

47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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DESPATCH 21 January 2010

COMMENT

Standing at the final, freezing ceremony in Vlissingen, a Dutch lady asked me how I had come by the Canadian poppy in my lapel. Not seeing anybody distributing them close by, I gave her mine. We started to chat and when I said that my husband took part in the landing and was standing in line with the rest of his comrades she appeared to be very impressed. "Stay there," she said. "I am going to get you a present from my house which is close by. I will only be a couple of minutes." She returned with a framed photo of her house taken in November 1944, slates loose, surrounded by debris, as members of the liberation force advanced in a running crouch. The black and white picture is of its time, lacking the bright clarity of modern photos. All the same, we are happy to have it hanging in a prominent position on the study wall, a constant reminder of the kindness, friendship and generosity of the people of the Netherlands who, after sixty-five years, still welcome the veterans and their families to Walcheren.

Lannah

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello to you all, trust you had a good Christmas, I wish you all a very healthy and happy New Year!

The Walcheren Pilgrimage was a great success, I will leave it to Lannah to expound. September 2009 – Ken Parker and myself representing 47 Commando Association, attended the RMA Annual Reunion at Lymington where a wall had been erected inscribed with the names of the Royals who have died in action since 2000. A very moving service with a total attendance of veterans, the service corps and families, I believe the number in total was about 4,000.

My thanks to our redoubtable Secretary, Betty Field, who as usual did us proud! Thanks also to Lannah for all her good work producing the Despatch, (we are all well aware of the huge amount of work involved). Also, Major Bob Perry and his band of serving Royals, together with Geof Haywood for their very considerable assistance on our visits abroad.

I would also like to mention Pat O'Connell, son of Captain Guy O'Connell, who accompanied us in 2009 and gave quite a boost to our visits.

Bless you all,

Chuck (C J Harris)

WALCHEREN 2009

This report with photo(s) should appear in the Jan/Feb 2010 issue of The Globe and Laurel.

47 RM Commando Association in Walcheren, 65th Anniversary of the Liberation

Gathering at our hotel, from all directions, gave our veterans, families and friends the opportunity to make or renew acquaintance before being thrown in at the deep end for a whole series of ceremonies remembering the liberation of the island of Walcheren sixty-five

years ago.

At Arnemuiden, due commemoration was made of the small detachment of French soldiers which attempted to stop the German advance in 1940 and where in 1944 Canadian and Scottish regiments fought fiercely to retake the territory. The whole event, with a speech from the Mayor, music, including RM trumpeters, two minutes silence and wreath-laying took place in pleasant sunshine, something looked back on later with some nostalgia.

After an excellent lunch, laid on by the Foundation to Support the Liberators of Walcheren we returned to the centre of Middelburg. A ceremony was held outside the former German headquarters in *het Damplein* (Dam Square) where the occupying force formally surrendered on 6th November 1944, naturally of great and joyful significance to the Dutch. During the ceremony, wreaths were laid at the foot of the building. Afterwards 47 veterans (all now in their mid-80s) decided to march in the parade to the Market Square, walking sticks an' all, to much applause from the bystanders lining the route.

A reception in the town hall followed. Dr Leon de Witte, for the Foundation, welcomed the veterans and their families and invited the units involved to speak. Many did, including our chairman, Chuck Harris, with a brief but telling impromptu speech which included heartfelt thanks to the Foundation for their generosity and friendship over the years.



Bergen op Zoom

Next day, 1st November, the anniversary of the landings, we gathered with 41 and 48 Commando and others, at the Westkapelle Museum where Major General John Rose, representing the CGRM, with the Corps RSM took time to speak individually to veterans. Outside, we had the opportunity to ride in a BV206 (all terrain tracked vehicle). This rattled the teeth but gave a trip along the beach protected from the strong wind and an excellent view of HNLMS Van Amstel, not a beer but a Dutch warship, lying offshore ready to fire saluting shots during the commemorations.

