

## 47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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## DESPATCH 27 January 2013

### COMMENT

Though 2014 is looked forward to as a momentous year for 47 RMCA, being the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the liberation of Walcheren, it is quite likely that 2013 will run it close. Very shortly we will be unveiling the oil painting by the military artist, David Rowlands, at the Union Jack Club. This reunion will also celebrate the 70th anniversary of the formation of the Commando at Dorchester in August 1943. Furthermore, we can look forward to a new edition of *From Omaha to the Scheldt*, which many have felt a need for over a considerable time. Combined with our usual forays into France and Holland, it looks to be a year which may be happily anticipated in its own right. A Happy New Year to all

Lannah

### FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Veterans, Family Members and Friends,  
Happy New Year!

2013 begins with some exciting plans for an important anniversary, since 47 Royal Marine Commando was formed seventy years ago - in 1943. I hope you'll be pleased with the steps we want to take to mark the year, and that you'll try to join them.

Readers of this *Despatch* include around twenty five men who signed up back then in 1943 or in the following months and years of the war, and I'd like to open this Chairman's message in sending the very best of wishes for you and your family. You inspire us all now, as you did the country back then. (You also terrified the enemy, of course, and I always make it my mission not to get on the wrong side of a 47 Veteran!) But all of us, veterans, family members and friends alike, are here with a common purpose - to honour and remember those who joined up but never came back from the war, as well as those we've lost since.

In the past months we have raised the standard and honoured the fallen in Walcheren and Port en Bessin. Veteran members were present at every key memorial.

Alongside the solemn commemorations you can read about in the following pages, there was the spirit of friendship and good humour expected of Royal Marines and friends. I can report that many toasts were raised, songs sung and stories exchanged. I'm excited to tell you that over the coming months, the association will re-publish Professor John Forfar's book *From Omaha to the Scheldt* and unveil a new war

painting of the assault on the Eastern Feature at Port en Bessin. We've also been filming commemorations and more for a video film in 2014 for the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

Professor Forfar's second edition which is being edited by Essie Cousins, the niece of Captain Cousins, will include an epilogue containing new material.

The painting is the work of much research by the artist David Rowlands, working with our veterans who all saw sketches, aided by committee member and historian Marc de Bolster.

Crucially, veterans Arthur Delap who was with Captain Cousins at the assault and Ken Parker who was fighting in the town beneath, have been working closely with him. We've also relied on expert advice from Mark Bentinck, the official historian of the Royal Marines who gives such special time and attention to the story of 47.

We will have an unveiling ceremony for the painting organised by committee member Geof Haywood on March 9th. The oil firm BP has contributed £1000 to help pay the travel and accommodation costs for all veterans who can attend.

Will you allow me to give a new call to arms to all veteran readers who are able to attend seventy years after 1943, to consider joining us in March?

In closing, I pass on the thanks of all of us to our secretary Ingrid Fearne, our Treasurer Gemma Davison and to our Newsletter Queen, Lannah Battley.

Best wishes

Patrick O'Connell

Chairman, and son of Captain Guy O'Connell, HW Troop

## WALCHEREN 2012

*This report is due to appear in the Jan/Feb issue of The Globe and Laurel.*

### 47 RM Commando Association in Walcheren 2012

Our group, including Dutch and Belgian friends, gathered in Middelburg from far and wide to commemorate the liberation of the island of Walcheren from German occupation in 1944.

Appropriately, our first ceremony took place at the Polderhuis Museum in Westkapelle, on 1st November, the anniversary of the landings, and right beside the beaches where 47 came in.

At the foot of the Liberty Bridge, wreaths were laid on behalf of 41, 47 and 48 RM Cdos and by Lt Col Jerry Slack RM who liaises with the Dutch Commandos. Among others, local schoolchildren also laid individual blooms at the monument and Bugler Ross Tomkins sounded the Last Post.

Following the Museum's usual very generous hospitality of coffee and sandwiches, we made our way to the 'Lighthouse' cemetery to commemorate the Dutch civilians who died when the dykes were breached.

By the time we reached Erica Beach for our final ceremony of the day, the high wind had grown into a gale. Fortunately, there were a number of brick-sized stones on the beach to weigh down our wreaths but even so they slid sideways until wedged. Lt-Col Bob MacDonald, RM (retired) oversaw a slightly shorter ceremony to the one which he conducted at Polderhuis. Arrived back on the coach, Chairman, Patrick O'Connell decided "Up spirits" was in order and it certainly helped to restore warmth and considerable cheerfulness to chilled souls.

