

47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

Committee

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DESPATCH 25 January 2012 COMMENT

An innovation in this issue is a serialisation of Gerry Brent's account of his time in Holland with 47. Too long to appear in one issue, it seems important to have good accounts of the experiences of those who served and the conditions at the time. As *Despatch* gets filed in the archive at the Royal Marines Museum, this seems as good a place as any to have Gerry's experiences on record.

What is not an innovation but, rather, a rarity is a marriage announcement. We have had one before and it's pleasing to have another. Happy New Year Lannah

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Someone once said "never make predictions, especially about the future". But here goes anyway. In 2012, someone somewhere will write that this June will probably be the last reunion in Normandy for the D Day Veterans. The same was said at the 60th anniversary of the landings. From the 60th, to the 65th to the 66th and on, the same feelings are expressed. By no means can all of our members travel to France or to The Netherlands, but I can report from making the journey again in 2011 that in the teeth of all these predictions, 47 RM Commando Association is now seen as one of the most active of its kind. Under the Chairmanship of Chuck Harris, marshalled by Ingrid our secretary and Betty Field before her, a warm and inviting atmosphere has led to a full and boisterous support party joining 47 Vets at every turn. In France, in Holland, and in London at our first Association Dinner in a long time, scores support the Veterans as they honour the service of their 47 comrades. We have plans for a renewed journey to France this year, and to keep the history of 47 RM Commando alive in visits, in print, in memorials and in film. Among the changes you can read about in this edition, produced in the sparkling Lannah style, that were agreed in June at the AGM, Chuck Harris remains as our Veterans Chairman and Adjutant, and I've taken on his other Chairman duties. All of us who are the sons and daughters of the 47 Veterans know that we can never expect to fill their boots, but some years ago, Chuck gave me an old red book. When I opened it, there above his own name was that of my father, who in turn had given it to him at the end of the War. So Chuck has now passed on to me something else that I consider very precious, which is the task of keeping our Association warm, welcoming, and fixed on what it means to "remember them." With thanks to our President John Forfar, our veteran committee members, Ted Battley, Ted Hartwell and Chuck Harris and to the other hard-working committee members Geof Haywood (our dinner organising MC), Marc de Bolster (historian and web wizard), Sandra Tebbutt and Peter Spear (Standard Bearer.)

Patrick O'Connell

Good wishes for better times to Michel Désérable, Peter Ford, Chuck Harris and Ken Parker who have all had health problems recently and to anyone else who is suffering!

WALCHEREN 2011



This report with photo(s) should appear in the Jan/Feb 2012 issue of The Globe and Laurel.

47 RM Commando Association in Walcheren Dragons' Teeth and Tiles

Our group of around twenty, including six veterans, gathered at Dover for the trip to Middelburg to commemorate the assault and the eventual liberation of the island of Walcheren in 1944. In Holland we were joined by Dutch and Belgian friends to swell our numbers. Our first full day began at the Polderhuis Museum in Westkapelle on the 1st November, exactly 67 years after the landing there. Following the Museum's usual generous hospitality, a ceremony was held beside the new Liberty Bridge with the tank monument on the sea wall high above.

Wreaths were laid on behalf of local organisations as well as 47 and 48 RM Commandos and by Lt Col Jerry Slack RM who liaises with the Netherlands Navy and Commandos.

With our Standard Bearer and his deputy both unable to attend, we had a very able sub in Eric Corlett who donned a green beret (his dad once had one) and did it to the manner born.

Bugler Ross Tomkins RM, sounded the Last Post together with the bugler from the local Music Company OKK, a very pleasing combination.

At the end of the ceremony, Lt Col Bob MacDonald RM MBE, now retired from the liaison post with the Dutch Commandos, presented a framed copy of a commendation from the Commandant General Royal Marines to the people of Walcheren for their support of RM veterans over the years and particularly acknowledging those who worked on the planning, funding and building of the Royal Marines Liberty Bridge.

At the 'Lighthouse' Civil Cemetery, local people of all ages who died following the bombing of the sea walls and the flooding of the island in 1944 were commemorated. A further short ceremony took place at the landing monument at Erica Beach.

Back at the Museum, some of the veterans were interviewed by a documentary film company about their experiences of the landing.