Everyone climbed to the top of the sea wall to the Tank Memorial for a ceremony under the auspices of Lt Col MacDonald MBE RM. The Rev J S King led the prayers. Maj Gen Rose laid a wreath as well as Col Heal RM, UK Defence Attaché and Lt Col H W Leicester on behalf of 4 Special Service Brigade HQ followed by our three Commando Associations. With the wind off the sea getting fresher, colder and wetter by the minute everyone was glad to make for the restaurant at the foot of the sea wall for shelter with good food and drink provided from Corps Funds.

Patrick O'Connell, son of the late Capt O'Connell of 47, played a recently discovered BBC archive recording made in November 1944. Men who took part in the capture and liberation of Walcheren spoke about their experiences with great clarity, their descriptions graphic, often horrific and also moving.

After lunch a further ceremony took place at Erica Beach, again in cold, wind and rain, followed by another at the 'Lighthouse' Civil Cemetery which proved even wetter. It sounds daunting but, in fact, there was plenty of laughter and camaraderie on the coach as people sloshed back aboard.

We continued to Serooskerke for a service where the singing in Dutch and English combined most fittingly and a talented contralto sang an aria from Handel's *Messiah*. Outside, wreaths were laid at the monument to 48 RM Commando's fallen in the heaviest rain yet. However, the good people of the small village of Serooskerke then provided us with a substantial hot meal with tea, coffee and a well-stocked bar. Everyone soon dried out, before returning to Westkapelle for a much anticipated concert by the RM Band Collingwood for both veterans and local people. Our anticipation was entirely met with a variety of wonderful music, humour and talented soloists. The five members of the Corps of Drums with their impeccable timing got extra cheers from us as, at the ceremonies throughout the day, they too had withstood the relentless weather.

Next day, dry but cold, we gathered at the church at Dishoek where a plaque outside names the thirty-four men of 47 RM Cdo killed in action on Walcheren. Their names were read out, followed by the Exhortation, two minutes silence and the laying of a wreath.

We continued to the British War Cemetery at Bergen op Zoom to join 41 and 48 veterans for a further ceremony led by Lt Col Bob MacDonald. He apologised for not being in his dress uniform but it was still damp and smelt of dog. We perfectly understood.

In the evening, another concert took place at St Jacobskerk in Vlissingen. Veterans were invested with medals recognising their actions sixty-five years ago. The Collingwood concert band and the Corps of Drums performed once more for an enthusiastic audience.

We returned to Vlissingen next morning for our final ceremony at the monument on Commandoweg. A large contingent of Dutch Commando veterans attended and, like our veterans, stood firm in the bitterly cold wind. After lunch we boarded our coach for the homeward journey and those who'd packed their long silk undies felt very grateful.

Thanks go to our indefatigable Secretary, Betty Field, Lt Col Bob MacDonald, Dr deWitte, the Foundation and all its hard-working members. And congratulations to our veterans who not only stayed resolute in less than easy circumstances but, as ever, managed to thoroughly enjoy themselves.

LB

Walcheren extras:

A LETTER has been sent to the village of Serooskerke from the Association thanking them for providing such a fine and substantial meal at their own expense. We were particularly grateful because there was insufficient time for us to return for dinner at the hotel and still get to the RM Band Concert at Westkapelle which, of course, nobody wanted to miss.

FLOWERS were laid at the grave of TSM Plank at Bergen op Zoom Cemetery by Marc de Bolster as well as attaching a photo of L Cpl Grimsdell to his headstone. This was done at the request of the families via the web-site and, of course, Marc also took photos for them.

GEOF'S LETTER

Having been lucky enough to be part of Major Bob Perry's Team over the past six years I've been able to meet and join the Veterans on their visits to Normandy and Walcheren. With the other "odd jobs" we had to do I wasn't able to fully participate in all the visits etc but this year by kind permission of my Wife/Bank Manager was able to travel with the party to Walcheren.

I was made most welcome and what a "hoofing" - current RM speak for "extra super good" - time I had, meeting new faces in the Families travelling and of course the endless leg pulls with the Veterans. Betty's organisation, the RM in the UK linked in with that of Col Bob McDonald MBE and the Foundation in Holland reflected the hard work they had done making the travel and programme really varied and interesting as we followed those footsteps of November 1944.