Next day, we were able to penetrate the tight security of the Dutch Commando Barracks at Roosendaal where coffee and cakes awaited us in the Sergeants' Mess. The Commandant, Lt-Col Rademaker welcomed everyone. RM Bugler, 'Tommo', posed with him and the veterans holding his copy of *The Globe & Laurel* in the hope of getting into the "Where Do You Read Yours?" section of the magazine. We then moved on to the museum on the first floor where strong links with Achnacharry, Spean

Bridge and the Royal Marines were very apparent.

After a group photo on the parade ground we continued to the British Cemetery at Bergen-op-Zoom. Wreaths were laid on behalf of 47 Commando and by John Bright, Chairman of the Royal British Legion, Holland branch and by Jim Kelly of 41 Cdo who accompanied us.

The following day we went to the bunker W11. This vast and heavily defended concrete construction had held up the advance of 47 Cdo in 1944 and cost many casualties. Now, our Dutch friend John Daane has a collection of WW2 memorabilia there, much relating to Walcheren, ranging from small items like uniform insignia to very large ones such as a German anti-tank gun. He and his wife, Suzan, provided refreshments and we were able to see videos of some of the displays they put on. After lunch, we continued to Dishoek and held a ceremony at the plaque outside the church. This commemorates the 34 men of 47 RM Cdo killed in action on Walcheren, their average age 22 years. The church has always been locked but this time arrangements had been made to see inside. This was a revelation and also an explanation of why it had never been open before. The interior is not roofed. Instead there are cloisters around an open grassed area with an altar under cover at one end. It is a "Tourist Church", only in use from May to September and very popular in summer for its open-air services.



*Veterans with Lt Col Rademaker at Roosendaal*

Our final port of call was the Commando memorial at Flushing. The fierce wind had stayed with us and wreaths were this time not weighted down but tied! Of our six veterans, one had served on landing craft and he wished to lay a wreath at the memorial stone on the beach. The intrepid and well-wrapped climbed over the sea wall and somehow managed to stay vertical. With the wreath duly tied down, our Bugler, visibly shivering, sounded the Last Post. Time to break out the rum, again. Any excuse!

Warmth was fully restored that evening with plenty of food, drink and good company.

The Chairman thanked all concerned and made presentations to the deserving before toasting absent friends. We missed them all.

Many thanks to the usual suspects, especially Secretary, Ingrid Fearne, for the seamless organisation and to Marc de Bolster for a great deal of liaison on our behalf in the Netherlands.

Here's to the next time.

LB

### **WALCHEREN Extras**

**The photo above** is the one with Tommo and *The Globe & Laurel*. If it is earmarked for "Where Do You Read Yours?" another very similar photo of the veterans with the Commandant should appear with the article.

**Leen van der Merbel** We were very pleased that, long-time member, Leen, was able to join us. As a former officer of the Dutch Korps Commandotroepen, it was very noticeable how much he was anticipating the visit to the Commando Barracks. In fact, we think he was as excited as a little boy on Christmas Eve. He certainly seemed to enjoy the visit and we look forward to seeing him again next time.

**Oh Dear What Can The Matter Be** several people and a wheelchair got stuck in a lift at Roosendaal. After some shouting and bell-ringing the doors eventually opened to reveal that we were about 3 or 4 feet above floor level. Christine Hagan and Lannah leapt into some open arms and the lift then ascended. Mortifying. We didn't think we were quite that heavy!

### **THE LAST FIGHT by GERRY BRENT**

#### Part Three

*PREVIOUSLY: Abruptly recalled to duty on Christmas Eve 1944, Gerry and his comrades found themselves facing a strong German force across the River Maas. With an enemy breakthrough in the Ardennes, the use of the port of Antwerp could again be at risk. When in January the Germans established a bridgehead on the island of Kappelsche Veer, the powers that be ordered a bombardment of World War I proportions before 47 Commando attacked.*

This time A Troop was in reserve with B and Y in the attack reinforced by a unit from 48 RM Cdo. There was a lot of noise, some shooting but to little effect. It was not long before I was ordered to "assist" the attack with my section. To my amazement, the assault had not got over the dike where the Germans were dug in.

