a more modern and attractive proposition for potential joiners. We want to increase our profile, engagement and, ultimately, our membership numbers. We have focused our plan on our charitable objectives through three key areas: education; heritage; and public engagement. In support of this plan, we have committed significant funds to the development of

a new on-line presence. The system under development is not just a new website, but an integrated combination of website, apps, marketing, membership management and event management, designed to bring the Society fully up to speed with the latest automated techniques and reduce the current level of human effort and time.

The use of such on-line platforms and tools will enable us to reach out much further and engage with a much larger audience than before. We are also planning to tap into the powerful resource of volunteering, both physical and virtual (on-line). All of this is a departure from the way we have operated in the past. One of the key aims is to augment our membership and hence our revenue, which in turn means more disposable income for charitable projects.

We hope that 2025 will see much of this come to successful fruition. It won't happen though without the continuing support of you, our membership, and the commitment and endeavour of your Board. Thank you all.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Rock Talk*. It is, as ever, full of interesting articles. I particularly commend the piece on Retallack Hooper's diaries though, as a Cornishman myself, I may be slightly biased! My thanks go to the Editor and all those who have contributed to yet another first-rate annual journal for the Friends.

Best wishes for 2025 and I hope to see you at one of our events this year.

A glimpse behind the scenery - a personal view of our traditional major events programme

Peter Hucker

Our key annual events, the June visit to Gibraltar and our Annual Seminar and General Meeting, are ones I have been closely involved in over the past few years. They are, in my opinion, the backbone of the Society's community, at least in terms of our ability to meet and preserve the relationships that are so important to us in our efforts to maintain an understanding of Gibraltar, its history and evolution into the dynamic Overseas Territory we see today.

We'll look at what that means in practice, from my perspective at least, a little later; but I wanted, first, to explain how I have approached what can be a challenging task, especially in the case of the visit. There is always a balance to be struck between what I think we should do and what you, the members, have in mind. I hope the join is invisible but I wanted to reassure you it is not entirely arbitrary.

Our new three-year Strategic Plan provides a clear direction for more or less everything we do these days. It defines our priorities and sets out the objectives and targets we, the Board, have set ourselves in order to measure success but, more importantly, to ensure our work is both relevant and fulfils the requirements of our Articles of Association and Charitable Objectives. As a window on Gibraltar for those of us who live elsewhere this is crucial. For those members who live on the Rock, it is important that we are seen as a supportive but non-interfering influence. Our work through our partners, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust (GHT), and other agencies, including those that are part of His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, inevitably underpin our status on the Rock: we are a UK based, external, Charity after all.

So, what does that mean when it comes to arranging visits and seminars? Well, the first thing is to define themes on which to build an agenda. The Plan provides the basic direction, it focuses on physical and cultural heritage, education and something called "visitor engagement" which aims to make the most of the opportunity to spread the word about Gibraltar to anyone going there or even thinking of visiting.

Built heritage is easy to define, we see it all around when we visit. We rely on the GHT to help us in that area: the fabric of Gibraltar and the way in which it is developed is not for us, an external charity, to get involved in. Education is less self-evident but includes support to schools and the University in Gibraltar but also extends to informing people elsewhere about Gibraltar and its history, culture and ecological importance at the gateway to the Mediterranean.

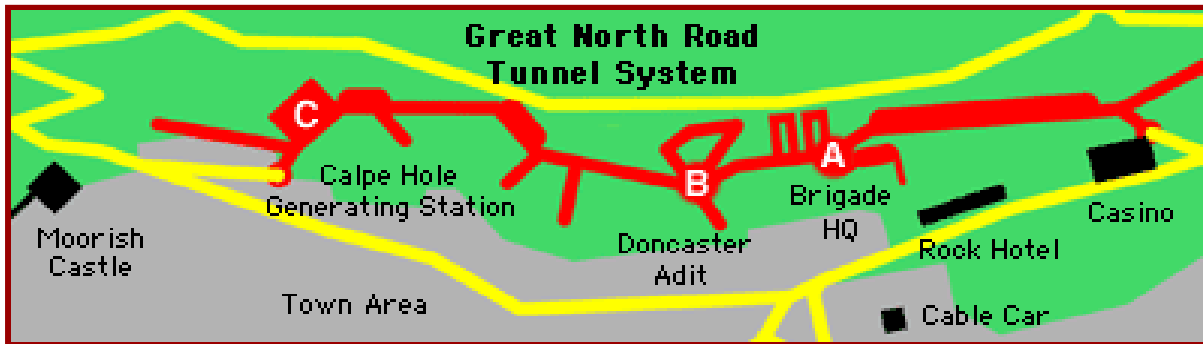
But that can be a bit overwhelming: so a good measure of social activity and a bit of fun is quite critical!

JUNE VISIT 2024

The annual visit has taken a similar form for a number of years. I have not tried to change that approach but to make sure we are looking at what is important to us as a Society while keeping things fairly light-hearted. It means repeating some of the most popular activities but trying to vary the emphasis to maintain and stimulate different interests.

For instance, it is traditional for us to visit the MOD, which remains a key part of life in Gibraltar and the reason many of us were introduced to the Rock in the first place. This year we went to Devil's Tower Camp (see p.22), home of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment (RG), on the Monday afternoon, having had a friendly welcome gathering at the GHT office at Main Guard. The Chief of Staff, Col. Ben Campbell-

Colquhoun, updated us on developments in the Command before a group of about 20 Friends went to explore the Great North Road: the main tunnel inside the Rock itself.



The Gibraltar Officers' Mess then laid on a barbecue for us which gave us the opportunity we needed to relax and catch up with each other and some key Command staff.

We were able to shift the emphasis completely on the Tuesday morning by taking a tour of the 18th century access points to the city with Richard Garcia. Very much in line with our built heritage theme. By lunchtime we were back in the vicinity of the Naval Base for a tour of the dockyard, now a commercial concern, but one which retains a significant interest in the history of the site and in its relationship with the MOD. I think this bridges the gap between the historical significance of the dockyard's past, the preservation of that memory and the incentive to build new heritage for the future. We rounded off the day with a reception at the Rock Hotel where our poolside gathering had become another tradition, albeit one that is becoming more difficult to sustain.

By Wednesday we were turning our attention to the Education imperative in our Plan. As members will know, we give each of the High Schools, Bayside and Westside, an annual History prize. The prize amounts to £300 for each school and they run a history project each year which we are always delighted to recognise by presenting to the award winners during our visit. The afternoon saw a departure from tradition when we visited the new GBC building in Rosia Road. While the building is new (though within South Jumper's Bastion), GBC celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 2024 and we were treated to a reflective talk and presentation by CEO James Neish and his team: truly a beacon for Gibraltar's cultural heritage. The evening involved an excellent meal at the Queen's Eatery in Casemates which was complemented by a private screening, in the Eatery's own Cinema, of Steven Cumming's documentary "Times of Closure" about the period when the border was closed. Not only was the historical picture painted by the film of immediate interest, but The Eatery itself is a winner of a Heritage Award for its preservation of the building and of the memory of the old Queen's Cinema, many of the fixtures of which are in the restaurant.

The Educational focus of the visit came into even sharper relief on Thursday morning when we visited the Loreto Convent School, which is the subject of a substantial project to preserve and maintain its buildings. Later, moving on to Europa Point, we took lunch at the Balcony Bistro, overlooking the Strait. This meant that we were all relaxed and ready for my favourite part of the week: our visit to the University and presentations by some past winners of our annual Bursary. The Bursary scheme provides up to £1,000 to support a PhD student researching a heritage related subject. This year we heard from our very first winner, Rebecca Gabay, who has now completed her doctoral studies with her thesis exploring expressions of local culture. Keith Madeira updated us on his work focusing on using Geographic Information Systems, particularly in the context of Gibraltar's defences. We also

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heard from the students who had successfully applied for an award from our annual MSc support programme which enables the University to give up to £500 to support their studies. While not part of the formal itinerary, the King's Birthday Parade that evening provided another traditional diversion for some of us.

The week had passed so quickly but, before we gathered at the Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club for a Farewell Lunch on Friday, we were treated to a visit to see progress with the development of the Northern Defences: its transformation from "the Jungle" to a vibrant public leisure facility. We were led by the Government's Projects Director, Carl Viagas, whose passion for the project will become clear as you read this edition of *Rock Talk*.

AGM & Seminar

Peter Hucker

The AGM & Seminar took place at a new venue this year, the Hilton Garden Inn at Abingdon. Accommodation was arranged by Sarah Fletcher Events, a new partner in our endeavours. Sarah had found us an excellent venue which we might well visit again. With a bit of help from me, Tricia Johnson, our Secretary, steered the organisation of the programme for the weekend. It started with arrivals on Friday evening when we were able to get together, informally, for dinner in the restaurant. The formal programme then got into full swing on Saturday afternoon.

The AGM is always a fairly brief affair. As you may know, our Society actually has two, quite separate identities: first as a Company Limited by Guarantee and then as a Registered Charity. You may not realise that the Company is made up of just its Directors: essentially Members of the Board who are also, then, Trustees of the Charity. The AGM therefore fulfils two roles: a legal requirement for the Company but also, and more importantly perhaps, an annual report to the members of the Society on the year and presentation of some financial information (please see the separate extract from the Annual Accounts on page 35).

The Seminar is a much more diverse event. The strength of our partnership with the GHT always comes out clearly at the first session every year. Claire Montado, the Chief Executive, and Rebecca Fa, who was accompanying her for the first time, gave us an in-depth report on the work of the Trust and its plans for the coming year.

We were lucky enough to have Richard Garcia with us for our second session. Richard is always great to listen to and his talk revealed the importance of John Mackintosh to Gibraltar and why the Piazza is named after him. Something most of us take for granted but which is actually a much more interesting historical story than you might expect.

John Mackintosh

Victoria and John Mackintosh



Carl Viagas completed the afternoon, in his usual passionate style, with the talk about *Embracing our Heritage* which you can read about on page 11.



I hope this article has been interesting, the task of organising events for the Friends is incredibly rewarding but it can also be hard work and I'm grateful to all those who have participated and supported the events over the last year, and look forward to doing it again, with a few tweaks, next year!

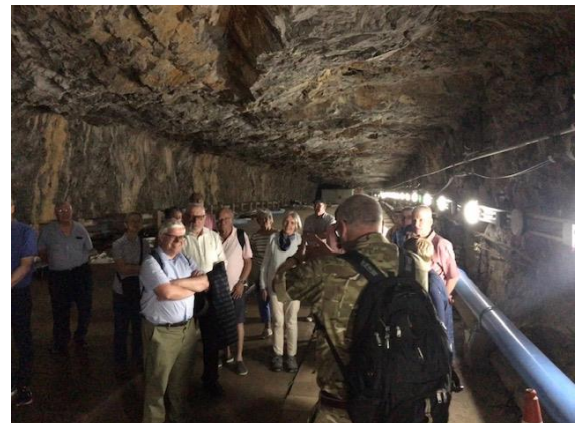
Friends visit June 2024 - by a regular visitor

Tori Robinson

There were so many highlights from our 2024 Visit that it is not easy to pick one or two in particular. We had a wonderful programme of exciting events, thank you to the team who made this possible, and it's not possible to do every activity unless you never sleep. The following are a couple of things I did this time which stick in my mind.