As always standing in the Cemeteries or at the Dishoek 47 memorial was a moving experience and thank you Chuck for allowing me to lay your wreath at Bergen op Zoom. Sharing a room with Patrick and being able hear about his Father then to see sites his Father was in, the mortar pits plus standing on the site of W11 during our trip out with the

Dutch collector John was terrific and we certainly learnt a lot doing it. If you have a chance to get John to show you round you must take it because as a local he knows so much about the area. Patrick's BBC recording, including the voice of his Father was amazing and hearing additional first hand reports from those on the ground filled in another piece of the story's jigsaw.

What else do I remember; the supreme efforts to host and welcome so many different groups by the Foundation led by Leon plus the people of Walcheren, the young people and the older generations that came up to say thank you and welcome you back, the Band of Her Majesty Royal Marines Collingwood's terrific concerts and the Corp of Drums who seemed to be everywhere even in or after the pouring rain. – It didn't really dampen our spirits although my efforts to mop certain ladies up were rejected - (spoil sports!!) - (notice no comment about the Ladies favourite DoM's rear end!!), the service at Serooskerke church and singing together in Dutch and English, our in-house "Cloggies" always there to show the way or tell us what the "double dutch" meant plus record it on camera, the march through the streets of Middelburg, seeing all the Veterans so smart and proud as we passed through the crowds all clapping was something I felt honoured to be a part of, the friendly banter between the groups that didn't hide the mutual respect you all have, having both the Landing Craft plus HNLMS Van Amstel lying offshore to fire the saluting shots and of course Maj Gen JG Rose CB MBE plus the other Royal Marines being with us - so many cherished memories!

To all those on the trip a big, big thank you, it was a laugh a minute, a real privilege to have been with you all especially the Veterans and to share your memories, meet new friends and renew old acquaintances, a trip I'll treasure and was proud to be part of. Take care and I look forward to meeting you all again... " don't know where, don't know when but I'm sure we'll meet again some sunny day"!!

Geof Haywood



Applause, applause

MARC'S PIECE

Mission (partially) accomplished

Another great week of commemorations and other events at the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Walcheren.

Although there was no final itinerary yet, we decided to make early reservations at the hotel ourselves. This caused us to arrive one day earlier, which gave us the opportunity to prepare for the arrival of the delegation arriving by coach the next day.

Apart from my usual role of 'paparazzi' I wanted to take the opportunity to show several items to the veterans whom I thought would be attending. The itinerary I had, originally, showed a lot of free time, so I loaded the car with part of my WW2 collection related to Royal Marines and Commandos, together with several books and other documents. But more importantly, several members and other relatives of veterans had sent me wartime photographs, which I needed to show to see if any veterans might remember names of others in them.

Friday 30 October the coach arrived in the afternoon at the hotel a bit earlier than we expected. Soon it became clear to us the itinerary had changed, so we did not have as much time as we hoped for. That evening I decided to start with showing the photographs to veterans and others that were interested. There were several photos of recruits posing at the Lymestone Barracks, one of the Eastney Barracks, and other group photos of which one is of A Troop. Unfortunately, no names of the faces in the photos came up, until Leslie suddenly recognised CSM Ashby and his father, QMS WJ Pike (on three of the photos). I also showed a green beret with (what I believed to be) a wartime officers two part cap badge. After some discussion it was decided it would have been a badge worn by WO2's. The next day I grabbed a couple of Battledress Blouses with 47 Commando shoulder titles sewn on (apart from the title 'commando' which are still missing on the blouses), to show around on the coach.

On Monday Ken Parker recognised himself and six others in one of the Lymestone photos. My mission proved to be successful to that point, because it gets harder for the vets to remember any of the names at over 65 years from the time they were made.

The next step for me was to grab some of the webbing equipment from my collection out of the car, and show it to a few veterans who had just finished lunch. I got several different reactions. One was the memory of the hours of treating the webbing with blanco. When I showed some 'Bren pouches', Chuck said to take 'the dreadful things away'. The reaction 'lovely' was given a few times when I showed a working marching compass.

Reg Stevens asked if I wanted to take a look at some documents he brought over, concerning research on a mystery about Churchill visiting the Normandy beaches by plane, along with several other documents concerning the Royal Artillery. If interested, he would allow me to take them home to make copies. So I did!

