



# Carve Their Names With Pride

A special ceremony organised by The Secret WW2 Learning Network, an educational charity, to commemorate with blue plaques the heroic WW2 service of four Brighton-born secret agents of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)



Lt Jacqueline Nearne MBE CdeG

Capt Ronald Taylor

Capt Michael Trotobas

Edward Zeff MBE CdeG

## Brighton Dome Corn Exchange

11am Saturday 12th November 2016

with special thanks to

**The Gerry Holdsworth Special Forces Charitable Trust**





The Brighton and Hove Commemorative Plaque Panel has supported the application by The Secret WW2 Learning Network, in partnership with the University of Sussex Resistance Studies Network, for blue plaques to be placed where these four WW2 agents were either born or had lived in Brighton.

Each plaque will be installed and formally unveiled at separate events during early 2017, and the only occasion on which all four blue plaques will be on view together will be during today's unique 'Grand Reveal' ceremony.

## Morning programme

- 10.00 Guest arrivals and registration - refreshments available
- 11.00 Welcome to Brighton - **Roger Amerena**  
Chairman of the Brighton and Hove Commemorative Plaque Panel
- Today's programme and forthcoming events - **Martyn Cox**  
CEO of The Secret WW2 Learning Network
- 11.10 *Brighton's Secret Agents* - **Paul McCue**  
Military historian & Trustee of The Secret WW2 Learning Network  
Presentation includes the Reveal of each of the four commemorative plaques
- 12.00 National Anthems
- Outline of afternoon event - **Martyn Bell**  
Chairman of The Secret WW2 Learning Network
- Closing remarks - **Brian Fitch**  
Hon Alderman & Vice-Chairman, Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission
- 12.20 Reveal ceremony closes - **Sussex by the Sea**
- Opportunity for group photographs followed by lunch interval
- Café & Bookshop open
- 13.30 Start of afternoon programme  
Talks & film screenings presented by guest authors, historians & film-makers (see page 7)



## LIEUTENANT JACQUELINE NEARNE MBE Croix de Guerre

1916 - 1982

*"Designer"*

FRENCH SECTION of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)



Jacqueline Françoise Mary Josephine Nearne was born in Brighton at 32 West Hill Street on 27 May 1916.

The family relocated to London and in 1923 to France, eventually to Nice where Jacqueline finished her schooling and became a sales representative for an office equipment company.

Following the fall of France in 1940 the Nearnes moved to near Grenoble, in the unoccupied zone. In April 1942 Jacqueline and her sister Eileen reached England via Spain and Portugal and in July Jacqueline joined the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (F.A.N.Y.) for secondment to French Section, S.O.E.

After training she was approved as a courier to the STATIONER circuit and parachuted into France with her circuit leader, Maurice Southgate on 25 January 1943. Jacqueline carried messages to and from the Résistance cells and other circuit members, meaning long and tiring train journeys over a huge area.

More than a year's strenuous work left her exhausted, and Jacqueline was flown back to Britain on 9/10 April 1944. Following recuperation and additional training Jacqueline declared herself ready to return to active duty, but Allied advances in France negated her return.

Jacqueline Nearne was awarded the MBE and, by the French, the Croix de Guerre. Post-war, she worked for the United Nations in New York until retirement and her return to England in 1978, but only four years later Jacqueline died of cancer on 15 August 1982, aged 66 years.



## CAPTAIN RONALD TAYLOR

1916 - 2002

*"Tenente Plastico"*

ITALIAN SECTION of SOE - No. 1 Special Force



Ronald Gordon Taylor was born on 2 October 1916 at 29 Carlton Street, Brighton, to Thomas and Jane Taylor. Ron attended St John's elementary school in Carlton Hill, followed by Varndean Secondary School and Brighton Municipal Technical College, gaining an engineering degree. He moved to London for work and joined the Royal Engineers of the British Army in October 1939.

Soon commissioned, he served in England as a military bridging expert before, seeking a more active war, he volunteered for S.O.E. in October 1941. Ron Taylor received paramilitary and parachute training in Palestine and was posted to No. 1 Special Force at Monopoli in Italy, where he was briefed as one of a three-man team to be sent to the COOLANT mission, supporting Italian partisans fighting the Germans.

The drop was on the night of 12/13 August 1944 and the team immediately started sabotage training for the partisans and carrying out operations against the enemy. In November 1944 orders were received to cease operations and to prepare for final efforts the following spring.

In December the COOLANT team accompanied the Italians in joining up with Yugoslav partisan forces and they were flown out from Črnomelj in Yugoslavia in February 1945. Taylor was awarded a Mention in Despatches and the Italian Partisan Medal.

Postwar Ron Taylor resumed his successful engineering career, returning to Brighton, marrying and starting a family before moving to Surrey. Having settled in later life in Buckinghamshire, in 2002 he moved to Dorchester, but died there on 10 December, aged 86.



## CAPTAIN MICHAEL TROTOBAS

1914 - 1943

*"Capitaine Michel"*

FRENCH SECTION of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)



Michael Alfred Raymond Trotobas was born on 20 May 1914 at 1 North Place, Brighton, the son of a French father and an Irish mother.

Michael's mother died when he was only nine years old and he was sent to live in France with an aunt. His schooling was completed there and in Ireland and, after drifting from job to job for several years, he joined the Middlesex Regiment of the British Army in 1933.

After war broke out, he served in northern France and, wounded, was fortunate to be evacuated from Dunkirk. Commissioned as an officer in the Manchester Regiment, he then volunteered for S.O.E. and in September 1941 was in a group of six agents parachuted into Vichy-controlled France.

