



47 ROYAL MARINES COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

15th March 2001

A DISPATCH.

Millennium No.2

From Editors to Readers.

This is our second attempt to communicate and entertain. The scarcity of contributions from our readers is disappointing. However, we do understand that Floods, Freezing Fog, Snow, Slush and Black Ice, probably make it difficult to glide a pen over paper, especially with woollen mittens covering frozen fingers. We old codgers ageing gently on these paradisaical Mediterranean shores with winter temperatures of 68°F, 20°C are stimulated not only by the climate but by the beautiful almond groves now in full blossom. Thus we burst forth once again into print.

Maybe the Darling Buds of May will encourage our readers to produce flowery sentences of wit and wisdom for our July issue.

Chairman's 'Epistle'.

You will recall that in the last issue of 'Dispatch', written on Remembrance Day, I enclosed the contents of an e-mail from **Godfrey and Pauline Freeman** thanking the veterans for their wartime exploits. Both of them have always taken great interest in 47 RM Commando and, I am delighted to say, have applied for membership of our Association. Welcome **Godfrey and Pauline**.

A further welcome goes to **Diane Wilding** and her husband **Barron**, who have confirmed their membership of the Association. **Diane** is the daughter of **Peter and Blanche Spear**. It now remains for the rest of you to have serious conversations with your families!

Sadly, I learn from **Prof. John Forfar** that his son, who is staying with him, is critically ill. I am sure that the thoughts of all members will be with both **John** and **Isabelle** at this very worrying time.

In recent years the Office of 'Secretariat' has played little part in the business of the Association. The Committee has agreed that it is now disbanded. The secretary, **Catherine Snook** is responsible to the Association for General Administration, and **Professor Forfar** the custodian of monies.

Peter Spear has very kindly accepted the task of 'Reunion Co-ordinator', and with the assistance of **Catherine**, will be responsible to the Committee for the organisation, transport, welfare, programmes, accommodation etc. of our meetings. I have advised **Peter Phillips** and written to him, on your behalf, a letter of appreciation for his past services. We should all remember that it was through **Peter's** suggestion, after the disastrous 50th Anniversary reunion in Port-en-Bessin, that the **47 RM Commando Association** was formed.

Our secretary, **Catherine**, has expressed great pleasure in receiving several letters and telephone calls from members thanking her for taking on the job of looking after us. We wish her all the best of luck in her new task.

News.

Mint Burkinshaw reaches his 80th birthday in August and his present from the family is to take both him and **Margaret** to France in June for the reunion. It is to be somewhat of a *second invasion* as, including the children, there will be ten of the family arriving in three cars and trailers. They will be staying outside Port-en-Bessin but will be with us for the reunion. Mint says he is looking forward to a pint of beer with the red-headed Irishman! He asked tenderly after **David Walters** (Bing!) and wonders how a Devon man can end up in Australia.

Chuck Harris wrote a charming letter to our secretary thanking her for taking up the "onerous" post! He also let us know that **Tom Payne** ('Y' Troop), who is not in the best of health, would be pleased to hear from us. **Chuck** has returned from 'walkabouts' in Australia where he met up with **Gerry Brent** presenting him with an Association tie.

Mrs. E.P. Wright. It is with great sadness that we have to tell you of **Patsy's** recent illness. Over the past two months she has been suffering with extreme high blood pressure. Her doctor who insists that she have no visitors or telephone calls has confined her to her house. It seems that this treatment might last for three months. Our best wishes for a speedy recovery go to her.

Betty Quinney. Thanks are due to **Betty** for a very kind and newsy letter written to **Catherine** who is now able to update our mailing list even further. We would like to apologise to those veterans of 47 RM Commando whose names have been omitted from the list, and assure everyone that we are trying to put this matter right.

Joe Beck. Although he served with 47 RM Commando, it seems that **Joe** has never been a member of the Association. Sadly we learn that his wife, **Beat**, died in November last year. **Joe** has asked to be remembered to anyone who knew him, both acquaintances and friends. For those who might like to contact him his address is: 149, Billacombe Road, Plymouth PL9 7HB.

Pat Hagan. Many apologies to **Pat** who has also been left off our list, in spite of the fact that he has visited both France and Walcheren with us. He served with signals, attached to 47 RM Comando and landed with us on D Day. He owns a restaurant the extension of which he kindly allows the local branch of the Commando Association to use for reunions.