Next morning, we attended a church service at Zouteland. The Royal Navy managed to blow a hole in the church roof in 1944, always remembered but also forgiven. The roof was being refurbished again and veterans were presented with old tiles as mementoes. Wreaths were laid outside at the 48 RM Commando monument with two of their veterans also in attendance. At Dishoek, outside the church, the plaque to 47's men killed in action had become partially obscured by a hedge. The church was closed but, with true Commando initiative, Geof Haywood scouted round and borrowed some shears from a local resident. We never knew about his fluent Dutch... After some robust gardening, our wreath was laid with due ceremony. Our Dutch friend, "John the Collector", arrived and showed the way to the Dragons' Teeth. These rows of concrete monoliths were tank barriers, mined and on the dunes in 1944 but now overrun by woodland. For all that, they were still clearly visible, the long lines continuing as far as the eye could see.

John took us next to the Battery W11. The vast concrete bunker had held up the advance of 47 Cdo in 1944 and cost many casualties. John now houses his WW2 memorabilia in a part of it. Did I really say, "The rusty old junk on this shelf reminds me of my husband's shed"? Black mark! However, the rest of John's collection is in good condition and includes uniforms, insignia, small arms, an Oerlikon and a German anti-tank gun so big that getting it inside must have been like putting a ship in a bottle. Our visit ended with "Up Spirits!", a surprise for the veterans which we all enjoyed.

Next day, at the British War Cemetery at Bergen op Zoom, wreaths were laid for both 47 and 48 Commandos. We continued to Kapelsche Veer where the 400 men of 47 Commando attempted to take the island in the River Maas in January 1945. The defending German paratroopers were in a commanding position and, ultimately, it took a whole regiment to dislodge them. Overall, many allied lives were lost before the objective was achieved, among them that of nineteen-year-old Lieutenant Adam of 47 Cdo. We visited his grave in a civil cemetery at Sprang Capelle. Now under the auspices of the War Graves Commission, it has been lovingly maintained over the years by the local community. Here "Tommo", our bugler, sounded his final Last Post for us.

The Corps Dinner in the hotel that evening brought our reunion to a fitting end, all hoping to enjoy the company and camaraderie again next year. LB



At the Dragons' Teeth

48 Commando We were pleased to welcome Ernie Taylor and Fred Bogarde of 48 Cdo, both resident in Holland, who were able to join us for some of the time in Walcheren and lay wreaths on behalf of their comrades.

Belgian friends Roger and Tina Vermeylen were also with us for a couple of days. Great to see them and we look forward to meeting them again in Normandy with their jeep and their authentic WWII uniforms.

Blue Knights, Derby had laid poppy crosses at Lt Ian Adam's grave. On checking, they proved to be not Hell's Angels but an international motor-cycling club for police and ex-police, male and female. They apparently travel widely and do a lot of charity work.

Walcheren Extras

Thank you to Ingrid Fearne, Geof Haywood and Patrick O'Connell for all the hard work that went into organising this reunion also to Marc de Bolster and Mariel for lots of liaisoning in Holland.

Ken Parker Due to complications of an eye operation, Ken was unable to travel as planned. While in Holland, everyone signed a postcard for him. Ken has been in touch to "thank each and every one for the well wishes. It cheered me up no end".

Bill Harvey We met up with Bill not for the first time. His father served with No 4 Army Commando at Lofoten, Dieppe and on D-Day. He landed at Flushing as part of Operation Infatuate but sadly was killed on 1st November 1944.

We hope Bill may become a member and perhaps travel with us in future.

Portsmouth RMA While returning from Walcheren, we met a bootneck in the bar of the Royal Maritime Club (surprise, surprise), a member of Portsmouth RMA. He said they were arranging a big reunion in Portsmouth in March to which all veterans would be invited. Since then it has been put back to early November when the RM Band is available. This may well coincide with our next Walcheren trip but, at the moment, the plans are for a Dinner & Dance on the evening of Saturday, 3rd November followed by a parade on Sunday morning for the unveiling of a new memorial to the Cockleshell Heroes at the Royal Marines Museum.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Trevor Hughes MBE 1st October 2011

The following obituary and photo appeared in The Daily Telegraph on 11th November 2011: Captain Trevor Hughes, who has died aged 88, landed on Gold Beach in 1944, survived being shot twice in the head, and subsequently rose to high rank in the Freemasons.