One of "A" Troop's marines was issued with a flame-thrower which he used generously on our side of the dike. Normally devastating weapons, on this occasion they were a nuisance, burning up sticks and stalks on the ground and illuminating our men against the black of the night. The flame-throwing marine kept screaming and cursing the "yellow bastards" who would not venture over the dike to take the German machine-gun nest. This was my first experience of action, and I certainly would not be called a yellow bastard by anybody.

Though against my better judgment, I made my way to the top of the dike, still brilliantly lit. Tommy gun at the ready, safety catch off, before I could even look over the top of the dike, there it was! The machine-gun nest right in front of me. I fired a burst and hit whoever was in the slit trench right in the chest but, strangely, there were no screams. On further examination, I found a second occupant in the trench. Both were stone dead, probably killed by blast from our bombardment. I returned to our side of the dike and told the "flame-thrower" that the machine-gun nest was liquidated!

Moving further along I found the remnants of B, Y and the 48 troop still on the south side of the dike.

By now we had got close to Captain Stickings and Q Troop's diversionary assault position. True to character, he and Lt Ian Adam had penetrated the German position exactly where planned. We heard repeated small arms fire coming from that direction accompanied by shouts and screams from the wounded.

With the Germans temporarily diverted by this attack, now was the time to cross the dike and help to draw the German fire away from them. However, looking around, where was our

attacking force? Out of the three troops there were about 10 of us left! But there was no time to hesitate or find more troops. Q Troop was hurting with shouts of the wounded and dying clearly audible. So we went.

All kinds of thoughts must have raced through our minds about living or dying but even after all these years one idea sticks out a mile: "There is Q Troop doing the job allocated, under fire, and we are sitting here protected by the Dike."

Of course, we did the most foolish thing. The first lesson you learn in basic training is never to walk or attack over a skyline – and this one was still burning bright from the flame-thrower. There were seven or eight of us, two officers, two corporals and two or three marines. With a wild scream, probably for our benefit rather than the Germans, we rose over the top of the dike into their position.

For them it must have been a shooting gallery with us as sitting ducks. Instead of surrendering, as we were led to believe, the enemy were ready for us. Our attack stopped before we could even toss a grenade or open fire.

The officer ran off screaming "they got me!" Corporal Dyke lay dead. The remaining marines and myself rolled over the top back onto our side of the dike dragging with us the other Corporal who had been shot in the head. Frustration, anger and fury with our abortive and useless efforts finally gave away to the warming thought that we were still alive. However, the corporal was bleeding profusely, his head cradled in my lap. Murmurs from the head sounded like "they shot me with an elephant gun" which at least meant he was alive.

There were the four of us, two marines, the corporal and myself. Was that all that remained of the attack? Also, we faced what we thought was an inevitable German counter attack. We had between us quite a number of Tommy guns and could have given a good account of ourselves. But nobody ventured over the top onto our side of the dike.

Meanwhile, the Corporal's head wound needed attention. Shot in the forehead a couple of inches above his right eye we needed to stop the bleeding. The only way I could find the wound was by probing around with my fingers. Once his field dressing was on, it soon became soaked in blood. The addition of my field dressing helped but reaching a doctor speedily was vital for his survival. The two marines were happy to take him back to more capable hands at the RAP and crawled away dragging him along on their backs.

There I was, now alone, sitting at the foot of the dike with the Germans a grenade throw away with Tommy guns strewn around me and wondering what had gone wrong.

I picked up as many guns as I could carry. Why leave them for the Germans? They weighed heavy but not as much as the thought that despite the effort and the lives lost we achieved so little.

The German position was finally taken on January 30, 1945 with a combined effort of Poles and Canadians supported by tanks in brigade strength. Our losses in this campaign were over 400 wounded and killed. There were 69 German survivors. The German offensive in the Ardennes was repulsed by the 25 January 1945.

*[Captain Brian Stickings, aged 22, and Lieutenant Ian Adam, aged 19, were both killed in action on 14th January 1945 during this operation.]*



*Gerry "Before" and "After" with his wife.*

*Thanks to Gerry, our 47 Branch Down Under, for this account. It's a long shot but he wonders if anyone has knowledge of the wounded Marine mentioned above or the two who carried him to the RAP.*



## IN MEMORIAM

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

**Peter Hughes** 8th December 2011 Sanderstead aged 78. Peter, a long time member of the Association, was a National Service Marine serving from 1951 to 1953. From a Royal Marine family, his father served as a Battery Sergeant Major and took part in the Battle for Crete in 1941 where he was captured. In 2009 Peter laid a wreath on behalf of the Royal Marines Association at the commemorations at the British Cemetery on Souda Bay in Crete. He and his wife Ann regularly came to Normandy each June where their support was always appreciated. We have missed them over the last couple of years when Peter was too ill to travel and continue to miss them.