Was there anyone aboard our bus who wasn't amazed by the driver's skill dropping us close to the entrance for our Foss Way Tunnel tour? Even more remarkable was our pick-up point. We walked down past the beautifully restored Calpe Married Quarters from 1904 and joined our bus below the Moorish Castle. The driver then negotiated roadworks and going-home-time traffic in the narrow lanes of the old Spanish part of town before depositing us at the Gibraltar Mess in time for our barbecue supper.



Two guides from the Gibraltar Regiment took us through the tunnels. Even though some of us have been inside the Rock on previous occasions we visited new places and heard new accounts of what went on inside there during dangerous times. The tunnels have a unique atmosphere and a role to play, past, present and future. The sight of Peter patiently waiting outside the metal grid gate in the sunshine while we disappeared into a tiny passageway through to one of the WW2 hospitals gives an insight into what makes these tours so good – good organisation and planning, relaxed timings and great company.

I didn't expect to visit a plant nursery and florist in Gibraltar but you can guarantee something unexpected from a walking tour with Richard Garcia. We gathered in Casemates and within 500 meters and 500 years we covered some pivotal historic moments in Gibraltar's history.



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We won't forget watching Richard close the historic wooden door, massive and creaking, to Landport. Richard walked us along unexpected pathways and highlighted spots we could easily miss as we strolled along. Richard's fascinating tour finished on the Devil's Tongue beside the memorials. After that we made our own way round the corner to the flower shop. The proprietors kindly allowed us to walk through to where plants and flowers are displayed on the old fortifications. This must be a unique shop layout with views through the defensive gun embrasures to the high-rise apartments beside Ocean Village. Can you see plants displayed like this anywhere else in the world?



Membership Secretary's Jottings

Richard Lord

In a similar way to last year our numbers to date have fallen slightly again. This time by about 6, to 454. I can report that we have 15 new Members this year and I do hope they are enjoying reading their first *Rock Talk*! Thank you to those who have recruited family and friends.

A thank you also to those who have advised to us that family members have deceased, and they are recorded on page 1. We send our sincere condolences to their families. We think it is a very important area for our records to be kept up to date.

The ongoing decline in membership, being felt by many charities, is being fully addressed by engaging more fully with those with an interest in Gibraltar through a much-improved website, soon to be launched, with a members' area and an easier means of joining the Friends. A Member's suggestion of a "Donate" button is being included.

Regarding communications, please let me know if your address changes – this is required for Gift Aid and saves having to resend correspondence from us to a new address. If you receive correspondence by post, please let me know if you have an e-mail address. We still have 30 members not on e-mail and this results in printing and postage costs, some of which could be avoided. We do recognise however that for some members post is their only means of communication.

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We offer the following:

- An excellent tie for only £23 inc p&p.
- For those with an appropriate award, a supported application for Membership of the Gibraltar OBE Association.
- Should you be visiting the Rock then a reduced access cost to the Upper Rock can be arranged. I will need to inform the GHT that you would like a card and it can be collected from their office. It is always well worth a visit – the shop is excellent.
- and, of course, interesting Newsletters and your Magazine – *Rock Talk!* Enjoy this copy.

Updated Information: Please don't forget to contact me if your Gift Aid tax situation has changed and you no longer qualify. (Or indeed if you now do). The next claim will be in April 2025 for the period Apr 2024 to Mar 2025. Our claim normally results in a contribution of a most useful £1,200 to the Society.

Could I ask if you will let me know if you hear of members who have not heard from us recently. Members change their e-mail and home addresses, and we are not always informed. Sometimes e-mails and letters are returned to us, but not in all cases.

Contacts: Should you wish, I will forward your e-mail to those members you may have lost contact with, and we are always keen to help members who want to contact authorities related to studies/research they are undertaking.

Feedback: We are always grateful for feedback on any issue affecting our Society. If you send any comments to me as your Membership Secretary, or other Board Members, then I can assure you that the Board will consider it. This is your Society.

Contact Details: Commodore Richard Lord CBE RN (Rtd), Church Cottage, 4 Kingsbury Square WILTON SP2 0BA richard.lord2@btinternet.com 01722 743173 (Please leave a message if there is no reply)

Charitable Projects – Gibraltar National Archives

The Board is pleased to report that it recently approved the purchase of a Kaiser R1 Copy Stand System for use by the Archives in Gibraltar. This follows a request by Gerard Wood, the Archivist, who thought that this versatile high-quality stand would be particularly useful to visitors who wished to take superior pictures of historical documents (as well as to themselves working in the Archives, of course).



It is utilized by expert users in agencies, universities, industries, and institutions such as The National Archives of the United Kingdom (Kew).

Gerry said that “He is delighted that the Gibraltar National Archives will be able to have on offer such facilities to the general public. Its introduction will greatly enhance their user experience and accessibility and provide a useful support tool for projects of a data-gathering nature.”

The stand is en route from Germany and is expected shortly. Friends will be welcome to see the stand and try it out in the June visit. It is planned to add a plaque acknowledging the support of FOGHS.

Note: User's camera in the picture!

Charitable Projects – History of Gibraltar Award for Schools in Ballymena

Julian Lyne-Pirkis

In June 1940 over 13,000 civilians were evacuated from Gibraltar to French Morocco, but the new Vichy Government were not happy for them to remain, so they were sent back to Gibraltar. As a result, London agreed to accept 13,000 evacuees with smaller numbers being sent to Jamaica and Madeira. However, as London was under constant air attack, 5,000 of the London evacuees were eventually sent to Northern Ireland where they were accommodated in 16 specially built camps in the Ballymena and Broughshane areas of County Antrim.

As a result, Ballymena is now twinned with Gibraltar and as part of our outreach work the Friends are sponsoring an annual award for the primary and secondary schools in the Ballymena area. Colonel Julian Lyne-Pirkis and Commodore Richard Lord visited Ballymena in September 2024 to launch the award on behalf of the Friends. It took place at the Braid which is the administrative heart of the town and of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. The photograph was taken after the launch with the High Sheriff of Antrim and the Mayor of Ballymena in the centre holding the Flag of Gibraltar.



The launch also included visits to two local primary schools, St. Colmcille's Primary and Broughshane Primary, to talk to pupils about the Gibraltar Second World War evacuees and the Award. After this, there was a tour of the remains of Dunaird evacuee camp outside Broughshane and a visit to the grave of former Gibraltar Governor, Field Marshal Sir George White VC. For the launch, Julian Lyne-Pirkis and Richard Lord were welcomed to the Mayor's Parlour by Alderman Beth Adger MBE for an exchange of gifts followed by the launch ceremony itself which was well attended by school representatives, local historians and the High Sheriff. The theme for this year is "Evacuation and Evacuees" with the focus on Gibraltar. Prizes, which will include cash and certificates, will be awarded at the end of the school year. Details of the prize giving will be published in a future newsletter.

Three schools have confirmed their participation: the two primary schools visited during the launch and Ballymena Academy. It is hoped that some extracts from the prize-winning entries will be published in a future edition of *Rock Talk*.

Embracing our Heritage – A study in the adaptation and reuse of our historical architecture

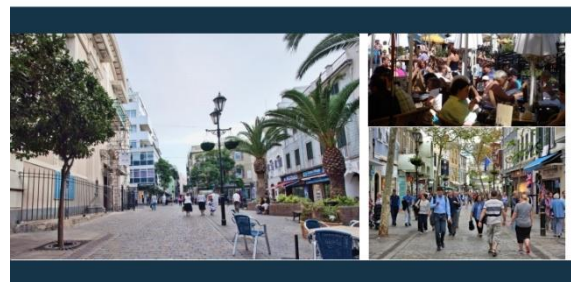
Carl Viagas

Introduction: This presentation, at the 2025 Seminar, by Mr Carl Viagas, Projects Director for the Government of Gibraltar, focused on the transition of Gibraltar from a military base to the vibrant multicultural city it is today. He showed how historic properties, perceived as liabilities in the past, are being adapted to meet many of the requirements imposed by today’s society. The presentation focused on several past projects which he has delivered; followed by two current case studies: The Mount and The Northern Defences, which were individually addressed with an outline of the challenges encountered and those which lay ahead.

Carl highlighted how Gibraltar, a British overseas territory, with a population of over thirty thousand and a booming economy, faces tremendous challenges when balancing the needs of a thriving population with those in safeguarding its heritage. Touching upon land as a scarce resource and a rich history, Carl explained how as a project manager he has had to deliver for clients who may not always have the same priorities to those of us who have a love for our heritage. His presentation provided a small window of such challenges and how in every case they were overcome.

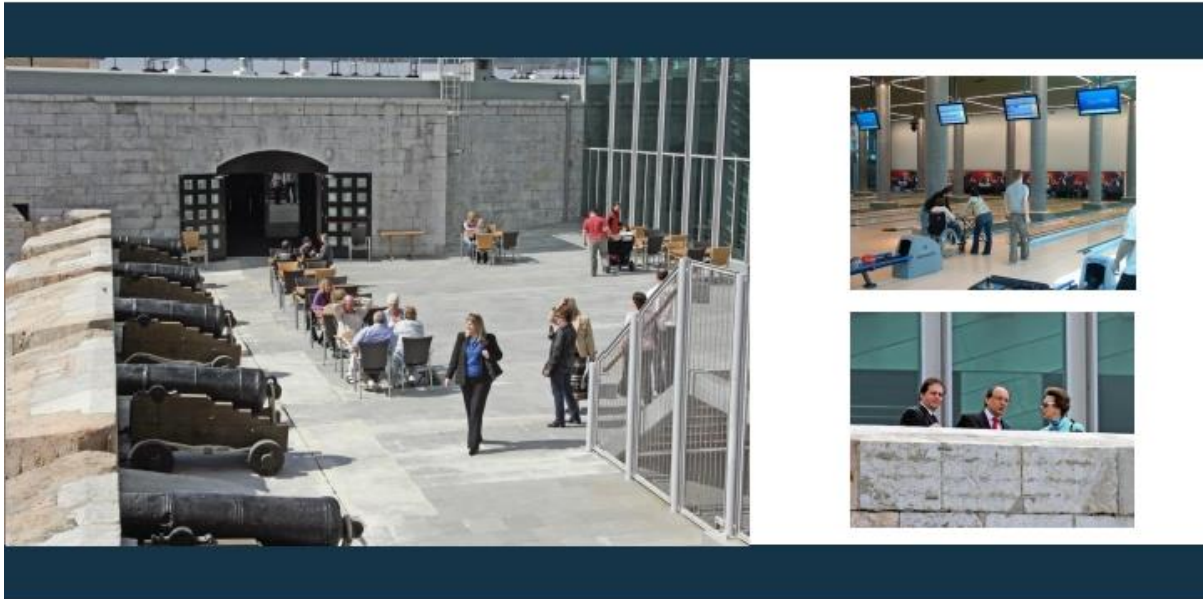
Projects: A list of projects was presented divided into several categories:

Urban Renewal Schemes such as Main Street beautification, which was Carl’s first project after graduating from Plymouth University. He described how the scheme was an introduction in working in Gibraltar. Even though there were technical challenges in this project, the greatest difficulty was changing the mindset of a community who are in love with their cars and fear the unknown or the new. The concept of pedestrianising the main vehicular artery was not only alien but frowned upon and the project was described as *“risking economic ruin”*. A project which on completion became not the ruin, but an economic driver, which raised the profile of Gibraltar’s main shopping district.