Hughes was signals officer of 47 Commando, Royal Marines when it landed in 'Jig' sector, east of le Hamel, about 09.30 on D-day, June 6, 1944: the rising tide swept 47 Commando's landing craft onto the beach obstacles [mines fixed to the top and bottom of posts stuck in the sand] and all but two of their 14 landing craft were blown-up or broached, the Commando lost much of its equipment and all their wireless sets. Undeterred, the commandos assembled at their rendezvous, were partially re-equipped, and set off to march the nine miles athwart the German rear to Port en Bessin, on the boundary between the British and the American landing beaches.

Operation Aubrey, 47 Commando's objective, was to take the harbour of Port en Bessin from the landward side and to preserve it intact for use by the Allies for Pluto, the cross-Channel fuel-line. Overnight the Commando established itself on a ridge overlooking Port en Bessin and Hughes, and his signaller, Marine J S Winrow, joined the headquarters company at, 'Point 72', where Hughes worked frantically to establish communications with brigade headquarters and the forward observation officer [responsible for directing the guns of the cruiser *Emerald* and the destroyer *Ursa* to destroy German positions defending Port en Bessin].

While 47 Commando became involved in desperate hand-to-hand for the harbour, Hughes reported that the eight men at 'Point 72' were coming under fire from further south, but was told by his commanding officer that no one could be spared to deal with it. He and Winrow were lying side by side shooting at the attackers when Hughes's helmet was shot off. It hit Winrow in the face, who passed it back, and they carried on firing until Hughes was hit on the helmet again, when they decided that prudence should rule and jumped through a hedge. Afterwards Hughes was amused by what the sniper must have thought when he realised he had not 'got' his man.

During the evening the headquarters came under increasingly accurate sniper, machine-gun and mortar fire from several directions, and Hughes tuned his wireless set off frequency (to prevent the enemy learning what they were) and started to burn his secret documents.

Hughes and Winrow now held their fire until the enemy was about 40 yards away, when about 15 of them charged. Hughes shot and killed the leading man; a German called out "Surrender!" and he too was shot. The Germans had by now advanced to within ten yards of the trench, when smoke bombs were set off and in the confusion Hughes crawled away through some long grass and barbed wire.

By midnight the enemy had overrun the headquarters, but Hughes and the gallant resistance of the headquarters platoon had prevented the Germans from interfering with the capture by 47 Commando of Port en Bessin.

His sons treasure the helmet he was wearing on June 7, 1944, but in the next few months Hughes was wounded twice more. Later in June he received shrapnel wounds to his right arm and shoulder when 47 Commando attacked at Sallenelles, Calvados and he received a



gunshot wound to his left hand at the landings on Walcheren in November.

He was awarded the MBE in 1945.

Trevor Lancaster Hughes was born in West Derby, Liverpool on October 27, 1922 and was educated at Alsop High School. In the early war years he worked in insurance and was a firewatcher during the Liverpool blitz. He volunteered for the RAF but failed a test in a spinning chair, when he could not stand straight after being whirled round. Instead he was joined the Royal Marines and was commissioned in spring 1942.

Postwar Hughes joined an insurance company

before setting up an office supplies company, Fonadek, which received a Royal Warrant after selling electrical equipment to the Duke of Edinburgh.

In a long sporting career Hughes was a cricket wicket-keeper, and kept goal at soccer and hockey, only retiring at the age of 65. His usual line of defence was to stop balls with his body, caring not about broken noses, broken fingers and bruised stomach. His other passions were sailing, and revisiting his wartime commando training areas by tent and caravan.

After being shot at Port en Bessin, he thanked his Maker and felt every day after that was a bonus to be lived fully, and his Anglican faith was the bedrock of his life.

Hughes was also a freemason for 64 years, active in four provinces and gaining honours in three, including grand rank in the Royal Arch, and he took pleasure in seeing his sons as installed craft Masters in 1996. He belonged to over 50 lodges and other degrees and was a regular attender, being out several times a week. He loved the ceremony and the ritual and totally believed in and upheld the moral standards of Freemasonry and revelled in the company of fellow masons.

Hughes, who died on October 1, 2011, married Jean Murdo in 1945. She predeceased him 2007 and he is survived by their three sons.

Peter Hore

Bill Wilderspin 29th December, 2011, Bristol. Bill, ex-QMS with 41 RM Commando, was the long time Secretary of their Association. Many of our members will remember him from visits to Walcheren and on other occasions. His funeral was in Bristol on 4th January 2012.