**John H Wain** 10th November 2012 Essex aged 90. John was a Corporal in Y Troop and served in Walcheren where he was wounded on 4th November 1944. After the war he married and lived in and around Essex, having two children and enjoying a long and fruitful life. He died after a short illness. He was a quiet and unassuming man who spoke rarely of his exploits during the war and played down his own contribution. His son, Mark, will be donating papers and other material to Marc de Bolster to be added to the 47 records.

## NEWS

**Antwerp** In July Marc de Bolster visited Schoonselhof Cemetery, Antwerp and placed a wooden cross at the headstone of Marine Guymer of 47 RM Cdo. The commando was killed while at a cinema which was bombed in December 1944. Marc discovered that there were several other Royal Marine graves there, including one for a member of 48 Cdo. It seems likely that they all attended the same film show.

**Committee Meeting** The Committee had a second meeting via telephone conferencing on Sunday, 23rd September. This was again very successful and seems to solve the problem of members living so far apart.

**Roger “Dobbie” Dobson**, veteran member who served in Walcheren, asked if Lt Chris Peto, Q Troop and Lt Robson of A Troop are or have been members. So far as we can check neither have. Our records have a Lt V E Robson, known as Vernon, serving in X Troop but he may also have served in A. Possibly somebody out there knows what they did after the war.

**Betty Field**, our former and very successful Secretary, laid a wreath at 47's Memorial Stone in the Garden of Remembrance at the Royal Marines Museum, Eastney, at the Remembrance Sunday ceremony in November. Betty, who now uses a wheelchair, was ably assisted by Pauline and Malc, her daughter and son-in-law. She sends her very best wishes to the veterans and all members.

**Patrick's PM Programme** Chairman, Patrick O'Connell, conducted an interview in David Rowlands' studio with both David and Ken Parker for the Radio 4, PM programme on Saturday, 8th December. The conversation between the three of them was very relaxed and free-flowing, excellent, in fact. Added to which, there was a very good response.

Emma Wood, the daughter of the late Captain John Wood, wounded while serving with 47, got in touch as a direct result of hearing the programme and wishes to become a member.

Christine Cole, the daughter of Marine George “Jimmy” Riddle, made contact via David Rowlands and as well as joining, she and some members of her family would like to attend the unveiling on 9th March.

**Extra Day in Normandy** The ferry schedules from Portsmouth have been changed and our usual sailing on 5th June has been cancelled. After considering all the options

it has been decided it's best to travel on 4th June but still return on the 9th. As the coach constitutes the bulk of the cost, this will not greatly increase individual amounts due. It also means that we will be able to accept an invitation to tea by the owner of Chateau du Bosq on the 5th. Some may have fond memories of staying there in the past. Or if they were kept awake at night by the frogs croaking in the moat, maybe not! **Dr Paul R J Winter** who was previously in touch regarding information for a proposed book will be running battlefield tours during the coming year, one of the few tours that include Port en Bessin. Details are at [www.dewintertours.com](http://www.dewintertours.com). His book on D-Day is due out for the 70th anniversary and will be published by Bloomsbury.

### NOT JUST THE WEBSITE

*Here's Marc's rundown on 2012 and his activities over and above his work with the website:-*

After so much sad news earlier this year, many good things came to me. For me personally, our annual Normandy trip started on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June. I was asked to attend the unveiling of a new memorial at St. Laurent-sur-Mer on 5 June by a local policeman, to symbolize the link between US and British liberating forces. Many Living History enthusiasts in US uniforms were going to attend, so I was asked to wear my replica Battledress. Chuck Harris joined us and met a few American veterans.

On 6 June I wanted to walk in the footsteps of 47 RM Commando from Asnelles to Port-en-Bessin. With the help and advice from veterans and friends, I joined a small party of about ten wanting to do 'the walk'. I had not prepared for it in any way apart from bringing an extra pair of socks, so again wearing the battledress and canvas Battle Jerkin on top with about 15Kg of load, walking on studded ammo boots. I got a lot of help from Lou Sartorel and Steve Hignett who, together with my own personal determination, pulled me through. To some it may sound silly or even foolish, but I am glad I did it this way, although it took about two months for my feet to completely heal. Needless to say a lot more wonderful things happened in Normandy, but I will not repeat what has already been written previously.