He described how such a success spread to other areas such as Casemates Square (previously used as a car park), and Castle Street in the Upper Town.

Bastions, Counterguards and City Walls have also been one of Carl’s passions and he described how projects such as King’s Bastion, Chatham Counterguard, South Bastion and Wellington Front allowed him to spread his wings and show off the rich heritage that Gibraltar had concealed behind or underneath countless structures. He also pointed out how he dealt with these projects by not attempting to falsify history by introducing pseudo “historic” features. Instead, contemporary structures have provided a new use and been designed to contrast with the original fabric. The juxtaposition of glass and steel against limestone and iron, provides a setting which adds value to the monument.



Other projects had other challenges, such as managing the reuse of **Royal Naval Assets** including the ex-Royal Naval Hospital, BFBS offices and military barracks - structures which had been condemned and then converted into a home for patients suffering from dementia, a hospice and residential homes respectively. Carl outlined how being able to not only save such assets but also adapt them to provide for a society's needs is a role he finds truly rewarding. Carl presented the refurbished of the Gibraltar Law Courts and Civil Hospital and some of the **Key Civic buildings** he has developed and is currently working on such as Parliament House.

Carl's portfolio included the **Upper Nature Reserve**. Two major attractions opened here in 2016: Windsor Bridge, a suspension bridge, which has become an icon in Gibraltar's landscape and celebrates Anglian Way, which used to be inaccessible; and the Skywalk. This remarkable glass balcony which cantilevers over the ridge of the Rock, was inaugurated by the famous Marl Hamill. A Skywalker to open the Gibraltar Skywalk Marketing genius.

Case Studies: Carl then turned to two projects which he is currently working on and will be completed in the coming years: **The Mount** and **The Northern Defences**.

The Mount: This area rightfully deserved a special mention due not only those who designed and lived there but also to its social and environmental significance. The Mount was the home designed by Sir William Green, who not only designed the defences of Gibraltar prior to the Great Siege, but is also referred to as the father of the Royal Engineers, a military unit famous for its accomplishments. The area also enjoys significant gardens, which were captured in some of the oldest colour photographs we have, taken by Sarah Ackland in 1903. Carl highlighted how, with the help of very generous donations, the Government is being able to slowly transform this area, strategically focusing in restoring key buildings as part of a master plan. Amongst these, a porter's lodge is being converted into a registry office for weddings, and an events hall will serve the needs of a growing population.

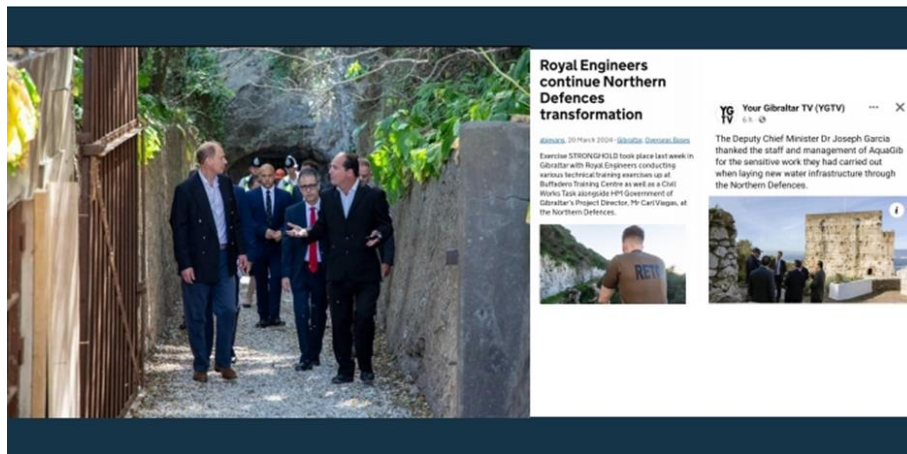
The Northern Defences: This is the project which has kept him busiest during the last few years. It is here where one can see his passion coming through as he described the one thousand years of hidden military heritage, which is not only being uncovered but also embraced. He described The Northern Defences as a series of military defensive lines which go back to Arabic origins and have seen later Spanish and British adaptations through the centuries. Defences which Carl described as truly



remarkable and unique at a global level: the natural landscape has been adapted and augmented with medieval walls, Georgian and Victorian defences, only to be crowned by later WWI and WWII emplacements. He talked of how the area was run down and neglected when he was a child and how he always dreamed of bringing such an amazing network of tunnels, terraces and steps

back for a community to enjoy. The area was commonly referred to as “The Jungle” and few parents would allow their children to venture there in those days.

Carl presented the amount of clearing out work which has been accomplished during the last few years, all by hand, and how the area has received the attention of not just the local population but also the UK Minister for Europe, His Excellency the Governor and His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex (as he was then), who visited the area in June 2022. The project is now set to receive private investment and expected to open officially in 2026.



Concluding Statements:

Carl concluded his presentation by reminding those present of the challenges and lessons learnt, what the future holds, but he very aptly brought the message home to Oxfordshire, by making reference to J.R.R. Tolkien. The greatest challenge we all face is that which appears as the answer to the fifth riddle in *The Hobbit*: TIME. This is the one thing we all face, that is our greatest challenge, the great devourer, we cannot beat it, it will turn our heritage assets into dust. What we have to decide is not only how we manage our assets, but how we manage our own time. What are the statements that we are going to make, especially those of us with influence, the decisions which we will face, and the actions that many of us are going to take. Hopefully our children and future generations will look back to us with pride and not disappointment.

FOGHS Christmas Party, December 2024

Tricia Johnson

Having issued a warning for the past three years that the Christmas Party might have to be held at a new venue due to the rising costs at the RAF Club, negotiations with the Events Manager resulted in FOGHS being able to use the RAF Club for our Christmas Party once again. It is certainly a favourite venue.

From the moment that our guests arrived there was a convivial atmosphere. Conversation and laughter flowed, and the event was enjoyed by all who attended, including some new members. However, numbers were slightly lower than in previous years, due partly to the nasty seasonal bugs that were circulating.

Sadly, our Chair Sir Adrian Johns was unable to attend, therefore Albert Poggio, our Vice Chair deputised and thanked everyone for attending, gave apologies from Sir Adrian Johns, welcomed new members and wished everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Returning to the issue of finding a new venue, we have already approached similar clubs in London, however, unsurprisingly, the costs are very similar and often higher. Therefore, should you be able to send details of appropriate venues, or even to suggest a less busy time of year we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Gibraltar Heritage Trust: Reflecting on the Past, Preparing for the Future

Claire Montado, CEO

The Gibraltar Heritage Trust (GHT) has been through a period of introspection and analysis over the last 12 months. Following on from the Government of Gibraltar's (HMGoG's) publication of its Heritage Vision and the increasing awareness of the criteria and expectations around heritage management and preservation of the same it was felt that it is critical for the GHT to review its processes and strategic direction for the future. As a long-standing guardian of Gibraltar's cultural heritage legacy, the GHT has taken pause to assess its achievements, confront its shortcomings, and chart a clear course for the future. This past year has seen us embark on a journey with the aim of renewed purpose.

Founding Principles and Evolution

The Trust was formally established by the Heritage Trust Act of 1989, though its roots stretch back to 1987. It arose from a groundswell of public concern about the widespread demolition of historic buildings and the lack of proper stewardship for Gibraltar's built heritage. With its charitable object enshrined in law, the preservation of Gibraltar's heritage, the Trust was born as a watchdog and advocate.

Initially steered by a large, high-profile board of 30 trustees, the Trust's structure was streamlined to 12 members under the 1989 Act. Today, the 2018 Heritage and Antiquities Act provides for a board composed of seven elected and five government-appointed trustees, maintaining a balance between public and official input.

Despite limited resources (it had no government subvention in its early days and a single part time member of staff) the Trust began co-managing the Gibraltar Museum and undertook landmark projects such as the restoration of City Hall in 1993 and the management of Parson's Lodge (1990–2006). Over time, it has matured into a statutory consultee and an independent voice on both the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) and the Heritage and Antiquities Advisory Council (HAAC).

The Gibraltar Heritage Trust was founded in response to mounting concern over the loss of historic buildings in the 1980s.



Structure and Outreach

The current Trust team comprises of five members of staff who support the Chief Executive in the daily running of operations. This core team is bolstered by a board of dedicated volunteer trustees and a pool of over 20 active volunteers. The GHT's membership base remains strong at around 1,400 a reflection of its broad support across the community.

Public engagement has been central to the Trust's mission. This year's highlights included a wide range of community-focused events and publications designed to encourage interest in and enjoyment of Gibraltar's heritage.

Key projects and products included:

- **Publications and Products:** The Trust continued to diversify its heritage-themed offerings, such as the *Gibraltar Gasworks* jigsaw puzzle, a heritage themed *Gin Set* in collaboration with local business, and books including *Beyond the Ramparts and Women of Gibraltar: Forgotten Narratives*.
- **Events and Seminars:** The 30th edition of the *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* was celebrated with a public seminar. Book signings and school visits reinforced the Trust's educational mission, while the Annual Painting Competition, now in its 35th year, focused on Sacred Heart Church.
- **Tours and Walks:** Guided tours remain a key outreach tool. Highlights this year included visits to the Upper Rock's Position Finding Cells, the SOE Transmitter Room in the Middle Galleries, and the GBC's 60 Years Exhibition. A new series of weekly walking tours, including *Main Street Tours* with the Llanito History Doctor and *A Rocky Labyrinth*, were well received.
- **Heritage Awards 2024:** The annual awards programme, running since 1993, continues to recognise individuals and organisations contributing to the preservation of Gibraltar's heritage.
- **Community Engagement:** As traditional, the Trust took part in the Convent Christmas Fair, Clean-Up the World Day (focusing on the West Place of Arms), and hosted school visits and volunteer days. Its social media initiatives, such as "Photo Friday" and "LI(Y)anito Word of the Day," keep heritage in everyday conversations.