That evening Arthur Thompson showed me some of his documents, of which one was a copy of a Signals Section photo. He was able to provide several names, so I made a copy of it to write the names on. Ted and Lannah Battley have also been very helpful in providing more names and other details to the list of names of men who served in (or were attached to) 47 Commando.

As always there was not enough time, so I have not been able to show everything I wanted to. Mission partially accomplished, with the help of veterans and several others who have been very kind and helpful. Hopefully more photos and information will come my way, so I can have another attempt in Normandy 2010.

Anyone who is on the internet can see the results of my research at www.47commando.org.uk and have a look at part of my collection at www.xs4all.nl/~bolster. Any addition to either one will be much appreciated. Let's preserve history as much as we can!

Marc de Bolster

THE RECORDING

In the wooden restaurant of the pub at the foot of the Dyke in Westkapelle this year, the voices of young Royal Marines could be heard. As Veterans from 47 joined others and their families for the 65th Commemoration of the Liberation of Walcheren, our Association had brought a special recording. There at the end of lunch, the Dutch waiter behind the bar put the disc in the machine, and a small crackle came from the speakers.

What we were about to hear had only been heard by three people since it was first broadcast sixty five years ago.

So we all fell silent, around one hundred of us in the room, sitting there just yards from the Dyke where one of the gaps had been blown to prepare for the assault that followed in November 1944. There we all were, museum staff, our Dutch hosts, serving Royal Marines, and the Veterans from 41, 47, 48 and the rest of us. You have to wonder what kind of recording could call such attention at such a time.

The answer is that in 1944 the BBC recorded an account involving serving Royal Marines just days after their landing and assault in Walcheren. The men could be heard themselves, as they were in their twenties and thirties. So the voices of young Royal Marines we were listening to were the comrades of our Veterans, travelling through time.

For sixty five years, the recording had sat at the BBC among one million hours of material. It

really only came to light because of a family connection. One of the ten or so voices was that of my father, Captain Guy O'Connell. He died in 1977, and his younger brother many years later told me that the family had always thought he'd been interviewed on the beach by the men from the BBC. So I set about looking for it to find it for him, and alas by the time I got the recording, he had died, along with all of my father's siblings.

So it seemed that the best thing to do was to get it heard by as many people of this great generation as possible. I flew to Edinburgh to ask Professor John Forfar what he thought, and he was most interested. Then, a few weeks later, I boarded the bus with the 47 Association to head to Walcheren, clutching the CD but unsure how to proceed.

Luckily Betty had billeted me with Geof Haywood. He listened to it with fascination, and immediately hit on the way to proceed. We asked Chuck Harris, and the serving Royal Marines who were involved in the organisation of events, if it would be of interest to play the sixteen minutes in public. So that's how this account from the past came back to life, crackling into life, there at the scene of such brave actions, and in front of the Veterans themselves.

The final voice on the tape is that of a Canadian Artillery Officer, stationed south of Walcheren. He looks north and describes the feeling of relief at seeing the Green Berets of 47 marching along the sand towards Flushing. He knew then that the mission was accomplished, and minesweepers were already at work at dawn to clear the path to the Scheldt, just hours after the batteries and their guns had been silenced.

To listen to the recording is to understand the work carried out by all the liberating forces, and of the Dutch who had been so brutally occupied. Officers and men from 41, 48, 47 and 4 Army Commando, as well as the Canadian Infantry are all heard talking about how their operation had progressed. After the recording finished, there was a round of applause, and many veterans said they had heard voices of men they knew well.

The museum there at Westkapelle now has a copy, as does Mark Bentinck the Royal Marines historian and the Royal Marines Museum. Marc de Bolster who has gathered so much material and helped so many people to commemorate the events of 1944 helped in the copying of the disc, and finally has his own recording too.

Many agreed that it seemed very fitting to fall silent to listen to such a rare account, in such a place, and at such a time. It was a great honour to be there with the Association in the audience, and to travel from Dover with the recording. Special though it is, it doesn't quite beat the more contemporary voices of the Veterans of 47 singing in the hotel bar at midnight as some of them were that week. As far as I know, no recording exists of that. It must be time to make one!