With the annual Walcheren trip coming up, and some of the veterans at the AGM of 8 June having mentioned wanting to go to the Dutch Commando barracks in Roosendaal again, and it was agreed upon that it would be easier for me to arrange such a visit. The Dutch Commando Forces originate from No.2 Dutch Troop 10 IA Commando, who fought alongside 47 RM Commando on Walcheren. Contact was made quite easily, and I was invited to visit the barracks to talk things through. A welcoming word from the 2i/c Lt. Col. Rademaker and a visit to the museum were suggested, while I in return requested to have lunch there as well. Everything was arranged, and so on 2 November we visited the KCT to the joy of all who attended. In the meantime I had become a member of the British Legion Holland Branch, and at our visit to the Bergen op Zoom cemetery in the afternoon, we were met by the branch Chairman Mr John Bright, who presented me with a Legion members pin to officially welcome me as a new member. The next day we had another warm welcome at both the W11 bunker and the tourist church in Dishoek, thanks to our local hosts.

Armistice Day saw me attending a local commemoration in the town of Heffen in Belgium, where I was hosted by our new Belgian members Tina and Roger. I thought it would be fitting to attend wearing my replica uniform, but this time gave it a more ceremonial look with bright white belt and gaiters. The local inhabitants and council were quite enthusiastic about the whole event.

Not only do I thank our veterans, our committee and other association members for making all our venues so very special, but also those who have made such a great

effort to assist in any way they could. I wish you all good health and happiness for the New Year!

Marc de Bolster

*As ever, we are grateful to Marc for his expertise and dedicated work on the website. He's always looking for material for the web. 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](mailto:m.de.bolster@xs4all.nl) All original photos etc will, of course, be returned safely.

#### INVITATION

In case you have not received one already, here is your invitation for 9th March 2013 :-



#### 47 Royal Marine Commando Association 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year.

You are cordially invited to join the Veterans of 47 Royal Marine Commando, Their Families, Friends with our Guest the Mayor of Port en Bessin at the Union Jack Club, London on Saturday March 9<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 1700 to unveil a new painting of 47 RM Cdo by the war artist David Rowlands and to celebrate the formation of the Unit in August 1943.

There will be an informal dinner afterwards and social drinks in the bar. If required accommodation can be arranged.

RSVP Geof Haywood, 10 Elizabeth Road, Wimborne. BH21 1AX  
0044 (0)1202 888194 [geofandjillh@btinternet.com](mailto:geofandjillh@btinternet.com)

**Even if you aren't staying please let Geof know if you are coming (details above) so that the Club have the correct number for seating arrangements for our meal. Also they are unlikely to let you in unless you're on his list!** He would also like payment for dinner, accommodation etc as soon as possible. Quite a few people haven't paid this year's subscription so if you'd like to combine it with your cheque for the reunion, Geof will send the necessary amount to the Treasurer.

It is expected that people will be arriving from near and far from lunchtime onwards with opportunities to meet old friends and comrades in advance of the unveiling as well as during and after dinner.

Geof was able to get a good deal by ordering a set menu being: soup, a chicken and vegetable dish (vegetarian option available), a cold dessert and coffee, price £25. Thanks to the contribution from BP, overnight accommodation, travel and dinner are available free of charge to veterans.

#### ANNIVERSARY

A married couple in their mid-sixties were celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in a quiet, romantic, little restaurant. Suddenly, a tiny yet beautiful fairy appeared on their table.

She said, "For being such an exemplary married couple and for being loving to each other for all this time, I will grant you each a wish."

The wife answered, "Oh, I want to travel round the world with my dear, dear husband."

The fairy waved her magic wand and – whoosh! – two tickets for the *Queen Mary 2* appeared in her hands.

The husband thought for a moment and said, "Well, this is all very romantic but an opportunity like this will never come again. I'm sorry, my love, but my wish is to have a wife thirty years younger than me."

Both the wife and the fairy were deeply disappointed but a wish is a wish so the fairy waved her magic wand and – whoosh! – the husband became ninety five years old.

The moral of this story? Quiet, romantic, little restaurants are hard to find.