The Trust also provided financial and advisory support to projects led by others, including supporting the Fortress of Gibraltar Group, the restoration work at Lord Airey's Battery, and the ongoing work at Witham's Cemetery.

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GHT's walking tours uncover the stories behind Gibraltar's military and civilian past. Featured is a visit to the SOE in the Middle Galleries.



On site at the 35th Annual Painting Competition which focused on Sacred Heart Church.

Partnerships and Support

The Trust enjoys strong working relationships with several bodies, including:

- The **Ministry for Heritage** and the **Town Planning Department**, with whom it consults on proposed developments.
- Environmental groups such as **Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Group (GONHS)** and the **Environmental Safety Group (ESG)**.
- Specialist organisations like the **Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Society (FOGHS)** and the **Fortress of Gibraltar Group (FoGG)**, which support research and conservation projects through expertise and funding.

These partnerships have helped the Trust deliver achievements, such as the establishment of a GoG Archaeologist post within Government and the creation of the Ministry for Heritage — both milestones in formalising the Government's heritage responsibilities.

School visits are in demand from the Trust. Visit to Nun's Well, an underground cistern dating from the medieval period.



Facing the Future

Looking ahead, the Trust is grappling with a number of strategic challenges:

- **Scalability and Growth:** How can the Trust grow in line with its increasing responsibilities while maintaining financial and organisational stability?
- **Measuring Impact:** The Trust aims to evaluate its work more rigorously, ensuring outcomes align with its mission and the expectations of the public.
- **Sustainability:** While an index-linked annual government grant covers part of its expenses, securing diversified and reliable funding sources remains crucial.
- **Skills and Resources:** Strengthening its professional and volunteer base to respond to new heritage demands is a top priority.

These questions are timely. The Government has recently made several announcements that will shape the conservation landscape, including future plans for the Northern Defences, the Moorish Castle, the WWII Tunnels, The Mount, and the Upper Rock's management. These developments will redefine heritage site responsibilities and opportunities in the years ahead. In response, the Trust is developing a new roadmap to secure its base and prepare for the future. This involves embracing its dual identity as both an advocate and a facilitator, not just protecting Gibraltar's heritage, but ensuring that it is accessible, understood, and valued by all.



Volunteer group at thank you morning at the Trust.



Lt-Col William Booth, RE, "Gibraltar; view of the rock from the W...", 1782, © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\) licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

British Military Engineer William Booth and the Great Siege of Gibraltar

Bonnie Huskins

I am writing a book on British military engineer William Booth (1748-1826) for Boydell Press. I first encountered William through two personal journals he kept while posted in Halifax and Shelburne, Nova Scotia (1785-1789).¹ Shortly thereafter I discovered another journal documenting his time in Jersey (1799-1800),² as well as a typescript professional diary written in 1781 when Booth was in Gibraltar and housed in the Gibraltar National Museum.³ An assortment of textual and visual records have also been located in a variety of repositories, including the British Museum, the UK Hydrographic Office, the National Archives, the Royal Engineers Museum, the Kent History and Library Centre, the Bristol Art Gallery, Library and Archives Canada, and the Gibraltar National Archives. The prospect of a book on Booth took form in 2018 when, out of the blue, a stranger named Bill Barker from England contacted me with the astonishing story that his family had been the stewards of several more personal journals dating from 1789 (when William returned to London from Nova Scotia), until his death in Bristol in 1826. As such, they cover William's intervening postings in the naval dockyards in Chatham, Sheerness, and Plymouth; his personal networks and experiences; as well as his life in retirement as a Royal Invalid Engineer.

Booth's first posting as a young officer was to Gibraltar from 1774-1782, which overlapped with the Great Siege (1779-1783). In many ways it was a life altering experience, and in his later journals he frequently reflected on his experiences and how they adversely affected his career.

¹ The original Shelburne journal is held by the Esther Clark Wright Archives at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. There is also a transcribed version: Eleanor Robertson Smith ed., *Remarks and rough memorandums : Captain William Booth, Corps of Royal Engineers, Shelburne, Nova Scotia, 1787, 1789* (Shelburne: Shelburne County Archives & Genealogical Society, 2008). The "Journal on a Tour, with Genl. Campbell in July & August 1785" about Booth's time in Halifax is housed at the Nova Scotia Archives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

² The Jersey journal is housed in the Lord Coutanche Library in Ste. Helier, Jersey.

³ "Gibraltar Journal, Lt Wm Booth Engineers ,1781," Gibraltar National Museum Reference 107/1984.

Booth's early life in London remains elusive. We know that his father died before he was born,⁴ and that John Ligonier, 1st Earl Ligonier, became William's patron and accompanied him as a 12-year old cadet to the Drawing Room of the Tower of London in 1760.⁵ During this formative time, Booth attained a reputation as a superb draughtsman, and was frequently used by Earl Ligonier, General Charles Rainsford, and others to draw and copy plans for various purposes, some of which were allegedly placed before the King George III for his approbation.⁶



Lt-Col William Booth, RE, "Coast of Barbary from Europa Point Gibraltar," 1780, © **The Trustees of the British Museum**. Shared under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\) licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

These talents helped Booth to attain his first commission in 1771 in the Corps of Engineers and he was posted to Gibraltar where he worked as Quarter Master until he was promoted by General George Augustus Elliott as Director of the Mines. Lieutenant James Holloway, a lifelong friend of Booth's who was also posted to Gibraltar,⁷ recorded in his journal that on 5 December 1781, "Lt Booth of the Corps of Engineers is to have the Inspection as Director, under the Chief Engineer, of all the Mines and all Persons employed therein, Taking his orders from & reporting to the Chief Engineer....It has given Universal Satisfaction, particularly to the Corps, as Mr. Booth is much Esteemed by Every Body." Booth

⁴ Mention of father's death in William Booth's Journal, 29 December 1799; burial date of Booth's father, also named William Booth, 30 December 1747, St George, Hanover Square, London, Westminster, England, <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/61865/records/957657>

⁵ John Philippart, *The royal military calendar, containing the series of General Officer, Lieutenant-General, and Major General, in the British Army From the Date of their First Commission and Services of Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels; with Appendices, Containing Accounts of the Operations of the Army Under Lieutenant General Sir John Murray on the East Coast of Spain in 1812-13*, Volume 3 (London: AJ Valpy, 1815), 361.

⁶ References in William Booth's Journal, 15 December 1800, 29 December 1817; also see two-page letter from Ligonier, 11 January 1770, recommending Booth for an Ensigncy in a marching regiment, or a Lieutenancy in the artillery, or a practitioner engineer (used with permission of owner Matthew Baird-Torney).

⁷ Holloway entered the Drawing Room four years after Booth. That is probably where they met: See Table 4: List of Draughtsmen Arranged by Date of Entry, in Douglas W. Marshall, "Military Maps of the Eighteenth Century and the Tower of London Drawing Room," *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 32 (1980), 38. Holloway and Booth corresponded throughout William's life. Booth was also a godfather to Holloway's daughter Augusta.

also had command of the Brigade of Engineers, a part of which was encamped on the Devil's Bowling-Green, "so called from the extraordinary roughness of the ground", being 3000 feet above sea level.⁸

However, a little over a month later, on 17 January 1782, Holloway reported that something terrible had happened to Booth: "Was sent for to Camp to Lt Booth who was insane, sent to the Hospital." And then again on 22 January: "In [the Naval] Hospital with Dr. Baynes to see Lt Booth who was outrageous and fastened in his bed." On 20 February: "Lt Booth went home in the *Viper* [an ordnance vessel]."⁹ This news made its way through the ranks quite quickly. Captain John Spilsbury of the 12th Regiment wrote on 17 January: "Lieut. B-, Ingeiners, <sic> out of his senses."¹⁰ What happened?

Unfortunately, there are no records of Dr. Baynes' diagnosis. The use of words such as "insane" and "outrageous" and "fastened in his bed" sound like "shell shock" to our modern ears. But historians are discouraged from using a modern diagnosis on an 18th-century malady. It would be safer to suggest that the condition is a "traumatic stress reaction," a "set of conscious and unconscious actions and emotions associated with dealing with the stresses of [a] catastrophe [or trauma] and in the period immediately after."¹¹ The words mentioned above did carry connotations related to madness in the 18th century, which followed Booth throughout his career. Many years later, in Sheerness in 1793, Mrs. Akid, the wife of a storekeeper with whom Booth was feuding, said contemptuously to William that "I wanted a Straight jacket put on me again – that I had one on once and which she could prove."¹²

Perhaps as a way to rehabilitate his reputation, Booth engaged in self-diagnosis, explaining his condition as being due to the stresses and dangers associated with his job. In a letter to Viscount Howe on 17 December 1799, he noted that during the bombardment of the garrison, he had "commanded the Working Parties when the fire from the Enemy's Batteries first opened, and, for a whole Week, past <sic> through a fire of 50 pieces of Cannon and 30 Mortars twice a day to visit the different Works. The fire of the first week was incessant both day and night." He also added "being obliged to visit the Galleries of the Mines under Landport Glacis, and also lying so long exposed to heat and rains during the time I remained in Camp [on Devil's Bowling Green] with only a tent for shelter brought on a violent fever<sic> so as to deprive me of my senses, and in that state I was sent to England in an Ordnance Vessel..."¹³

Booth remained preoccupied with his Gibraltar experience for the rest of his life and continued to lobby his military superiors for compensation for his losses. For example, Booth complained that he was "hurried away" from Gibraltar in an "extraordinary manner" due to his illness, and as a result did not receive "my share of the prize money or any share of the Honor which was mine."¹⁴ It is likely that the military authorities on The Rock saw Booth's condition as a detriment to the war effort and perhaps to the morale of the garrison. Moreover, as an officer, Booth's "outrageous" behavior meant he had

⁸ Charles Holloway's original journal is housed in the Royal Engineers Museum in Chatham. It is quoted in Whitworth Porter, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, Volume I (London: Longman's, Green, and Company, 1889), 93; and Philippart, 361-362. For a discussion of Devil's Bowling Green, see Neville Chipulina, "1704-Devil's Bowling Green-Rock Strewn and Rough," *The People of Gibraltar*, <https://gibraltar-intro.blogspot.com/2016/07/devils-bowling-green-rock-strewn-and.html> .

⁹ Porter, 94.

¹⁰ John Spilsbury, *A Journal of the Siege of Gibraltar, 1779-1783* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Garrison Library, 1908), 55.

¹¹ Charles R. Figley, "Introduction," *Trauma and its Wake* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1985), xix.