Happy New Year to all Association Members.

Patrick O'Connell



German prisoners assemble at Damplein, Middelburg 7.11.44

[photo M.Geerse]

THE ROYAL MARINES COMMEMORATIVE LINK BRIDGE

A bridge linking the Tank Monument at Westkapelle with the Polderhuis Museum is planned. The following is extracted from details received from Lt Col Bob MacDonald:

Many people are aware of, and very grateful for, the prominent role that The Polderhuis Museum in Westkapelle has played in acting as a focal point for veterans and their families visiting the Walcheren area... The Museum has been working hard on a proposal to erect a bridge from the Tank Monument on the dike... to the ramp of the existing Landing Craft. The bridge will act as both a symbolic and physical link between the sea and the land, thus capturing the very essence of the Royal Marines motto "Per Mare Per Terram" – "By Sea and By Land".

The Veterans Associations are proposing to make donations to the bridge project so as to hasten its construction and thus establish it as a living memorial to the strength of the ties that bond the Royal Marines "family" with the people and families of Westkapelle. It is hoped that individual donations will be marked in the form of a book of donations or a commemorative plaque in a prominent place in the Museum.

Major General J G Rose CB MBE, (representing the Corps on behalf of the Commandant General Royal Marines) [viewed] the details of the project on 1 November during his visit to the Museum and it is hoped that he will make a recommendation to CGRM as to the suitability of the project for Corps funding.

The bridge will be built largely by local labour using traditional dike and sea defence building methods and materials. The final flight of steps into the museum grounds will be in the form of the bow of a Landing Craft, a design chosen to complement the existing Landing Craft in the museum garden. It is hoped that the completion and opening of the bridge – scheduled for mid 2010 - will be marked by a suitable ceremony with articles published in relevant newspapers and journals to bring the bridge to the attention of the wider public and historical world.

The architect's drawing is reproduced (albeit rather small-scale) on the back page.

Donations Quite a few people made individual donations while in Walcheren. Anyone else wanting to contribute can do so through Secretary, Betty Field, as all payments will be sent together (including a contribution from the Association) using a special system which will keep the cost of currency conversion to a minimum. Cheques should be made payable to '47 RM Commando Association' and please make it clear that it is a donation for the bridge. We hope that it will be possible to attend the opening later this year, probably in July or August. It should be warmer than November and, who knows, there might be a heatwave.

REMEMBRANCE IN CRETE

Our member Peter Hughes laid a wreath at the British Cemetery at Souda Bay in Crete on behalf of the Royal Marines Association on Sunday, 8th November 2009. Peter's father fought in the Battle of Crete in 1941 where he was captured. Interestingly, the late E Gurnos Jones served in Crete (which pre-dated the formation of the commandos) and Peter's father was his Battery Sergeant Major. Peter's son, Dominic, who is the BBC's Europe correspondent, travelled with him. There was an item about it on Radio 4 and an excellent audio slide show can be seen at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/8354533.stm> with Peter explaining his father's exploits to Dominic and showing family photos of his father in uniform plus views of the cemetery in its stunning position on Souda Bay.

Peter's other travelling companion was his friend, Dr Norman Rose (not a medical doctorate but nuclear physics) who was drafted into Q Troop 2 weeks before D-Day and then served with 47 Commando throughout the campaigns. We hope he will become a member.

IN MEMORIAM

We have learned of the death of the following veterans and offer sincere condolences to family and friends:

Thomas Roger Griffiths 3rd October 2009 after a short illness. The family take great pride in his service with the Royal Marine Commandos but he didn't talk of his service much, mainly about times remembered with his comrades, and they don't know which troop he served in. However they do know that his landing craft was hit going in to Gold Beach with only three survivors. He was picked up by another craft which was also hit. Yet another craft picked him up and returned to England and then came back the next day to Port en Bessin. His service continued right through to Belgium. It is believed that his cousin, Arthur Bradley, was lost in the first landing craft and Bob Godfrey, the cartoonist (children's animation

Roobarb etc), was one of his mates in his troop.