Peter Winter. Our Chairman has never been the same since returning from an un-enjoyable two-week holiday in Northern Cyprus before Christmas. It seems it rained twenty-four hours a day for the first seven days, and for the second he spent seven days in bed with a vicious type of Cypriot 'pox' (bronchitis). This stayed with him for a further three weeks after he returned to Palma. He is only now starting to talk to anyone!

Letters from Readers.

THE FRANKTON TRAIL

By Mark Bentinck

Perhaps I should introduce myself as many Association members will never have heard of me. I am the Corps Historical Records Officer, and one of my roles is to act as the "Historian" for the Royal Marines. Some years ago I gave John Forfar some facts to help with his very fine account of 47's action at Port-en-Bessin. I was so impressed by the story that I wanted to meet those who were there: this action seems to me to encapsulate the Commando virtue of tenacity in achieving the aim of the mission. regardless of setbacks and disasters. I had the privilege of walking the route with "Doc" Forfar a couple of years ago, and meeting many of you. I joined your Association and went to Walcheren the following year, when "Doc" again had me up at dawn in the Dunes, examining the site of the German Battery' that was the Unit's target.

Many of you will know of Operation Frankton, popularly known as the "Cockleshell Heroes" raid, after the film of the daring exploit which took place in 1942. As is well known, the mission was successful, and the canoeists disabled 4 ships containing supplies vital to the enemy. Of the 10 who set out, 2 were drowned while 6 were caught and executed by the Germans. The two survivors were Maj. Hasler and Marine Bill Sparks, who made their way through 100 miles of occupied France, to eventual safety in Spain. The French remain profoundly grateful for the bravery of these men, particularly because, had the raid failed, the RAF would have been called upon to bomb the ships as they lay alongside the quay in Bordeaux, and many French civilians would have been killed in the surrounding areas. The Ceremonies attract strong support from the French civil and military authorities.

Seizing the opportunity of a £78 return fare to Bordeaux on the airline "Buzz", I represented the Royal Marines Historical Society at the annual ceremonies there in December, to commemorate the raid.

The first events took place at St Georges de Didonnes, near the mouth of the Gironde, where there is a memorial to the raiders, and where their names are inscribed. I was privileged to read out the names of those who took part. A reception followed, in the town hall, then a lecture/symposium on the raid.

The following day saw the main ceremonies at the site in Blanquefort where those who were caught by the Germans were shot. It was a poignant and emotional moment as Bill Sparks, the remaining survivor, laid his wreath at the foot of the bullet holed wall where two of his comrades were executed: our hearts went out to him..

On our final morning in France I joined the members of Bagheera, the organisation of former members of 11th DBPC (Special Forces Paras), who are supporting the development of the 100 mile walking trail that follows Hasler and Sparks' escape route. En route it was warm and wet (contrasting with the icy conditions in December 1942), and muddy underfoot. but undoubtedly will be a most pleasant walk, through woods and vineyards, and old villages.

The plan is to fully mark the route, with descriptive panels describing the story. This project is firmly supported by the Royal Marines Historical Society, as it will be an enduring monument to a brave and courageous episode in our history, and one which raised the morale of the country in a year which had seen so many disasters. 2002 will see the 60th anniversary of the raid, when the route will officially open. The plan is to create a public trail, with a written guide in French and English, signed and marked, with explanatory boards at appropriate points, and to thus ensure that the memory of the raid is preserved for ever. As a leader of walking tours in France - and that country is covered in a highly organised network of paths - I know that a trail with a "history" is a great draw: I know of walks that follow the mediaeval routes to Santiago de Compostela, and Robert Louis Stevenson's "Travels with a Donkey" - doesn't the "Operation Frankton Escape Trail" sound more interesting?

Now here's a thought! How about a 47 Commando walking trail to commemorate your route from Asnelles to Port-en-Bessin? I realise that this is entirely up to the French, but they might be interested in the idea of a D Day "attraction" that would catch the imagination of the more active tourist.

Ed.

The Major wishes to avoid compromising his office and has suggested that the Chairman proceeds with an investigation of this matter. This is now in hand.

Snippet's corner.

We note that at least one veteran is alive and well and reads the Dispatch. He wrote and commented as follows.

The newsletter is good but of doubtful parentage. In Scotland we have a narrow (?) religious club called the 'Wee Free's': perhaps the readers of the newsletter should be told who the mysterious editorial cult or the 'We three' are! **John Forfar.**

Ed. *All done by MAGI-(c).*

Just a thought.