¹² William Booth's Journal, 8 May 1793.

¹³ William Booth's Journal, 17 December 1799, Jersey journal.

¹⁴ Porter 94. The staff of the Gibraltar National Archives have helped me to find the entry in the Governors Diary 1782 which mentions Booth and the *Viper* vessel which took him back Home to England.

lost his reason and thus could not contribute to the siege. Nonetheless, William saw many of his colleagues receive promotions and allowances, even men who had worked under him, like Artificer Henry Ince, who suggested “digging a series of galleries out of the rock” as a way of countering enemy fire on the North Front batteries. This resulted in the tunnels and galleries on Gibraltar that tourists continue to visit today.¹⁵ Booth also claimed that he was “sent to England without the usual indulgence of Six Months Leave for the Recovery of My Health,” and was even “obliged to pay the Master of an Ordnance Cutter Twenty Guineas for my passage when, I conceive, I had a right to a passage free.”¹⁶ Neville Chipulina makes a good point that Booth’s “mad days seem not to have affected his career overly” as he eventually attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.¹⁷ Nonetheless, in accounts of the history of British military engineering, Booth appears primary because of his breakdown on Gibraltar.

Because Booth was rapidly removed from The Rock, he regretted that his sacrifices and contributions had never been officially recognized. For example, he was annoyed at being left out of Captain John Drinkwater’s 1785 history of the siege.¹⁸ He also found J. Heriot’s 1792 account of the sortie to be unsatisfactory. His major grievance is that he was never acknowledged for initially suggesting the idea of the sortie, which would prove instrumental in Britain’s eventual victory. In a letter in 1800, he notes:

I am venture <sic> to assume your Lordship I was the first who gave the Link of the Practicality of attempting the destruction of the Enemy’s advanced Batteries and Approaches having mentioned it to Seward now Lt Col. of the Artillery and who communicated my opinion to Gen^l Boyd, the L^t Governor, when the General sent for me to dine with him, and afterwards consulted with me upon the matter in his private study. The General went out the next day as far as the Devil’s Tower to reconnoitre <sic> the Enemy’s Works, and in a few days after, the Sortie was made and the Batteries were destroyed- Perspective Views of the first Encampment of the Enemy were drawn by me by order of Elliott and forwarded to the King. I had the thanks of the Governor on the Public Parade for a Report of the probability of an additional Battery being created on the Right of their advanced Mortar Battery called the Battery du St. Carlos, having the day before sketched and counted the paces of one of their Engineers who was tracing it out-In a few days after My Report the Battery was set up.¹⁹

Due to a lack of corroborating evidence, we will never know the veracity of Booth’s claims. Present-day commentators and historians view his grievances as sour grapes. In Jack Russell’s 1965 history of the siege, he does not seem to have appreciated Booth’s campaign for recognition, for he notes after describing Booth’s breakdown: “Could this be the Lieutenant William Booth already claiming credit for the sortie?”²⁰ It is not my intention to serve as Booth’s champion, but it is interesting to note that many 18th-century officers struck a “rough balance between obligation and reward,” and would have perceived a personal slight if they obtained no “due return” in the form of pensions, grants of land,

¹⁵ Neville Chipulina, “1782-Sergeant-Major Ince-a Thousand Dollars,” People of Gibraltar, <https://gibraltar-intro.blogspot.com/2012/07/1782-sergeant-major-henry-ince-on.html>

¹⁶ Copy of letter sent by Booth to Viscount Howes, 14 February 1800, in William Booth’s Jersey Journal.

¹⁷ Neville Chipulina, “1780-William R.E. Booth-William Booth R.E.,” People of Gibraltar, <https://gibraltar-intro.blogspot.com/2013/02/1780-lt-col-william-r.html>

¹⁸ Porter 94

¹⁹ Copy of letter sent to Viscount Howes, 14 February 1800, William Booth’s Jersey Journal.

²⁰ Jack Russell, *Gibraltar Besieged 1779-1783* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1965), 167.

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decorations, and appropriate honours.²¹ We also have to remember that Gibraltar was Booth's opportunity to prove himself as a young officer. For him, it seemed as if The Rock was built on shifting sands.

²¹ Christopher Duffy, *Fire and Stone: The Science of Fortress Warfare 1660-1860* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1997), 78-79.

I would like to thank Commodore Richard Lord CBE from The Friends of Gibraltar for suggesting I submit a piece to Rock Talk. Also thanks to Gerard Wood and the staff of The Gibraltar National Archives for searching for Booth in their collection, and Dr. Geraldine Finlayson of The Gibraltar National Museum for sending me Booth's Gibraltar journal. Lastly, I am very indebted to Neville Chipulina for his amazing blog series The People of Gibraltar.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions, please contact me at bhuskins@unb.ca



Lt-Col William Booth, RE, "Part of the Moorish Castle, Gibraltar," 1780, © **The Trustees of the British Museum**. Shared under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\) licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).



Friends at Devil's Tower Camp, North Front, before the barbecue June 2024 (see p. 4)

A 60s Saga

Peter Mitchell

In June 1965, a couple of days after I had finished my GCE O levels in the UK, I travelled to RAF Lyneham for the journey on an RAF Comet 2 to join my parents who had been posted to Gibraltar a few months before. My father worked for the Ministry of Public Building and Works (MPBW) at New Mole Parade (now the HQ of the police). In those days RAF planes had the seats facing backwards for safety reasons – now in the days of health and safety they are, I am informed, facing forwards.

Our first accommodation was on the top floor of Trafalgar House. The positive point about this apartment was the fantastic view. Less positive was the absence of a lift and the need to climb many flights of uneven stairs while the lights that were operated by a timer switch often went out before reaching the next level. After a few weeks, we moved to temporary naval accommodation in Edinburgh House, before moving to a much nicer apartment in Tower Buildings, finally moving to a brand new



house in Buena Vista with an even better view from the African coast right round the Bay to La Linea. I used to invite school friends to stand on the balcony to watch the nuns from Loreto Convent enjoying their early morning swim at Rosia!

Trafalgar House (note new Referendum Gate under construction)

School was the Grammar School run by the Irish Christian Brothers next to Sacred Heart Church (now Prior Park private school). This was rather a culture shock after my relatively normal Grammar School in the UK. My French teacher, Brother Murphy complained that he couldn't understand my English so we should converse in French – and then complained that he couldn't understand my French either. I couldn't understand him in any language! I forgot to hand in my homework one day and that evening he was knocking on the door at Tower Buildings to speak to my parents. My mother offered him a cup of tea, which he declined, then coffee, also declined. He had come round for brandy. Unfortunately for him my parents were teetotal, so he had to leave and visit someone else from my class whose parents were used to his visits and kept a spare bottle of brandy.

I joined the 8th Gibraltar Air Scouts, which was fun – until the Scout Leader and the Assistant Scout Leader fell out. Both were in the RAF but one was a policeman and he had to arrest the other one for running down the runway while under the influence of drink, flapping his arms and trying to take off. That was the end of the troop for a while.

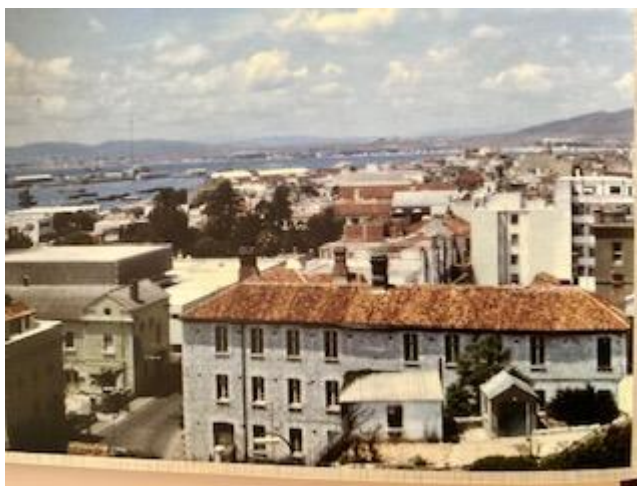


Scout parade on Naval Sports Ground, Governor Sir Gerald Lathbury, of Barracks fame

Those of us who were not Catholics had to go for religious instruction to King's Chapel with the RAF Padre and to Holy Trinity Cathedral with the Dean (Godfrey Worsley). One day I was sitting carving my initials into the back of the pew in front when I heard a voice saying, 'I hear you can play the organ, old boy'. I looked to my right and saw a pair of gaiters and realised that it was the Dean and he was speaking to ME! I had never played an organ but could play the piano, so I said that I could. The next day I found myself playing hymns for a school service. That went well and I was asked to do this every week, which I thought was a good idea as it got me out of going to school on Thursday mornings. A few weeks later he asked me if I could play for evensong on Ash Wednesday. I swotted up on the psalms and arrived at the cathedral – the Dean said, 'Did I tell you that this is being broadcast?'. After that I played for all the Cathedral services until I came back to the UK. On a couple of occasions, the band of the Royal Marines and I played the hymns together.

On one occasion I was asked to play the piano at the Edinburgh Bar as the regular piano player had to attend an army function. Playing requests for a pub full of drunk servicemen was an experience – they showed their appreciation by buying me pints and at the end of the evening, still with 7 pints on top of the piano, they insisted that I drink all of them. I decided it would be wise not to repeat the experience - probably a wise decision as I heard that the regular player had to leave the army a few months later due to his alcohol addiction.

My time in Gibraltar was an amazing experience. I was there for the 1967 Referendum, standing outside the Convent when Sir Joshua Hassan was being cheered by the whole population of the Rock. One weekend I was in La Linea and coming back into Gib, noticed that the sentry on the Gib side was not wearing his usual uniform – then an armoured car appeared. There had been riots after people learned about some Gibraltarians having had secret talks in Madrid and martial law had been declared. Groups of more than 3 people were not allowed to stand still, so my friends and I had a lot of fun forming circles round the policemen and walking round and round.



View from Trafalgar House

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When A levels were finished my father decided that for as long as I stayed in Gib, I should do some work, so he got me a job as a Boy Labourer with the MPBW. I was given a dark blue boiler suit with MPBW written on the back and a tin hat and joined a team of about 10 Spanish and Moroccan men sweeping up gravel and then laying tarmac on the parade ground at Lathbury Barracks. The foreman gave me a broom and said 'sweepy sweepy'. I started to sweep and everyone started shouting 'tranquilo'. It seemed that I was sweeping too fast. On the next day I wasn't allowed to use the broom, my instructions were 'tu trabajas con los ojos' which meant that I had to keep a look out for the warrant officer who used to appear in his vehicle from time to time. If I saw him on the horizon I had to shout 'cuidado, viene el tio' and everyone picked up a tool and looked busy. One day I was sitting in a circle with my colleagues spending time as usual smoking, drinking coffee, and chatting (I managed to learn Spanish in a few weeks – it was that or not speak to anyone) and was so busy doing this that I forgot to do my job as lookout. The warrant officer stopped, got out of his vehicle, called me over and said, 'you are supposed to tell them as soon as I'm coming up the hill, not wait until I am actually here'.