### ARTHUR'S CAMERA

Many will have heard the tale of Arthur Thompson's German camera. It received the publicity it deserved when *The Daily Mail* published a long feature article in mid-September about how Arthur acquired it on Walcheren. There was plenty about 47's exploits, photos of Arthur, looking very smart with green beret and medals, and also photos already on the camera of German servicemen which seem to be of a very high quality after all these years. A case of *Vorsprung durch Technik* perhaps. The whole article is still online at [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2202688](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2202688)



*The camera with Arthur*

### BOOKS

**Review** Richard Brooks, "WALCHEREN 1944 – Storming Hitler's Island Fortress", illus. Graham Turner, Osprey (Campaign Series) June 2011.

There is no shortage of books on the subject of the November 1944 assault on Walcheren, but this one "Walcheren 1944 – Storming Hitler's Island Fortress" by Richard Brooks, is a useful addition to the collection. The publishers, Osprey, are working their way through significant military events, and producing booklets, by reliable authors, with excellent, clear diagrams: they also commission artists to depict key scenes.

Walcheren Island guards the entrance to the Scheldt, the river leading to Antwerp: without the facilities of this major port the Allied advance into Germany was stalled. We had captured Antwerp intact but, to our cost, delayed addressing the Walcheren problem, whilst the Germans – who well appreciated its importance – reinforced it.

A quick reading suggests that the book is an accurate account, and the author rightly pays tribute to the Support Squadron Eastern Flank armed landing craft that engaged the German gun batteries, distracting attention from the troop-carrying landing craft: of the 27 SSEF vessels that took part 9 were destroyed and 8 were unfit for further action.

The difficult fighting along the steep sided, narrow ridge of the dunes is well portrayed, however whilst the actions of 41 and 48 (RM) Commandos are covered in some detail, those of 47 are not. 48 Commando attacked and took battery W13, and this is described, but the fact that 47 (after a chaotic landing) subsequently passed through 48 and captured W11 is not recorded at all. The Brigade Commander, Leicester, resisted pressure from Moulton, 48's CO, to take over the advance after 47's initial attack on this battery was beaten off and their CO, Phillips, had decided to pause overnight. General Thompson ("The Royal Marines – From Sea Soldiers to a Special Force") dwells on this point: the "staff" solution would have been to

allow 48 to take the lead, but Leicester, well appreciating the affect this would have on the morale of 47, allowed them their delay, following which they captured the battery. We must remember, of course, that our interest is in 4 Special Service - shortly afterwards renamed "Commando" – Brigade consisting of 41, 47 and 48 RM Commandos, and elements of 10<sup>th</sup> Interallied Commando, and their landing at Westkapelle. This was operation "Infatuate 2". The book naturally also covers "Infatuate 1", the 155 Brigade, 4 (Army) Commando led attack on Vlissingen, which took place at the same time.

Mark Bentinck FRHistS  
Royal Marines Historian

**HOLT'S NORMANDY BATTLEFIELD GUIDE** The 6th edition of this was published in August 2012 and includes very good coverage of Port en Bessin, 47 Cdo and Captain Cousins. Much of this is due to Mark Bentinck providing the Holts with information. However, many of the errors which he pointed out to them in the previous edition reappear in the new one. Very irritating but he is going to persevere and will be in touch with them again with a view to getting it right next time.

#### **"FROM OMAHA TO THE SCHELDT"**

**At last, a new edition!** Our President, Professor John Forfar, better known to veterans as "Doc", has written an epilogue for a new edition of his history of 47 RM Commando. This adds a good deal more about the activities of the Association and extra material on PLUTO (Pipeline under the Ocean).

It is actually being published by us, 47 Royal Marine Commando Association, and at the moment is being funded by generous loans from members' families. Donations from members towards the cost of production would, of course, be very welcome. Cheques made payable to '47 RM Commando Association' should be sent to our Treasurer (details page 11) and please indicate that it is for the new book. Apologies for the tight deadline but if you would like your name to be listed as a donor in the new edition, cheques need to be received by the end of January.

We are incredibly lucky in having Essie Cousins, Publishing Operations Director & Editorial Director at Harper Collins, to edit and push through the project on our behalf. In the process, with her skills, knowledge and contacts in the publishing world, she has not only added a great deal of professionalism but also saved us a considerable amount of money.

The book will be published this year in late Spring and the probable cover price is £20.