Ronald Everton 7th November 2009, Coventry, aged 85 years. Ron served as a signaller with 47, landing on Gold Beach on D-Day and at Walcheren, having had two landing craft sunk under him on the way in at Westkapelle. He probably served with X Troop but may also have been with other troops at different times. After the war, Ron served as a firefighter in Coventry, the city of his birth, until retiring with the rank of Chief Fire Officer.

SINS OF OMISSION

From Gold to Omaha John Forfar's new book was available in both English and French in Port-en-Bessin in June which I should have mentioned in the July issue. A review appears in the November/December *Globe & Laurel* together with a cover photo which is also included in this issue together with details of availability and price.

Albert Rutherford When reporting Albert's family scattering his ashes at Westkapelle, I forgot to mention that they also visited the British Cemetery at Bergen op Zoom where they laid a wreath at the main cross and laid a poppy at the headstone of every 47 RM Commando.

James Delingpole article Among the many articles in advance of the 65th anniversary of D-Day, was one by journalist (and Association member) James Delingpole in a *Sunday Telegraph* travel supplement. It gave an excellent account of 'one of the most magnificent British military exploits of the Second World War', being of course 47 RM Commando's capture of Port en Bessin. It also suggested to travellers that if in the port in early June and they "spot a group of old boys in green berets in a seafront bar, for goodness sake stop and buy them a drink". There was also a good photo of several of our veterans in the port taken at the 60th anniversary.

This same photo appeared with an article by the historian, Richard Holmes, in the London *Evening Standard* though, apart from the caption referring to the Commando, the article is a more general one about various military anniversaries and 'the 65th' in particular.

The line-up in the photo is, so far as I can tell: Albert Rutherford, Tim Tye, Ted Battley, Pat Plumb, Chuck Harris, George Amos, Peter Ford & Roy Bryant.

Capt A P O'Brien RM MC Further to Mickie's letter on the Normandy 65th, he would like to add further thoughts, having not mentioned "the monument to appreciate the major contribution of John Forfar to establish the 47 attack on Port en Bessin, one of the outstanding events of Corps history. Also his energy and drive in the initial development of the Western Feature and achieving the recognition by the Corps of Terence Cousins who played the major part in the success of the attack."

KAPELSCHE VEER

Ed Thoden van Velzen informs me that Dutch Commando Veterans and local people will, as usual, be commemorating the battle at Kapelsche Veer on 30th January and it will probably be as freezing cold on the 65th anniversary as in previous years and in 1945.

He also sent me copies of German maps of Walcheren from 1943. These show that the huge concrete batteries defending Walcheren, known to the Commandos as W4, W11 etc were given names, mainly using opera titles, e.g. Carmen, Fidelio, Zauberflöte, even Edelweiss. It seems unlikely that anyone serving in 47 thought of W11 as quite so romantic.

REVIEW

From Gold to Omaha, *the battle for Port-en-Bessin 6th-8th June 1944* by John Forfar, published by Les Gens du Phare, ISBN 978-2-911924-44-6. Price 15 euros (available via lesgensduphare@live.fr and also published in French)

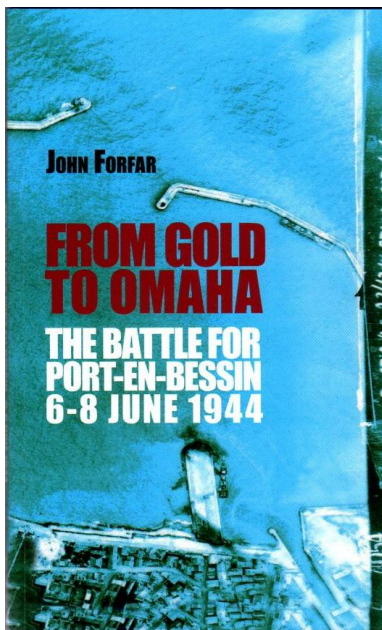
On D-Day, 6th June 1944, 47 RM Commando landed at the extreme right of Gold Beach with the task of taking Port-en-Bessin and ultimately linking with the American forces on the left flank of Omaha Beach. A great deal happened and a good many setbacks had to be surmounted before this could come about.

John Forfar, the unit's Medical Officer, was there and gives a graphic account of the chaos as they approached the coast with landing craft being sunk or damaged by beach hazards and of the constant fire from the well-entrenched defending forces.