Albert Thompson who served in Q and Y Troop, died September 2010 not February as stated in *Despatch 24*.

MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMENT

Doreen Isherwood to Gary Sigvaldsen in the USA in February or March 2012.

Doreen is the daughter-in-law of Captain Ken Isherwood (B Troop) and "found" us by chance in the coach park at Bayeux in June. She immediately became a member and joined the party to Walcheren in November. Doreen is retaining the name Isherwood.

Gary is Norwegian American, a former pilot, now a Federal Aviation Authority Inspector.

They will divide their time between London and North Carolina and it's possible they will join us in Normandy in June.

Several other members of the Isherwood family have become members, including Doreen's son, Lt Carl Isherwood RN.

Congratulations to Carl for being presented with the 2nd Sea Lord's Recommendation Award for his work on assault navigation. His name was put forward by Col (now Brig) Copinger-Symes of 1 Assault Group RM and the presentation was made aboard HMS Victory on 17th November.

THE ASSOCIATION DINNER

"I think it would be a good idea to have a Dinner somewhere central in the UK, say the Union Jack Club, London, which made us so welcome for the Cabinet War Rooms Tour. We'll invite all the Veterans to come and have a good get together" says our new Chairman Patrick O'Connell! "Geof, you've done this sort of thing before, would you organise it?" - Something

for our Veterans - who could refuse the challenge thus I became the 47 RM Cdo Association Dinner Organiser!!

Patrick had spoken to the UJC so I made contact plus set the date, Sat 17th Sept. Ingrid sent the list of Association Members which I checked with Lannah and Gemma for updates. An advert in Despatch 24 page 8 (in case you missed it!) then we rang all the Veterans plus persons we had in our address books. Sadly those who didn't come were unwell or unable to be with us on that date but we toasted you at the Dinner. Slowly the list built up and I sat happily booking everybody into the UJC on my credit card with cheques from the Association to cover it. My bank felt at one stage I'd "overspent" and wrote to tell me so – oops pay some in plus I changed to the other card! Guests were invited with the result we were honoured to have Malcolm Ross as our Guest of Honour plus our President sent a letter to be included in the souvenir menu.

The date arrived - I marshalled my bits of paper and on the Friday moved to London to confirm the accommodation and meal details at the UJC. On Saturday I met people as they arrived to book into their rooms. All was going well until the "I'll bring it and show the DVD" equipment was not forthcoming – the UJC jumped in, kit produced! My seating plan was laid out and the restaurant staff awaited the diners. After a "wee dram" to start the evening we "sat to table", the Standard was "marched in", Patrick welcomed us and the meal was served. At half time some changed tables to "mix and meet the others" there.

After our delicious meal – well nobody said else! - the Toasts were given, Patrick made a short speech in which he thanked Chuck for his work as Chairman and Malcolm for his terrific support. Chuck in reply read Maj Bob's letter from Afghanistan, Malcolm Ross spoke and said how he was honoured to be involved, meeting our Veterans plus suggested he'd be happy to help in future projects. The Standard was "Marched out", the DVD of Port en Bessin was shown and we all retired to the bar/lounge area where many stayed catching up on memories, friendships and the odd familiar song or two until the early hours!!

For me as organiser all the work involved came with a big reward and the honour to see 47 Veterans, Family and Association Members have what was I believe a great social evening and two days together. It was my pleasure to "organise it" and thank you for your support.

PS The Thursday after the 47 dinner I organised/Chaired one for 80+ of my RMA in the Sgts Mess, RM Poole – my ever supportive wife Jill said it was good to see me occasionally when I came out of my PC that month!!

Geof Haywood

More Dinner

THANK YOU This was a brilliant evening, not only due to Geof's meticulous organisation but also to his talent as a Master of Ceremonies. Thanks, Geof, from all of us.

SOUVENIR MENU Our President's letter read:

Dear Ex-Members of 47 Royal Marine Commando and Adherents, It is many years since Corporal George Amos, who on 7th June 1944 had been captured and imprisoned in the massive defensive concrete bunker on Port-en-Bessin's Western Headland, telephoned me to say that he had revisited the bunker and found it deserted, neglected and full of unpleasant rubbish of all sorts. He was distressed as this was where so many of his colleagues had died in 1944. At the same time a village source indicated that the possibility of the bunker being blown up was under consideration.