We are completing this dispatch on March 15th. The Anniversary of the day in 44 BC on which Brutus & Cassius and others, used Julius Caesar for bayonet practice, stabbing him twenty-three times. JC was advised by a soothsayer, probably the astrologer Spurrina, to "Beware the Ides of March", but Caesar believed the I.O.M. to be on the 13th not the 15th. His misreading of the calendar encouraged him to go 'walk abouts' on the 15th with the fatal result. One of our Editors misread the calendar mistaking the year 2000 for 2001 and consequently issued the wrong dates for the Portsmouth AGM (see **Attenshun**). He has apologised and has been given a reprieve – temporarily!

Pause for thought.Answers to the World's Easiest Quiz.

The Editors note the world is full of non-triers.

November edition (contributed by Carol Winter)

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1) How long did the Hundred Years War last? | 116 years |
| 2) Which country makes Panama hats? | Ecuador |
| 3) From which animal do we get catgut? | Sheep and Horses |
| 4) In which month do Russians celebrate the October Revolution? | November |
| 5) What is a camel's hairbrush made of? | Squirrel's fur |
| 6) The Canary Islands are named after what animal? | Dogs (Latin Canares) |
| 7) What was King George VI's first name? | Albert |
| 8) What colour is a purple finch? | Crimson |
| 9) Where are Chinese gooseberries from? | New Zealand |
| 10) How long did the Thirty Years War last? | 30 years |

No entries were received. A member of the editorial staff got one question right and so was given one wafer from a large box of After Eights and the Chairman 'scoffed' the rest. Mint please note!

A corner to 'A' Muse.

Smile with a Quartet of Quatrains from the poet, astronomer, mathematician and delightful hedonist.

Into Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *whence* like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

And, as the cock crew, those who stood before
The tavern shouted – 'open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more.'

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough.
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness-
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Ah, my Belovèd, fill the Cup that Clears
TO-DAY of past Regrets and Future Fears:
To-morrow! – *Why, To-morrow I may be*
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

Omar Khayyam

Matches and Hatches.

We are delighted to report that our first 'granddaughter' member, **Gemma Tebbutt**, daughter of **Sandra**, became engaged to **Nick Davison** on 31st. October. They hope to be married at Upnal Castle, Chatham, on 1st May 2002. Our best wishes go out to you both.

Jacqueline and **Rod Crossland** are the happy parents of recently born baby **Eve**. **Jacqueline** is **Mint Burkinshaw**'s youngest daughter. **Mint** and **Margaret** have one son and six daughters and now seven grandchildren. Our congratulations to all.

Funny corner



RM Commando Initiative Test

Mathematical Magic.

How to find out the age of someone **without them knowing!!**

1. Give the person a calculator and ask them to think of a number, any number, and ask them to enter it.
You must not look at the calculator.
2. (Let us suppose they choose 27). Then tell them to proceed as follows.
3. Multiply it by 2 54
4. Add 5 59
5. Multiply it by 50 2950
6. Add 1750 (Called the factor). 4700
7. Subtract the year of their birth. (let us say 1962) 2738
8. Then ask them what number they have left on the calculator.
9. The first two numbers are the number they thought of
and the last two are their **AGE !! (But don't tell them!)**

If they have **already** had a birthday this year then the factor must be **1751**, as it will for next year.

Try it and have fun.

Funny corner continued.

(Contributed by Carol Winter).

The British Military writes OFR's (Officer Fitness Reports). The form used for Royal Navy, Royal Marines and WRNS fitness reports is the S206. The following are actual excerpts taken from officer's "206's".

His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of curiosity.

I would not breed from this Officer.

This Officer is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definitely won't-be.

When she opens her mouth, it is only to change whichever foot was previously in there.

He has carried out each and every one of his duties to his entire satisfaction.

He would be out of his depth in a car park puddle.

Technically sound, but socially impossible.

This Officer is a gyroscope, always spinning around at a frantic pace but not really going anywhere.

This young lady has delusions of adequacy.

On joining my ship, this Officer was something of a granny; since then he has aged considerably.

This Medical Officer has used my ship to carry his genitals from port to port, and my officers to carry him from bar to bar.

Since my last report he has reached rock bottom, and has started to dig.

She sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.

He has the wisdom of youth, and the energy of old age.

This Officer should go far - and the sooner he starts the better.

In my opinion this pilot should not be authorised to fly below 250 feet.

The only ship I would recommend this man for is citizenship.

Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.

This man is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.

Only occasionally wets himself under pressure.

PS. It should be pointed out that none of the above were taken from the reports of officers who served with 47 RM Commando!!