The beach was intended to be already secured with the highly-trained, elite force passing through the British bridgehead to make their way behind enemy lines to approach the port from the rear. The opposed landing presented a very different situation with many men killed and injured. Those who had landed safely were strung out over a vast area of beach, many without weapons or ammunition, some without boots. These remnants managed to regroup, some catching up much later, and set off inland away from the uproar of the beach to the dangerous quietness of the occupied countryside.

This advance is described with great narrative drive. Despite intermittent exchanges of fire with Germans encountered on the way, they arrived by nightfall at their objective, Mont Cavalier, a mile and a half inland, overlooking the port and undetected by the occupying troops.

The book also shows the situation from the viewpoint of the French inhabitants. Within the



port were active resistance workers, though by 1944 many had been arrested and transported elsewhere. For ordinary citizens there were shortages, severe restrictions and impositions. Men had to work on the building of the formidable defences and access to the sea was largely forbidden.

After little sleep, the Commando advanced towards the town and found that the two headlands within which the port sheltered not only held the dominant position they were already aware of but also had the support of two flak ships inside the harbour which had not been in the script.

Mounting casualties became a huge problem for the MO but he found that French families were always willing to take in the injured despite the fact that if the assault had failed they would suffer the harshest reprisals. Ultimately the flak ships were

rendered useless and the fiercely defended headlands thanks to RM spirit and determination overrun and German resistance crumbled.

At one time this was the forgotten operation of WWII, perhaps because the importance of the capture in implementing PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) to provide essential fuel for the early days of the Normandy invasion was still considered hush-hush after the war.

Thanks to John Forfar's *From Omaha to the Scheldt* (Tuckwell Press, 2001) which covers the entire history of 47 Commando, these events have become more widely known. This volume is well-illustrated by numerous photos and maps, many of which appeared in the earlier volume.

The battle played a crucial role in the success of Operation Overlord so this book can be considered essential reading for anyone specialising in the history of that momentous time but it is highly recommended for those with simply a general interest, too, as a jolly good read.

LB

BACK ISSUES OF THE DESPATCH

The request by Major Bob Perry RM to trace missing back issues of *Despatch* met with an excellent response. He thought there might be a few squirrels out there. Bob has now completed the set and deposited them with the Royal Marines Museum and would like to thank everybody who got in touch and sent him copies.

IN THE PRESS

DAILY MAIL 8th June 2009

Robert Hardman had a long article reporting events from various parts of the Normandy

coast during the D-Day 65th commemorations with a lot about the veterans who made it there, including the following:

I watched ten old chaps from the Royal Marines' 47 Commando back in the town of Port-en-Bessin which they had liberated with astonishing bravado on June 7th 1944. It was a crucial objective because it was the proposed conduit for all the fuel needed to keep the invasion going. But steep cliffs ruled out a direct assault. So, Royal Marines such as Corporal Chuck Harris, now 86, had to land ten miles away, fight their way along the coast through the night and attack the town next day. Yesterday Chuck and his chums unveiled a memorial to Captain Terence Cousins who died leading the victorious charge on a German bunker.

'He was very hard. You'd follow him anywhere,' says Chuck. 'He should have won the VC for this.'

GLOBE & LAUREL July-August 2009

Dave Devenney had an excellent and entertaining two-page account of the preparations and events of the 65th anniversary in Port-en-Bessin. Among others, he had the group photo of the veterans at Allée Professeur John Forfar with the CGRM which I sent in for my article, although I'd begged the editor not to let Dave nick it. Was I bovvered? Er, yes, but we did have a very good group photo taken outside Chateau de Tracy with our article instead.

47 Commando get a couple of other mentions in this issue. 1 Assault Group RM reported attending the service for the unveiling of the new memorial to Captain Cousins before going on a battlefield tour in the area. Another Normandy battlefield tour was taken by a large contingent from Merseyside RM Reserve and took in Port-en-Bessin and 47 RM Cdo's exploits.

GLOBE & LAUREL September-October 2009 Under Association News is an excellent photo of our Chairman Chuck Harris (again!) in the Chelmsford & District RMA section. The branch are doing a series of features on specific members with details of their service. Chuck is also President of Chelmsford RMA.