47 RM Commando's D-Day task was to capture Port-en-Bessin. Most of the 420 strong commando were aged around 19-24 years of age and untested in battle. After an opposed 10 mile march through enemy held territory following heavy losses at the landing they were faced with high quality German troops in concrete defensive positions above them at both the Western and Eastern Features and had to operate without any ground support other than two ill-functioning Bren gun carriers. Yet they succeeded.

This achievement set in train a series of meetings and actions which over a number of years created impressive garden-surrounded monuments atop the Western Feature, the specific Cousins Memorial at the Eastern Feature and plaques lining the route taken by the advancing commando. The Port-en-Bessin civil authority was jointly and actively involved in these developments.

While monuments and plaques remain static the Association remains a vibrant living organisation and changes have now become inevitable. Twice in the past I withdrew my name

from chairmanship consideration on the basis that only a Royal Marine should be so appointed. Now the franchise has been widened and Patrick O'Connell has been appointed. Nothing could be more suitable as Patrick is the son of the late Guy O'Connell the distinguished commanding officer of Heavy Weapons troop. Patrick is a man of great ability and dedication to the '47' task he has undertaken.

Many post-war military associations are fading away but ours is thriving. In that context I fully welcome the Committee's addition to its membership of adherents whatever their nationality.

Coincidentally, with current changes the Committee has created the new post of President and has generously offered this to me. I consider this a great honour and thank the Committee for this recognition. I would particularly like to apologise for my absence tonight.

John Forfar

THE GREEN BERET MEN, the poem which appeared in the menu is by Elizabeth Boardman. She kindly allowed me to make a few amendments appropriate to 47 RM Cdo's activities (eg Gold for Sword beach) when it appeared in Despatch 13. It was first published around the time of the 50th anniversary of D-Day. The widow of an army Commando who served in a variety of arenas with Special Services, Elizabeth, despite the advancing years, remains a staunch and active supporter of the Commando Veteran's Association.

LB

THE LAST FIGHT by GERRY BRENT

Part One

At the end of November 1944, 47 RM Cdo moved across the border into southern Holland from Bruges in Belgium where our unit was resting and regrouping after the successful amphibious invasion and conquest of Walcheren, the key to the entrance of the port of Antwerp and the answer to the allies forces problems of supplies. Previously, every jerrycan of petrol, every bullet of ammunition had to be brought up 100's of miles from the Normandy beaches making the supply of the pending attack into Northern Germany one giant headache.

A radio broadcast (I cannot remember if it was ours or the Germans) announced that the allies had conquered Breda (far from the truth). As a result, the German army group occupying the part of Holland south of the River Maas withdrew in great haste to the northern bank in fear of being cut off across the last remaining bridge over the lower Maas. The bridge carrying the railway line was duly blown up after the German retreat.

"A" troop was moved into the area of Woensdrecht across the main road connecting the causeway to Walcheren from Bergen op Zoom and to the northern approach of Antwerp. The rest of 47 RM Cdo was stationed in the town of Bergen op Zoom.

The end of autumn was wet and cold. Belgium had fared reasonably well under the German occupation but Holland had been stripped bare of everything. The province of Brabant, normally a rich farming and fruit growing area, could not muster a hen that would lay an egg nor a cow that could be milked. Any foodstuff mobile or otherwise had been taken by the Germans long before their retreat.

My first job and introduction to the section of marines under my command was a standing patrol guarding a small part of the beaches of Brabant facing the island of Schouwen, still in German hands. Such an attack was unlikely but it did give us a chance to get to know each other and to become a closely knit fighting group.

We were on a two hours on, four hours off routine for fourteen days with lots of false alarms, sleepless nights, and endless rain. Our main purpose was to watch for German stragglers cut off during their hasty retreat and we actually apprehended two Other Ranks who had been hiding in apple baskets on a truck.

After being relieved from these activities, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I had been billeted with one of the local farmers who sported the luxury of luxuries, a bathtub. Needless to say, my batman, Tom, who had a nose for the better things in life managed the billet arrangements when advised that there was no room for us at the officers' mess.