Ladies Corner

Violette Szabo, GC, MBE, CdG



Violette Reine Elizabeth Bushell was born in Paris on the 26th June 1921. Her mother was French, her father an Englishman, who had met his wife while serving in WW1. Within a few years her parents brought her back to England, eventually settling in Stockwell, South London. She was a popular girl, showing signs of courage at a very early age.

When the second world war began, Violette met a Captain in the French Foreign Legion, Etienne Szabo. Within a few weeks, on the 21st August 1940 they were married. Etienne was posted abroad, Violette saw nothing of him for a year. He returned for seven days leave, they met in Liverpool and spent his leave together. Violette became pregnant, it was the last time she saw him alive. He was killed at El Alamein in North Africa. Time passed, and her daughter Tania was born. Violette received a letter from a **Mr. E. Potter** asking her to attend an interview at an office in London. When she arrived at the office, she was shown up to a bare room with a table and two chairs. Mr Potter suggested that her knowledge of France and fluency in French could be useful. He explained that he was looking for people to do 'dangerous work' in occupied France. "You mean spying?" she asked. 'No, not spying - but similar', he said. 'We want people with special qualities to be trained and go into enemy occupied territory to make life very unpleasant for the Germans'. She agreed immediately, but **Mr Potter** would not accept that, he wanted to run security checks on her and he wanted her to give it some serious thought. She returned a week later and again gave him the same answer.

Then began her training. Violette went into France twice. On the second occasion she was captured after a shoot-out in which she killed several German soldiers. After torture and interrogation in which she gave nothing away, she was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp where she was eventually shot through the back of the neck with two other women SOE agents, **Lillian Rolfe** and **Denise Bloch**. She was posthumously awarded the **George Cross** and the **Croix de Guerre** in 1946.

The poem she used to encipher her messages has become famous through the film '**Carve her name with Pride**'.

YOURS

The life that I have is all that I have
And the life that I have is yours.

The love that I have of the life that I have,
Is yours and yours and yours.

A sleep I shall have, a rest I shall have,
Yet death will be but a pause.

For the peace of my years in the long green grass,
Shall be yours and yours and yours.

Farewell.

*We have just learned that **Dennis Roberts**, 'Q' Troop, who was on our nominal list, died in 1999 from cancer. We understand that **Dennis** proved the doctors wrong by living a lot longer than they had forecast. He had no family and news of his sad death was seen in the Commando Association magazine. Our condolences go to his friends and to any relatives he may have.*

'Attenshun'

1. You will have read on page 4 that incorrect dates were given in our last issue for the Portsmouth reunion and AGM. This will be taking place on **Saturday 6th of October** until **Monday 8th** returning home on Tuesday 9th. With many apologies for this error.
2. It would be of great help to planners of our reunions if members were to suggest any places they would particularly like to visit or things they would like to do. If you have any preferences or suggestions please let **Catherine** know. We would remind all members that both family and friends are always welcome at our reunions. If an elderly member is dubious of travelling on his/her own and would like to bring a friend then please do so.
3. Some of you may be wondering why Lannah Battley's excellent write up of our Portsmouth reunion did not appear in either of the last two publications of the Globe & Laurel. I have received an answer to my enquiry to the editor, Capt. Newing, RM, which reads as follows.
 "Dear Peter,
 I am afraid there was a cock-up at this end. We have only recently started receiving articles by e-mail and our procedures are not yet foolproof. My apologies.
 Tony Newing."
4. Prof. Forfar has received a letter from a Mr. Jerry Maycock asking for information concerning his father, George William Maycock, who, he believes, was attached to 47 RM Commando in April 1944 as a Midshipman or Sub Lieutenant RN, and landed with us on D-Day and continued on to Port-en-Bessin. He later landed with the Commando in Walcheren. Jerry is very anxious to meet anyone who knew his father and would appreciate hearing from them. His address is as follows. Jerry Maycock, 28 Swan Close, Buckingham, MK18 7EP.
5. The following members have confirmed that they will attend the reunion in Port-en-Bessin in June.
 Jane Mansfield with son and partner; C. Harris; E. Killingback; Sandra Tebbutt and cousin Romy Richards; Guernos Jones and Shirley; F. Making; Gordon Tye and Betty Field; Ted and Lannah Battley; Ted and Cath Hartwell; Mint Burkinshaw and family of nine; Peter and Blanche Spear; Diane and Barron Wilding; Gordon and Coral Taylor; Richard and Lynne Fisher (formerly Lynne Goldsmith); Catherine Snook and sister Virginia Hartley; Bernard Woodgate and nephew Steve Mason; Mickie O'Brien and Peter Winter.

Easter Greetings to you all and a Happy and Healthy 2001.