47 PLAQUES



The supply of 47 RM Commando plaques ran out some time ago but Geof Haywood decided to take the matter in hand.

Geof has laid out the money, in the first instance, for the making and supply of a new batch which are now available direct from him at 10 Elizabeth Road, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1AX or 01202 888194 or

Geofandjillh@btinternet.com The price is £25 plus £2.14 p&p. Many thanks to Geof for his fine endeavour.

TRACING THE PAST SPECIAL

Captain Terence Cousins

This section normally features families trying to trace information about past members of 47 Commando. This is exactly the reverse. Over several years efforts have been made to trace relatives of Captain Terence Cousins. Now, rather like number eleven buses, two have come along.

Dr Christopher Jones of Ottawa made contact via the website. His grandmother was Dorothy Berting, nee Cousins, and the sister of Terence Cousins' father Cyril Walter Cousins. He visited the UK in August but we had no contact information. However, since then, he has spoken to Malcolm Ross on the phone and also Arthur Delap who took part in

the assault on the bunker where Captain Cousins fell.

Essie Cousins has also been in touch and is now a member of the Association. Her father, now quite elderly, is a half-brother of Terence Cousins. She also spoke by telephone to Arthur Delap as well as George Amos who was in A Troop and John Forfar and Mickie O'Brien who both knew Terence well. Essie reported that it was great to have the chance to talk to them.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, 27th March 2010 at The Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth at 2.30 pm. It may be possible to visit and hold a ceremony at the 47 Commando Memorial Stone in the Garden of Remembrance at the RM Museum, Eastney so it is suggested that veterans wear or have with them berets, medals etc. For those travelling any distance who wish to stay overnight, the Club's number for room bookings is (023) 92837681. We are Associate members so please mention that you are with the 47 RM Cdo Association group. Whether you are attending or not, if you would like to propose any changes to the chairman and Committee, please send in your request to Lannah via post, email or phone. Also any volunteers to be the Standard Bearer?

MONEY MATTERS

The annual subscription of £10 per head for 2010 has now fallen due. Please make cheques payable to '47 RM Commando Association' and send to our Treasurer:

Mrs G Davison, 91 Catherine Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 2HL

SECRETARY'S SECTION

Secretary, Betty Field, received Christmas greetings from two 47 veterans in Australia, Gerry Brent and Dick Tull who both also sent best wishes for the New Year to all members.

Normandy 2010 After big occasions in 2009 in France and Holland we will now be commemorating the 66th anniversary of the D-Day Landings. All the same, it's expected to be far from humdrum. The probable dates for our trip are from 5th June to the 8th or 9th. The usual early start is likely so some may wish to book overnight at The Royal Maritime Club, details as above re the AGM. There will probably be other pick up points around Portsmouth, including the Ferry Terminal. All times and dates will be confirmed later, as well as the cost. Of course, the more people that travel the less it will cost individually.

If you wish to go, please let Betty know just **as soon as possible**. As usual, send a deposit of £25 per head, cheques made payable to "47 RM Commando Association" to:

Mrs E A Field, 12 Alfred Road, Stubbington, Fareham, Hants PO14 2QY

47 RM CDO WEBSITE

Marc now has on the website the list he has been compiling of everyone who was either in or attached to 47 RM Commando. It's probably impossible to attain an absolutely complete list but it seems likely that it's the most comprehensive one that there has ever been. To add to it's completeness, Marc is now trying to add any nickname, rank, service number and troop for the existing names. If you can help with any of these for anyone who served then please get in touch with Marc, as below.

As always, Marc is still looking to add wartime portrait photos in uniform of men that served. The website has proved to be a wonderful way for people to get in touch and learn more about relatives who served in the Commando and deserves all the support we can give.

Any photos, documents and other material that you think might be of interest can be sent to: Marc de Bolster, Elzendreef 29, 2272 CG Voorburg, Netherlands

Or email: m.de.bolster@xs4all.nl All originals will be returned safely.

You can access the website at: www.47Commando.org.uk

Next issue due July 2010

Happy New Year !