The family who ran the farm were the cream of this earth! They had nothing left themselves but whatever they could scrape up on the farm, and there is always the odd potato or the hidden hen, they would share with us! "Their liberators" as they called us! They also had a



dog. This little story is so significant of the many Dutch who I met and shows the deep anti-German feeling unfortunately not shared by all, as we would learn later. The dog, a little Bitzer Terrier, sported a black patch over his right eye. This together with a snarl caused by some accident in his earlier life gave him a very close "Fuhrer" image! However, much as his looks may have indicated another Hitler "look alike", this did not betray his true Dutch heart! Starved as the poor dog was, like everybody else at that time, the most delicious bone produced to him with words, "This is from Hitler", would increase his persistent snarl and there was no way he would touch the

morsel offered! If, however, the offer was accompanied by the words "this is from Gerry", or anybody else, the bone would be dispatched with great haste and appreciation.

So it looked like we would spend Christmas in these lovely, peaceful and so comfortable surroundings. In their endeavours of extending their hospitality, my hosts offered the use of their own big brass bed which after long protestation I had no chance of declining. At this stage, I had not slept in a bed since arriving in Holland! Into all this bliss, quite unexpectedly, I was called to HQ with the greatest apprehension!? However, there was no need for worry - a parcel had arrived with all the ingredients for a luscious Christmas cake, a most unexpected pleasant surprise. Flour, sugar, dried fruit, chocolates, nuts and raisins galore from home in Sydney. When I got back to the farm my friends thought all their Christmases had come at once, none of the goodies had been either seen or eaten for years. This was going to be a real Christmas for them, free, happy, and for once a real Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. However, unfortunately, it was not meant to be! Christmas Eve is the major celebration for the Festive Season in Europe. The cake, courtesy of my family in Sydney was in the oven being baked and everybody was getting ready for the occasion. Then it came! Out of the blue! An urgent message from "A" troop H.Q. "Unit will assemble in three hours to move up into the new front line, south bank of the River Maas."

So our Christmas Eve was spent trying to dig slit trenches into the frozen ground in and around a little town called Oosterhout. Forgotten was Christmas, dinner, cake, and warm beds. The war had claimed us back from the little respite and hope of a peaceful Christmas.

(to be continued)

AS BACK TO THEIR BILLETS THEY CRAWL

Extracts from Notes on Billets produced by Major P N Cunningham, 2 I/C 47 RM Cdo. Dorchester, 22nd September 43.

1. Billets usually will be good. Men not satisfied can change after notice given.
2. Landladies in new area have all been given following infm:-
 - (a) Weekly rate 25/- to 30/- per week. 25/- not much; she must ask for more if necessary.
 - (b) Weekly ration card with double meat ration will be brought by all ranks. Cards will be promptly delivered...
3. Prejudice in the area against excessive drinking; in some cases men required to be teetotal; in all cases drunkenness is regarded as a crime.
4. Behaviour in houses is very important... Men should treat all the womenfolk with politeness and courtesy; offer to help with washing up, peeling potatoes, scrubbing out on Fridays, digging in the garden etc etc. Furniture and furnishings are in many cases excellent and great care must be taken by men. Remember always that these are peoples homes and NOT hotels or boarding houses or hostels or worse...
7. There will be a lot of cases where ranks will be sleeping two in a double bed. Should be no difficulty but men shd be infm now.
8. Tp Cmds to see billets are allocated to best advantage. In one case two erstwhile "birds" sent to local Manse!

...

10. All complaints, founded or otherwise, will be listed by Tps and reported from time to time to the CO. All complaints resulting in a charge will be remanded automatically for COs disposal. Get an offer to the landlady to appease her wrath as quickly as possible; but no need to make fetish of appeasement.

...
12. All changes of billets will be reported to Troop offices by individuals and to Cdo HQ by Troops.

THE REALITY

Ted ("Ben") Battley at one time shared a double bed with his oppo, Roy Emsley. (They were just good friends.) One of their duties was to carry the man of the house back from the pub every night. That Achtnacarry training could certainly come in handy. Another Commando, when his family managed to lock themselves out, to their great amazement, obligingly picked the lock for them.

If you have any amusing (and repeatable) memories of billets, please let's have them.

Many thanks to Essie Cousins for sending this from the National Archive. Essie sent a lot of other interesting material which may appear from time to time.

MAJOR BOB PERRY RM

Congratulations to Bob for the recognition he has received from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for his comprehensive *47 Royal Marine Commando: Cemetery and Memorial Register*. In an appreciative article in their September 2011 newsletter the Commission state, "We were greatly impressed by the quality, ease of use and impact of the register – which has been added to our reference library." In recognition Bob has been awarded a copy of a limited edition of "Remembered", a history of the CWGC, and been invited to visit their HQ on his return from Afghanistan.