MPBW families were members of the Naval Officers' swimming club at Rosia. On most days when I



finished work, I would walk down to Rosia with a friend who was also a Boy Labourer in a different team. We would wear our boiler suits and tin hats, speak Spanish to each other and wait for the inevitable instruction to 'get out, this is for Naval Officers only'. We would then put on our poshest English accents and explain that we were members.

There are many other memories – climbing up the water catchments to Rock Gun in the middle of the night on scout camps (without being caught by military police); winning Best Boy Actor at the Drama Festival; acting in combined school plays produced by Cecil Gomez in John Mackintosh Hall; Saturday afternoons sitting in the Village Inn at Catalan Bay in the winter with rain lashing down and huge waves; Friday evenings in La Linea - walking back across No Man's Land at midnight and meeting the Spanish soldiers half way between the frontier and the Aduana, who then had to turn round and unlock the gates for us to get back into Gib (bribed with a packet of cigarettes); watching Romper Room on TV with Miss Carmen (Carmen Gomez); the day I was with my labourer colleagues on the parade ground at Lathbury, when suddenly there was a full scale invasion by the Marines that nobody had told us about, causing a great deal of panic.

I think the main memory I have is the people. Walking from one end of Main Street to the other and meeting so many friends. I even got used to the fact that the friendly greeting, if just passing, was 'goodbye'. I have been back to the Rock many times over the years for business and pleasure and it always feels like home.

RAF North Front and the 'Modernaires'

Michael Rigby

I read, with interest, the interview with Derek Jezard in your last issue of *Rock Talk* and was pleasantly surprised to see the photo of the 'Modernaires', and to read he sang with them.

I, too, was at RAF North Front between 1963 – 1965 as a wireless operator with the Marine Craft unit, and played guitar with the 'Modernaires' on occasions, which included a TV show. The chaps in your photograph: Joe Pyke, Johnnie Osborne and Frankie Fortunata (I hope I am spelling Frankie's name correctly), were, by this time, joined by Francis Caruana (again, apologies for any misspelling), who played saxophone, and the band had all the best gigs on the Rock! I, in the meantime formed 'The Tycoons', which played some Ball Room and some Rock. I was also very lucky to have sat in on many jazz sessions with Joe Pyke, sometimes Frankie, Pepe Noguera on drums, and an excellent trumpeter named Jim, at the Hole In The Wall in Bell Lane. My previous experience on guitar was limited to Ball Room dance music and Country & Western, but these great guys allowed me to sit in and learn so much.

Joe Pyke and I became good friends, and when both the 'Modernaires' and 'The Tycoons' simultaneously dismantled, Joe and I, with Pepe and a bass player called Roy from the Middlesex Regiment band, sat in Johnnie Stagnetto's restaurant (La Bayuca), and formed 'The Blue Indigos'. (Johnnie was also a great jazz fan). Not only did we have all the best gigs on the Rock, but a residential four nights a week at the El Polverin Night Club. During this time, I was also playing solo guitar on an ex RTTL (RAF Rescue and Target Towing Launch) Mk1, which ran trips to Tangier and Ceuta. I also worked for the RAF from time to time!

Gibraltar was a different place in those days, but I have no doubt that it is still a great place to visit.

So, thank you, Derek, for the photograph of Joe, Johnnie and Frankie; it brought back some wonderful memories. I wonder if you have found the same as I: that a musical hobby can get you into all kinds of amazing places and situations.



*'The Blue Indigos' at
El Polverin*

I still play guitar, now as a solo instrument, playing many of the old Spanish popular numbers I was familiar with in those days. Until about ten years ago I played in the cafés of the South of France, but now here in North Devon where I live with my wife, Anne. I have also been working on an orchestral piece about Gibraltar, although the days of Hector Cortes and the Gibraltar Symphony are over. Maybe I'll get it played somewhere here.

The Cornish-language war diaries of E G Retallack Hooper during his posting to Gibraltar, 1942-1945

Peter Thomas

Though no doubt unfamiliar to most readers of *Rock Talk*, the name of Retallackⁱ Hooper (1907-1998) is well-known to those who take an interest in the Cornish language or in the history and culture of Cornwall more generally. He was one of the first to achieve proficiency in revived Cornish, which led to his being made a Cornish Bard in 1932, the first year in which such proficiency was recognised as a qualification for bardship, and he spent most of his adult life promoting Cornish (traditional and revived), not least through his numerous publications. His bardic name, Talek ('Broad-Browed'), is the one by which he is best known and (according to someone who had been a pupil in one of his Cornish classes) was even used by his wife Bertha in a domestic context. He set up his own publishing house for Cornish books and issued his own all-Cornish periodical for many years. He served as the third Grand Bard of Cornwall, between 1959 and 1964.

Hooper was born in Mithian, a village near St Agnes on the north coast of Cornwall, but grew up in Crantock near Newquay. He was christened Ernest George simply, but as he became more committed to his work for Cornwall he adopted the further forename Retallack, his mother's family name. He worked for many years as a professional horticulturalist, at Kew Gardens and in Palafrugell, Catalonia, among other places, and he mentions horticultural matters in several diary entries. He later became a teacher and, with his wife, ran independent schools in Truro and Camborne, the town with which he is most associated. (Pentalek Road in Camborne is named after him.) Cornish was of course part of the curriculum of their schools.

He left a considerable archive,ⁱⁱ and among these papers are several diaries, largely in Cornish. The one which concerns us here is the diary he kept during the World War of 1939-45, specifically the entries covering his time as a serviceman in Gibraltar. The following account is derived from these entries. Passages in *italic* are the author's direct translations from Hooper's Cornish. (The entries were often written under difficult conditions, and minor slips of the pen are ignored.) He amended a few passages at a later date, but not extensively or systematically. He also used a few scattered words of languages other than Cornish in the diary, mainly English and Spanish. He knew Spanish (and Catalan) from his time in Palafrugell, and he attended Spanish classes in Gibraltar.



Reproduced by courtesy of the Cornish Gorsedh

Hooper joined the British Army (Derbyshire Yeomanry, soldier no. 7918587) in September 1940, shortly before the death of his widowed mother – not the best of starts to his military career. In due course he was transferred to Gibraltar, arriving on 13th July 1942 on the 'Llanstephan Castle', and was assigned to the Garrison Fire Brigade (Alameda Park). His diary entries, though sometimes matter of fact (the weather is a recurring topic), can be astonishingly frank and personal, indeed intimate, with respect to various aspects of his life – including his inner life – in Gibraltar. These entries will not be discussed further, but they form a distinct category within the diary.

Some of his references to military life and the events of the war are fairly straightforward. In August 1942, for example, he notes: *Many sailors in town have come from Malta, also those who were rescued when the 'Eagle' sank*; and in April 1943: *Finally the 4th Devons are going (likewise the 'Black Watch')*. On a less routine note: *Large fire in harbour (sabotage)* (June 1943); *2 trials in the law court: treason. Bringing explosives into Gib. hidden inside bananas!* (August 1943); *3 men sent letters home*

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with a man who went home by air. They will be court-martialled apparently ... 112 days [in prison] for 3 men, 84 to the fourth (March 1944).

We learn something of his duties: *I am now on Telephone Orderly duty for one day: off duty the next day! (8 am – 8 am sleeping in the 'Watch Room'). As a fireman, there were 48 hours on duty, 24 off. For 48 hours (if there wasn't a fire!) it was very easy. In the afternoon we would sit in the sun and watch the cricket (Autumn 1942); New work in Control Room underground: a new plan has been made by Col. Simmonds (April 1943); New pay, 6/6 a day (1/6 more) (October 1944). Army life was not always mundane, however, as this clipped entry recording exercises in Algeria indicates: S.S. "Alert," 61 men leave to go to Gib. Training Camp (R.A.) Les Andalouses for 26 hours. Sleep on the floor. Twice to Oran (September 1944). One diary entry gives *The Rock*ⁱⁱⁱ an honourable mention: *Forceful answer in "Rock Magazine" to the English newspaper writers and their distortions of our life (August 1943). Towards the end of the war, Hooper was one of 90 men who left Gibraltar on leave in March 1945, eventually landing in the UK where he spent a month, returning to duty on 23rd April. In May he wrote: Peace this week? It will be hard to adjust to civilian life.**

Other entries refer to the progress of the war beyond Gibraltar: *As we thought, news came today of the Americans landing in North Africa (November 1942). He also notes some of the operations of his own regiment: I heard on the wireless that the Derbyshire Yeomanry are in Libya pushing the Germans back. (November 1942).*

Some less military aspects of army life are also recorded: *Christmas. Rivers of beer: I didn't drink: but I did rest (December 1942); In a boat around the bay – a few "Wrens". Escape – off the rock for the first time! Help in Toc H in the evening. There are Wrens there too! (June 1943). In the same month, after mentioning a conversation with Mr J Edwards, Head Gardener at Alameda, he writes: The fleas – terrible: we can't sleep sometimes. Buy insecticide. Yesterday evening Anthony Eden, [Alan] Brooke, Montgomery were in Alameda. Churchill is also here. A few further examples: On Christmas night the Commandant spoke on the radio and read the Christmas Day lesson (December 1943); W.A.A.F.s are here now (May 1944); Common soldiers now have leave to go to La Línea. This is better: instead of 2 hours in Algeciras, nearly a whole day in La Línea: with Osborne and another man. We walked to S. Roque and spent very little (July 1944); Prepare the place for victory celebration! (February 1945); End of the war, afterwards called "V.E. day". Mr. Churchill, 3 pm on the wireless. "Fun fair" in Alameda (May 1945).*

Hooper mentions many other activities outside his mainstream army life. He sometimes attended the cathedral, King's Chapel or other places of worship, Anglican or Nonconformist. He was a regular attendee at the very active Literary and Debating Society and helped when the Society moved from Hospital Steps to Prince Edward's Road (*where the Garrison Variety Company used to be*) in June 1945. He also frequented Toc H, the YMCA (at both of which he was also an occasional helper), Brythoniaid y Graig ('Britons of the Rock'), the Garrison Library, the Museum, theatres and cinemas. He mentions the Toc H party on Christmas Day 1943, which was attended by the Revd 'Tubby' Clayton, the organisation's founder. He explored Gibraltar on a few occasions, walking around the Rock and up to its summit, down into the tunnels with the St Andrew's Club, and elsewhere. (Regarding the tunnels, he remarked that they made him feel that any building feat would be possible, given sufficient army manpower.) He was sometimes accompanied by fellow soldiers, mentioning Osborne (as above) and Crame among others. (On a second visit to Spain with Osborne in December 1944 they explored churches and watched a Spanish film at the cinema.)