After only a month he was arrested, but escaped in July 1942 and made his way back to Britain via Spain and Portugal. Two months later he again parachuted into France to create a new circuit, FARMER, in and around Lille. From May 1943, he began sabotage operations in which he personally participated.

On the morning of 27 November 1943 the enemy forced their way into his lodgings in Lille and in the subsequent shoot-out, Trotobas was killed instantly.

SOE's submission for a Victoria Cross for Trotobas was turned down and in the post-war confusion of the organisation's disbandment, no other award was granted.



## **CAPTAIN EDWARD ZEFF MBE Croix de Guerre**

1904 - 1973

*"Georges 53"*

FRENCH SECTION of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)



Edward Zeff has long deserved to have his story told. He was born into a British Jewish family at 22 Hanover Crescent, Brighton on 22 April 1904 and educated at the York Place Elementary Schools.

He joined his older brother in Paris around 1922 to develop the family tailoring business there and returned to Britain, with his French wife, after the fall of France in 1940.

Zeff joined the Royal Signals of the British Army and then, despite scant knowledge of soldiering and no experience of clandestine warfare, he volunteered for S.O.E. to work as a secret agent in enemy-held France in one of the most dangerous roles possible - that of radio operator.

German detection services were eventually hot on Edward Zeff's trail in the city of Lyons, but it was only when he was trying to return to Britain that he was betrayed and captured as he was about to cross the Pyrenees into Spain. Badly tortured and interrogated in Paris, he nevertheless held firm - only to then be sent to Mauthausen concentration camp.

As a Jew and a British agent, his fate should have been doubly sealed, yet somehow this remarkable man managed to survive. He was awarded the MBE (Military) and, by the French, the Croix de Guerre.

Edward Zeff returned to Brighton to live at 94 Embassy Court with his wife, but subsequently returned to his business in Paris and died there in 1973.

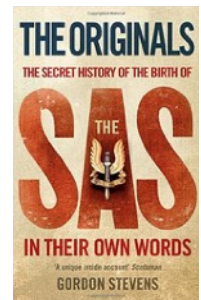
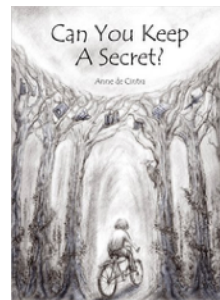
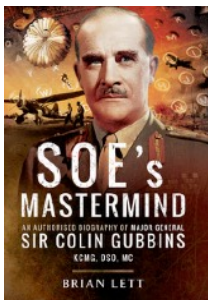


# Afternoon programme

## Talks & Films, Bookshop, Exhibits & Café

- 13.30 **Brighton's Secret Agents** - Introduction by Martyn Cox  
Co-founder & CEO of The Secret WW2 Learning Network
- 13.35 **SOE's Mastermind** - Brian Lett on his recent biography of Major General Sir Colin Gubbins
- 14.30 **Evasion from France, Escape from Italy** - *The Twisted Florin* written by Stella Marsh  
is the just published biography of Sqn Ldr John Mott MBE, and will be presented by  
John Mott's daughter Suzannah and her husband Brigadier Richard Dennis OBE
- 15.30 **Can You Keep A Secret?** - *Growing Up Under Occupation, a Child's Tale of Courage, Risk  
and Resistance* - Tim Davis on the just published children's novel by his late wife Anne de Cintra
- 16.15 **The Secret Hunters** - the documentary maker and author Gordon Stevens will screen and then  
discuss an extended excerpt from his SAS television programme featuring SOE's Vera Atkins  
and Brian Stonehouse
- 16.55 Concluding remarks and thanks - event closes at 17.00

(Talk timings are approximate)



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While thanking the above presenters for their contributions to today's event the organisers would also like to acknowledge the research and other support so willingly given to this initiative by many more writers, researchers and academics plus our veteran friends and their families. Thanks especially to today's sponsors and our charity's volunteers, and also to the many people and organisations in Brighton and Hove whose names won't fit here - but they know who they are. Our charity's heartfelt appreciation goes out to one and all of you because without your help this unique day would not be taking place, nor could we already be planning the ongoing "Brighton's secret agents" events for 2017.

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**The Secret WW2 Learning Network** is an educational charity established in 2014 with the aim of creating greater public awareness of the contributions and experiences of the men and women who took part during the Second World War in Allied special operations, intelligence gathering and resistance - principally, but not exclusively, in Britain and France.

The charity has established a unique partner network of specialist historians, researchers, writers, teachers, veterans' descendants and associations, museums, local communities, and media outlets who work proactively with the charity's Trustees and volunteers to instigate learning initiatives and special commemorative events.

Access to a unique archive of filmed personal testimony from more than a hundred British 'secret warriors' and French resisters provides a key resource, and the charity's innovative approach regularly brings recognition to these remarkable wartime exploits and also to the cross-channel links that were forged.

The ultimate aim of The Secret WW2 Learning Network is to ensure that the wartime contributions and sacrifices of the 'secret warriors' will become their lasting legacy by continuing to engage, inform and inspire people of all ages.

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We will remember them

Very special thanks to

**The Gerry Holdsworth Special Forces Charitable Trust**



visitBrighton



BRIGHTON AND HOVE  
HERITAGE COMMISSION

US

UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX

**The Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission** was formed in 2013 to campaign for the preservation and enhancement of the character and amenities of the city. It is also an umbrella organisation representing the concerns and interests of many heritage and community groups across the city, each of whom are actively involved in maintaining, and, when necessary, defending the heritage value of their area against threat.



**CITY  
BOOKS**

  
**ROYAL PAVILION**