Bob is due home in mid-February. Following leave, his next appointment will be for one year on the Islands of Diego Garcia (in the Indian Ocean). Run as an American base with British personnel as Customs and Civil Police, he will be Detachment OC and Magistrate (plus work on the suntan, so I'm told).



Christmas in Kabul. Bob 2nd left

He reported that Christmas in Kabul was as good as could be expected with dinner on Christmas day washed down with a can of alcohol-free lager. (Mm, lovely.)

You can still reach him by email: bobperry@live.co.uk

or by post: Maj R W Perry RM, CAMP DUBS, BFPO 758

A DAY AT ACHNACARRY

As the RM Historian, I am occasionally asked to appear in documentaries as a "talking head" to provide the historical background to what is being filmed. This time it was for "Castle Commando", the current working title for a BBC Scotland TV film about Commando training in Scotland in World War 2. The reference in the title is to Achtnacarry Castle, ancestral home of

the Camerons of Lochiel, and from 1942 the Commando Basic Training Centre. Set in beautiful, wild surroundings, some 25,000 men from the Army and Royal Marines went through the tough training regime. Our RM PR people were keen that this should not be just about the Army Commandos. So, we met up at Achnacarry (where it was raining, of course, which as trainees remember, it usually was): the producer (improbably called Andy Twaddle), cameraman (Colin), sound (Pete), and delightful Claire the researcher. All Scots to a man (and woman). Andy: "We could win a BAFTA with this film" – "Ayes" all round. It was a pleasure to work with Andy, who had a deep knowledge and interest in World War 2, since so often film makers have time to take no more than a passing interest in that day's subject. A dozen serving Royal Marines from Lympstone were there, and who should be the one veteran - our own Norman Rose, with Daphne!



In driving, torrential rain the lads from Lympstone were filmed speed marching into Achnacarry castle grounds. Then we went to Inverailort, where the house was the original base for training in "irregular warfare" in 1940, and the boys went through their unarmed combat routine on the lawn in a brief period of sunshine. The elderly lady living in the house said "You'll want to see the staircase?". Yes, I agreed, puzzled, then remembered the story. A trainee recalls being in the hall of the house, and seeing two elderly gentlemen at the top of the stairs, wearing glasses, in uniform but with no equipment, just web belts. They both trip at the top, then fall on their feet, in a fighting crouch, pistol in one hand, and knife in the other. This was his introduction

to Fairbairn and Sykes, late of the Shanghai Municipal Police, the world experts in unarmed combat and close quarter fighting, and inventors of the Commando fighting knife. WO2 Pete Jordan, the Corps unarmed combat expert, is filmed examining an original pamphlet written by the pair, and commenting that the methods taught then are still little changed today: he examines and turns over in his hands an original fighting knife (borrowed from the Spean Bridge Commando Museum). The knife, when not being filmed was, in accordance with BBC Health and Safety regulations, kept in a locked security container!

Throughout, Norman added that essential ingredient – the testimony of someone who was actually there. At the end of the day, we went to the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge. A damp evening, with the sun setting, Norman stands alone at the Memorial, the three resolute bronze Commandos towering above him, their gaze fixed on the distant hills. Poignant, powerful stuff.

Mark Bentinck

REVIEWS

TV THE MOST COURAGEOUS RAID OF WORLD WAR TWO Paddy Ashdown, in his capacity as an ex-Special Boat Service Commando, presented this excellent TV drama-documentary on 1st November on BBC2. It was based on a book he has just completed on the "Cockleshell Heroes". Though an oft-told tale, there was much detail of which most people would be unaware. The hazardous voyage and the raid on the harbour of Bordeaux in December 1942 is well reconstructed and Lord Ashdown gets across the success and yet the final tragedy of the situation. This is yet another 2012 anniversary so will probably be shown again. Well worth catching.

LB

BOOK Richard Brooks, "WALCHEREN 1944 – Storming Hitler's Island Fortress", illus. Graham Turner, Osprey (Campaign Series) June 2011, currently £9.71 or less from Amazon. Just received so unread but an interesting array of photos, maps. Full review next issue.

Many thanks to Diane Staphnill for pointing out its existence!