There are well over 100 entries in the diary which refer to Hooper's attendance at cultural events of different kinds. Less than two weeks after his arrival in Gibraltar he mentions a meeting of Brythoniaid y Graig, at which Welsh hymns and songs were sung and broadcast. On 6th September 1942 he attended a debate on Welsh nationalism under the auspices of the same organisation,

describing some speakers' objections to the National Party of Wales (later Plaid Cymru) as *very stupid*. As a Cornishman, Hooper felt himself to be a 'Briton on the Rock' and had great affinity for the Welsh and their language (as well as other minority cultures), so Brythoniaid y Graig would have been an important recourse for him.

Talks and debates were held regularly, as Hooper records. The first he mentions, in early September 1942, is a talk by Lt Lawson (RE) at Toc H headquarters followed by a *short but good* debate, on the causes of another war (*The speaker rather left-wing*). The Bishop of Gibraltar (presumably the Anglican bishop, Harold Buxton) gives an address to Toc H a few weeks later about his life in the Mediterranean, and in October 1942 Capt. Walsh speaks on the 'Value of History'. Though Hooper questioned aspects of this presentation, he described it (in a rare use of English) as a 'bloody fine talk'. As a professional gardener, he must have been pleased to attend talks in the Library by Head Gardener Edwards, on local plants and the Botanical Society (April and May 1943). (Hooper was approached to take over the Head Gardener's job on Edwards's retirement in 1945 but did not feel robust enough to do so, and the position was taken by Crame.) Some other examples: the neutrality of Ireland (October 1942); Trades Unions (November 1942); a talk by the Army Psychiatrist (June 1943); two talks on genetics, at least one by Sgt Leak, both followed by music (July 1943); 'Japan' (September 1943); 'Christianity and Society' (October 1943); private ownership of the Press (January 1944); 'What I want from Life' (June 1944); 'The Voice of the People is the Voice of God' (October 1944); 'Why is the British Council in Gibraltar?' (by Bingley and Eames-Hughes, December 1944, in the Royal Engineers' Hall); 'South Africa' (July 1945); the first part of 'Romanticism and Classicism' by Pte Brown (August 1945). Also that month, the Potsdam Conference was debated. This major event, in which the leaders of the three principal Allied powers discussed the postwar peace, had concluded only a fortnight before.

Music was also an important source of solace for Hooper. As early as 4th September 1942 he records a *very acceptable* event in the Garrison Library, in which Lance Corporal Barrell presented '300 Years of Music' with accompanying records. He also notes meetings of the Gramophone Society (or Group) in March and October 1943. In June that year L/Cpl Edwards presented the third in a series on 'Forms of Music', and in August Major Little gave his own talk. Hooper attended music classes and went to performances (live or recorded) of works by composers including Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, Haydn, Mozart, Sibelius, Stravinsky and Vaughan Williams. In October 1943 there was a recital by Solomon (the pianist Solomon Cutner) at the Theatre Royal, and on other occasions there were performances by service personnel. In April 1944 [*Thomas*] Edwards and [*Philip*] Abbot played Beethoven, and in October that year the same men played Mozart. Edwards was evidently also a composer: *A new song by Thos. Edwards "Round me falls the night"* (August 1944). Although on a number of occasions Hooper expresses his loathing for raucous modern American music, in January 1945 he records without comment a presentation of jazz, swing and classical music by Sgt Lovelock in the YMCA, having written just four days earlier that *American music is like a beast in pain*.

Literature, in the form of reading or talks, classes etc. at the Literary and Debating Society or elsewhere, was another invaluable resource for him. With a few exceptions, the books and periodicals he read were serious or educational. Some of these were borrowed from colleagues, others came from the YMCA, Toc H or the Library, to which he also donated material. (His reading in Cornish will be mentioned later.) Bernard Shaw was clearly a favourite – he notes four titles by him as well as a biography. Among other works are 'The story of San Michele' (Munthe), 'The blue bird' (Maeterlinck, in a Spanish translation from French), 'Cold Comfort Farm' (Gibbons) (*priceless*), 'Mathematics for the Million' (Hogben) (*too deep for my wits*), 'The Way of All Flesh' (Butler) (*I couldn't read it*), 'Rasselas' (Johnson). Other reading included Swift, Smollett, Ruskin, Gaskell and M R James. In July 1943 he notes: *A gift of God in the library: archaeology, poetry, travel, fiction, English classics*. In December 1944 there was a Prose Reading Class in the old YMCA tea room, followed by Russian music.

Within the field of literature, poetry clearly held a special place in his intellectual life, sometimes under the auspices of the Poetry Group at the Literary and Debating Society (one of its many sub-groups). Poets studied included Auden, Browning, Eliot, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Shelley and (from an earlier period) Spenser, and there was at least one session on war poetry and another on Old English (pre-13th-century) poetry. In January 1944 he wrote: *Poetry gathering! Strange that it takes a war to get together like this!* He also mentions a few art exhibitions and (much more frequently) visits to the theatre and play readings.



In January 1943, Edith Evans, John Gielgud, Michael Wilding, Beatrice Lillie and others put on a performance for the troops. Venues for theatrical events included Holy Trinity Cathedral (a traditional Nativity Play was performed there at Christmas 1944), the Royal Engineers' Hall and the YMCA, as well as the Theatre Royal. Also in December 1944 a Drama Festival was held over several days. Some performances were staged by servicemen themselves – the North Front Players are mentioned – and there were also readings at the Literary and Debating Society.

From *The Rock* January 1943 (editor's own copy)

In January 1944 there was a reading of 'Macbeth' in the Ballroom of Government House, and 'Twelfth Night' was staged in May 1945 by the L & D Society Theatre Group. Other 'serious' playwrights mentioned are Terence Rattigan and Graham Greene.

Lighter performances included a pantomime, 'Babes in the Wood,' in January 1945. In the same month there was a Spanish show in the Theatre Royal, featuring Estrellita Castro. Hooper commends some of the plays he mentions, others he deems *stupid*.

Advert in *Gibraltar Chronicle* 1943; courtesy of Anthony Pitaluga

He records numerous visits to the cinema, writing that he was *wasting a lot of time* watching films. (Only a few of the other cultural activities he mentions could be described as 'light'.) He specifies various venues including the L & D Society (Film Group), the RN Cinema and the Rialto. Among the films he mentions by name (there were clearly many others) are: 'Gone with the Wind' (*a very long film after library*) (March 1943); 'Desert Victory' (*A strange turn for me that I didn't go to Africa with the Derbyshire Yeomanry. Sometimes I wish I had gone*) (April 1943); 'Big Street' (*a stupid film*) (November 1943); 'Now Voyager' (March 1944); 'This Happy Breed'



(November 1944); 'Slightly Dangerous' (*a laugh*) (January 1945); 'Western Approaches' (*good work*) (February 1945).

Contacts with home were another lifeline for him. He mentions friends and members of his family, their activities and problems. He was also in occasional contact with his elder brother Noel, who was serving with an Australian regiment. Equally important for him was to maintain contact with his friends and fellow workers in the field of Cornish culture. In this way and others, he tried to keep up to date with work in and on revived Cornish and to continue his own study of Cornwall, its language and the wider Celtic world. Attending meetings of Brythoniaid y Graig served a similar purpose, as did the presence of a few personal contacts in Gibraltar. Among several individual correspondents noted by Hooper were Robert Morton Nance (the Grand Bard of Cornwall) and the latter's collaborator in Cornish lexicography, A S D Smith, a particular friend of Hooper's. As well as receiving and sending letters in Cornish, he received printed material from home, including copies of the *West Briton* newspaper and the magazine *Old Cornwall*. (He was a contributor to the latter, and after the war he wrote a gardening column in the *West Briton*.)

Only a very small selection of entries from the diary have been referred to or quoted above. This carries an intrinsic risk of distorting its overall effect, but omitting any mention of Hooper's more outspoken entries would be even more misleading. They reveal that the war years were probably the lowest point of his life, a period during which he was deeply unhappy for much of the time, if not seriously depressed.

The war came at a difficult stage in his life, and he did not take to military ways. If it were not for the avenues of escape he was able to take advantage of, it seems likely that he would have been almost overwhelmed and come through, if at all, with more physical and mental scars than he did. As it is, he was driven at times to deep despair and was not infrequently physically unwell. (He makes frequent reference to bouts of illness, and poor health was an issue throughout his life, though he lived to be 90. One of the main problems was his hearing – in later life he became profoundly deaf.) As outlined above, the principal ways in which he tried to counteract the perceived negative aspects of army life and to preserve his often precarious equilibrium, were the cultural opportunities available to military personnel, the company of a few like-minded fellow servicemen, his contacts with home and the interest he continued to take in Cornwall and Cornish.

In the army he felt alienated from the start: ... *assigned to the Garrison Fire Brigade (Alameda Park). In a Spanish atmosphere again but how different [from Catalonia] it is! Having to wear Army uniform and submit to its rules and orders, which is a hateful thing to me, and such stupid great boots instead of alpargatas ... In 12 hours there were two fire alerts. Why did the War Office assign me this kind of work? Apparently I'll have to spend two years here.* Some consolation came when, within his first few days on the Rock, he met fellow Cornishman and Cornish speaker Edwin Chirgwin (1892-1960), a lieutenant in the RAOC, who had arrived in Gibraltar the previous year. Given that there were only a handful of speakers of revived Cornish in the world, it is quite a coincidence that two should be given the same posting. Even more remarkably, Chirgwin was an Army censor, which enabled Hooper to write home in Cornish without having his letters blocked. Chirgwin was also Secretary of Brythoniaid y Graig, which, as we have seen, became a haven for Hooper shortly after his arrival in Gibraltar. He is dismayed when his friend, having reached the age of 50 in 1942, has to leave Gibraltar and the Army: *Oh no! [Chirgwin] is leaving the Rock after 21 months here. I'm upset that I will be more homesick than before. Who will censor my Cornish letters?* In August 1943 he wrote that Chirgwin, having left the army, had spoken about Gibraltar to the College of Bards in Cornwall.

He is scathingly outspoken about the hypocrisy and 'propaganda' he perceives around him. One example from June 1943: *Talk on the radio by the Commandant: "We are sorry the King couldn't come here."* Mentira! [Spanish: Lie!] *We are glad he has returned to England, thus enabling us to*

escape a lot of trouble. And in October that year: Countless books about this war. A lot of nonsense is written: in the booklets of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs particularly.