It is expected that it will also be produced as an ebook at a later date.

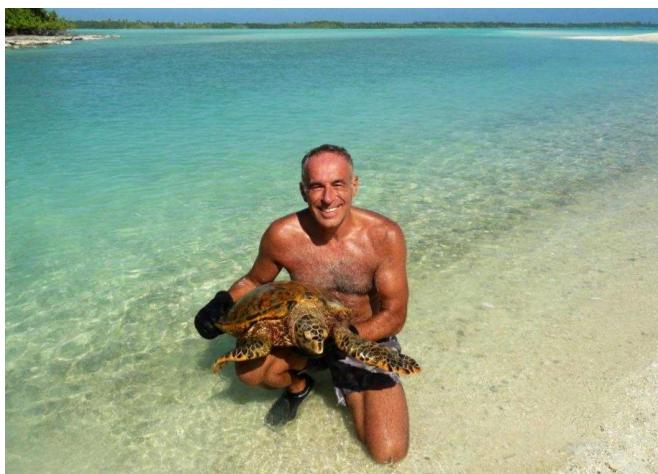
#### **LIFE IN PARADISE?**

*Major Bob Perry RM, as many will know, is currently serving in Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory(BIOT). He has had a couple of articles about life there published in The Globe & Laurel with more to come. Here's the account he's compiled for us:-*

Variety is the spice of life, it's said, and where else would you find yourself chairing an Equipment Care meeting in the morning, hearing a criminal case as the Magistrate in the BIOT Court in the afternoon, conducting a maritime patrol of the uninhabited outer islands of the Chagos Archipelago or having the authority as BIOT Coroner to order a post mortem and legally determine the cause of death? As the Executive Officer in Diego Garcia, of course! Located in the centre of the Indian Ocean, Diego Garcia is the largest island (a horseshoe shaped atoll 37 miles from tip to tip and between 500-100 metres wide) in BIOT which is one of 14 British Overseas Territories that are under the jurisdiction of the UK but not actually part of it. It is a key strategic US operated base that acts as a staging area for Navy ships, long-range bombers, aerial tankers and other military assets whose missions take them to Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It is also used as a deep space surveillance and tracking base by the UK

and US.

As the Executive Officer I am effectively the 2IC of all UK military personnel and the Detachment Commander of the Royal Marines. The Detachment is the lead security organisation responsible for BIOT and territorial waters out to 200 nautical miles. In order to maintain the sovereignty of the territory regular military patrols of the outer islands are conducted. These are combined with environmental tasks such as turtle surveys, fishery protection and enforcement of the environmental exclusion zone around BIOT.



*It's a hard life...*



*... in Diego Garcia*

When I am not hopping in and out of small assault craft and undertaking my other duties, I do get a chance occasionally to improve my dinghy sailing on the lagoon or work on the golf handicap, all part of life as a Royal Marine on a tropical island! I expect to be here till around September so, unfortunately, will not be able to attend the March reunion or get to Normandy this year but look forward to catching up with everyone later in the year. If you want to know more about the islands, my job or just to catch up on 47 RM Cdo Association gossip then drop me a line: [bobperry@live.co.uk](mailto:bobperry@live.co.uk) Finally, best wishes and Happy New Year to all our veterans from the Royal Marines serving 7°degrees below the equator in Diego Garcia.

Bob Perry

### MONEY MATTERS

The annual subscription, running from January to December, is now due and remains at £10 per annum. Veterans need no longer pay. If you are in arrears, you might like to pay double the quantity! Thank you. 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 2013

As already mentioned, our trip to Port en Bessin will be from **4th June** this year because of alterations to the ferry crossing timetable, but as usual we return on 9th June. Rooms are booked at the King Hotel but if you intend to travel you need to let 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, on the **4th** and if you stay there you need, of course, to book overnight on the **3rd**. It will also pick up at the ferry terminal. If you plan to stay at the Royal Maritime Club it is worth booking as soon as possible. (Advance Bookings: 0239 2837681). Say that you are with 47 Cdo (Association Membership No 4600) and 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](mailto:ingrid.fearne@blueyonder.co.uk)

### Email

If you have email and don't already get *Despatch* that way, please consider opting to receive your copy by this means. It saves a great deal in both postage and "production". Thanks.

Website: [www.47Commando.org.uk](http://www.47Commando.org.uk)



*On the Parade Ground at Roosendaal*

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