STILL IN DEMAND

Veterans' and their memories are still much in demand. Our Secretary heard from Dr Andy Holborn who is researching Gold Beach for a forthcoming book and would be pleased to hear from members of 47 Commando who landed on D-Day. Dr Holborn has produced other books on WW2. Unfortunately, his request just missed our July issue. Write or ring:
Dr Andy & Su Holborn, 3 Charlton Terrace, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0AU 01752 892421

GEOF'S EMPORIUM

FOR SALE:

Glass Paperweights: £21.50 (can be engraved, as photo, £3 extra) + p&p

47 RM Cdo plaques (painted/baked on metal): £30 + p&p (please check).

One "Old plaque" (fibreglass embossed): £26 + £2 p&p available from Ingrid (0208 2390145)

Polo shirts with RM Crest: £16 post free

"From Gold to Omaha" by John Forfar: £15

47 Baseball Cap: £8 post free (only 1 left)

New Poppy Pin badges combined with RM logo: £4 about half of price goes to Poppy Appeal.

Other pin badges eg RM Crest, Cdo flash (as seen on trips): £4.50 post free

RM Wristbands saying: "I support Royal Marine Charities": minimum cost £2 donation plus cost of a stamp would be helpful.(Royal Marine Charitable Trust Fund covers the needs of the disabled, disturbed, RM families etc etc)

"47 RM Cdo: Cemetery and Memorial Register": a couple of copies still available.

All obtainable from: Geof Haywood, 10 Elizabeth Road, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1AX or phone 01202 888194 or email geofandjillh@btinternet.com



MONEY MATTERS

Veterans now have free membership but we rely on everyone else to support them. Should your subscription be allowed to lapse for too long, we shall have no option but to remove you from the list which would be a great shame as we are proud of our members and like to think that they will continue to give their support.

After that, it just remains to say that the 2012 subscription is now due! It stays at a very reasonable £10 per head. Our Treasurer, Gemma Davison, will be very pleased to receive your contributions. Cheques should be made payable to '47 RM Commando Association' and sent to: Mrs G Davison, 91 Catherine Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 2HL

NORMANDY 2012

Our trip to Port en Bessin will be from 5th to 9th June. Rooms are booked at the King Hotel but if you intend to travel you need to let our secretary, Ingrid Fearne know **as soon as possible**, sending a £25 per head deposit to:

Mrs I Fearne, 138 Beauchamp Road, Upper Norwood, London SE19 3DB

Please make cheques payable to '47 RM Commando Association'.

The coach will pick up (very early) at the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth, and at the ferry terminal. **Our trip this year coincides with the combined Late Spring and Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday and June 9th is a Saturday** SO if you plan to stay at the Royal

Maritime Club please book as soon as possible. (Advance Bookings: 0239 2837681). Say that you are with 47 Cdo (Association Membership No 4600). At the time of writing the Club has double and single rooms available for the night of 4th June but only doubles for the 9th. Twin rooms (if single travellers wish to share) are available at the same cost as two singles. If you have no option but to book a double, they will give you a discount (say you're with 47) but it will not be as cheap as a single. Also please order a packed lunch at time of booking as we leave long before breakfast is served!

Due to the increasingly high cost of coach travel, people travelling out separately from the coach will need to make some contribution if they use it while in France.

If you have any queries, please ring Ingrid on:

0208 2390145 or email: ingrid.fearne@blueyonder.co.uk

47 RM CDO WEBSITE & TRACING THE PAST

As ever, the website had plenty of contact from families of former members of 47 Cdo and others. Here's a selection:

Marc de Bolster was particularly grateful to Frank Cadman, son of the late **Charles Cadman** (Q Troop), who sent photos which Marc was able to restore.

A query from Wolfgang Thun a German now resident in the USA about the last resting place of **E Gurnos Jones** was answered successfully.

The daughter of the late **A.E. (Ted) Mills** (X Troop) is looking for information about her father's service and was also able to give further info for our archive.

Sandy Stewart, Prince Edward Island, Canada, researching family history, is seeking more information on **Capt Brian Stickings**. A photo of the grave at Bergen op Zoom was sent (thanks to Bob Perry's Register).

David Wetjen, son of the late **John Wetjen** also contacted the website and has sent material and is planning to join the Association.

Last but not least, **Frank Wright** (served in X Troop) has been in touch and is now a member. Marc is always looking for material to put on the web and for his collection. 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 original photos etc will, of course, be returned safely.

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