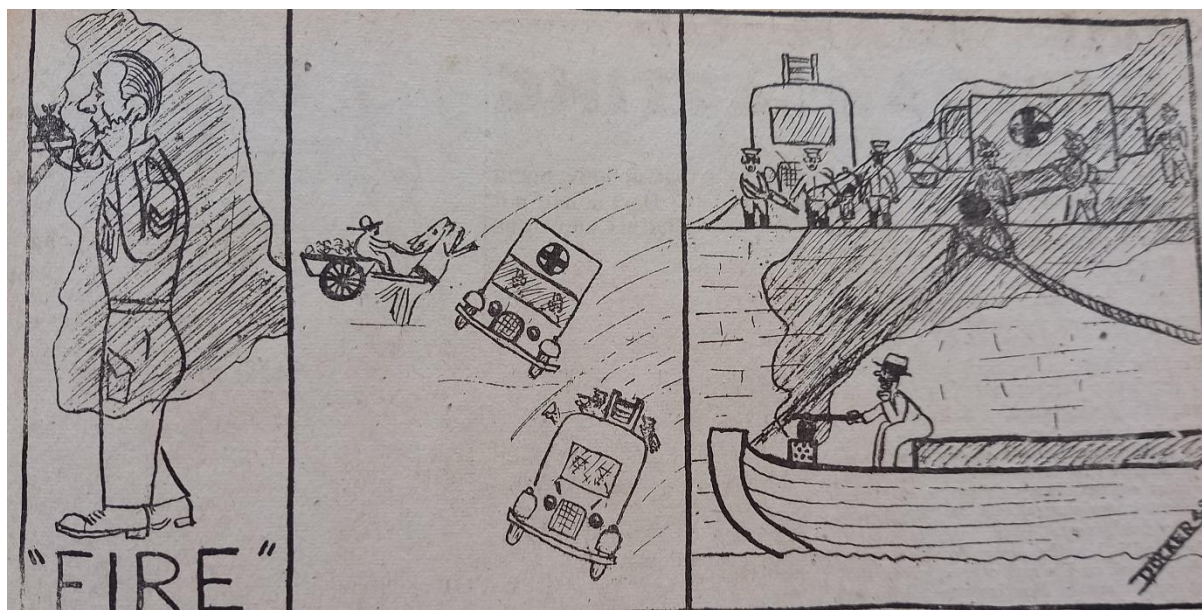
He reserves his most scornful remarks, however, for the troops with whom he shares a Nissen hut. The first of many entries of this kind occurs shortly after his arrival and is one of the mildest: *The men's ignorance is awful: again, I'm not surprised there are wars! They are animals, every one of them.* Taken together, the vehemence of his comments on this subject can scarcely be overstated. He despises their attitude to local Gibraltarians as well as their personal conduct. He himself relished the limited contact he was able to have with the locals.

Retallack Hooper left Gibraltar on the hospital ship 'Atlantis' on 9th September 1945. It has been said of some people that they had 'a good war'. This can certainly not be said of Hooper. Judging from his Cornish war diary, overall he had a thoroughly miserable time, notwithstanding the sources of consolation he found on the Rock, and he left army service in a poor state of physical and mental health, with deep misgivings about his future. He had survived the conflict, however, and within a few years had managed to pick up the pieces of his life, become a married man (in 1950), changed his career and started on some 50 years of dedicated work and achievement for the Cornish cause.

ⁱ For those unfamiliar with Cornish names, in 'Retallack' the stress falls on the second syllable ('tal'), which rhymes with 'pal'. The other Cornish surname in this article, Chirgwin, is pronounced 'shergwinn', i.e. also stressed on the second syllable.

ⁱⁱ Most of his papers are held at Kresen Kernow, Redruth, which includes the archives from the former Cornwall Record Office.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Rock Magazine (by the troops for the troops)* published in Gibraltar from April 1941 onwards.



Cartoon from *The Rock* January 1943 (editor's own copy)

Saturday 26th October 2024, 14.00 hours



at

The Hilton Garden Inn, Abingdon

AGM Minutes

Board Members Present

Sir Adrian Johns (SAJ) Chair; Mr Len Goss (LG) Marketing and Communication; Mr Peter Hucker (PH) Treasurer; Mrs Tricia Johnson (TJ) Secretary; Commodore Richard Lord (RL) Membership and Charitable Activities; Mr Ross McNally (RMcN); Dr Vincent Mifsud (VM) (Succession Planning); Mr Albert Poggio (AP)

Vice Chair: Ms Jennifer Scherr (JS) Archivist.

Plus 46 FOGHS Members and Guests.

Apologies Colonel Julian Lyne-Pirkis (JLP); Prof. Charles Ramirez (CR).

1. **Welcome** - SAJ welcomed everyone present both old and new members saying it was pleasing to see such a full room.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising.** The minutes that had been circulated were agreed. There were no matters arising.
3. **Reports from the Board.** SAJ introduced the following reports -

- a) Financial report by the Treasurer. PH provided an outline of the Accounts for the year 2023 – 2024 explaining that income and expenditure had resulted in an overall operating deficit of approximately £2K.

Income for the society is earned from subscriptions, donations and gift aid, while expenditure, other than direct Charitable activity, includes the cost of our Newsletters and Zoom subscription as well as costs incurred in holding some events. However, the significant cost of producing Rock Talk is not included, for this year only, to reflect slippage in the billing timescale. PH asked for any questions. Paul Blake asked if there was a similar deficit for 2023. PH confirmed that the underlying figure was much the same.

There were no further questions.

PH shared the FOGHS Vision and Mission Statements.

SAJ thanked PH for his contribution.

- b) A review of the year's activities. RL in his role as Membership Secretary commenced by saying that current membership has reduced from 463 to 450 this year and there is a steady decline with only ap
- c) proximately 6 new members per year. The current membership includes 47 over 80's and 7 under 25's. One under 25 has resigned as they didn't want to pay.

Charitable Activities and Events – RL spoke about the Schools and University Bursaries that are provided each year. These have helped to strengthen appreciation of the importance of the heritage in Gibraltar.

Christmas Card Competition – recipients of the cards were very appreciative. Thanks to CR who organises this competition.

Links to Ballymena – Approximately 1000 Gibraltarians were evacuated to Ballymena during the 2nd World War. RL and JLP visited Ballymena in October 2024. The visit included visits to two schools, which it is hoped will result in awards being granted to pupils who successfully complete a project linked to heritage. The children were very interested and asked questions.

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RL and JLP also met with the Mayor of Mid and East Antrim. Twinning of Ballymena with Gibraltar was discussed as this has apparently lapsed. Subsequently RL has met with the Mayor of Gibraltar and the Minister Dr J Cortes to discuss the prospect of rekindling the twinning.

Alabaré – these projects have been inspiring and popular. The success in Gibraltar has resulted in a similar arrangement with Malta. The first will take place in May 2025. RL thanked GHT for their involvement with this scheme.

The Arboretum Wreath – this was laid again in 2024. 2025 will be the 10th Anniversary of this ceremony. Information about this event will be circulated.

Chalke Valley Festival – Rupert Hague-Holmes represented FOGHS and gave a talk about Operation Flavius – The IRA incident in Gibraltar in 1988. This was well received and supported by a FOGHS member who was stationed in Gibraltar at the time.

Christmas Party 2023 – held at the RAF Club, thanks were extended to TJ for organising the event. RL also mentioned the forthcoming event, which would also be held at the RAF Club, perhaps for the last time. Information for the 2024 event would be circulated asap - attendance is encouraged.

PH went on to speak about the talks held in Gibraltar House. In the past there have been up to 3 or 4 each year but there are fewer now. The documentary film 'Times of Closure' was screened at Gibraltar House in April and was subsequently shown, more exclusively, to the Friends during the June visit by its producer, Stephen Cumming.

The Annual Visit – this is very important because it maintains and establishes strong links between the GHT and the FOGHS, as well as the University and schools, given that we see first-hand, what is happening in Gibraltar. Up to 50 members had participated in at least one of the events this year.

- d) Strategic development and the way forward for the Society. SAJ introduced LG stating that this was a time to visit new horizons. We have always had interesting events and projects, but we must increase our revenue and membership by embracing modern IT to provide a fresh view for the future. LG said the website is crucial in this and it is imperative that we develop integrated systems. Manpower is required to maintain the currency of our social media community of around 1,600 people and to draw them into subscribing membership. Volunteers are therefore urgently required. This is an exciting time, however, £8K is required to develop the system. We have a target to have a total of 1000 members by 2027.

LG stated that buying into research usually costs between £10 and £15K, but RMcN had found a reliable company that quoted considerably less, and the Board has agreed to use this company. A target has been set to have the new website and integrated systems in place by March/April 2025.

SAJ stated that we are not flush with money, but this ambitious project should help to achieve the targets and ultimately increase membership. He thanked the members directly involved and the whole Board for their efforts and support.

4. **AOB** - Paul Robinson expressed his thanks for today and for the great 2024 visit to Gibraltar. He suggested mailing all attendees of the visit to ask for a donation to the FOGHS. Could there be an area on the website for donations, with just a click? SAJ thanked Paul for this helpful suggestion.

5. **Date of Next AGM** – October 2025 to be notified.

The meeting closed at 14.30

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| Balances at bank | 31 March 2024 | 31 March 2023 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| | £ | £ |
| <i>Scottish Widows Deposit</i> | 16,371 | 24,266 |
| <i>Lloyds General Current Accounts</i> | 7,301 | 810 |
| <i>Cash in hand and stock of ties</i> | 853 | 1,410 |
| | 24,525 | 26,486 |
| Current Liabilities | - | - |
| Net Assets | 24,525 | 26,486 |
| Operation of the Society | | |
| Net Income including Subscriptions, Donations and Gift aid | 6,458 | 8,005 |
| Net Expenditure (<i>before Charitable activities</i>) including Rock Talk and Sundry expenses | 4,526 | 4,251 |
| Charitable activities | | |
| <i>University Bursary</i> | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| <i>University MSc Awards</i> | 500 | 500 |
| <i>Schools Awards (including plaque)</i> | 658 | 667 |
| <i>Schools Christmas Card Competition</i> | 320 | 895 |
| <i>Witham's Cemetery</i> | 2,000 | - |
| <i>Falkland Islands Plaque & Unveiling</i> | - | 99 |
| <i>SOE Tunnel Virtual Tour</i> | - | 1,900 |
| <i>Lord Airey's Battery Restoration</i> | 2,395 | 4,000 |
| <i>Other charitable donations</i> | 20 | 20 |
| | 6,893 | 9,081 |
| Surplus / (Deficit) for the year | (1,961) | (5,327) |

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Front cover: The entrance to The Mount, June 2024 (*Jennifer Scherr*)

Back cover: Spanish period sentry post, South Mole, Dockyard (*Jennifer Scherr*)

(See <https://www.ministryforheritage.gi/heritage-and-antiquities/spanish-medieval-sentry-outpost-1523>)

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OF GIBRALTAR
HERITAGE SOCIETY

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THE FRIENDS
OF GIBRALTAR
HERITAGE SOCIETY



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