

## 47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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## DESPATCH 34

*July 2016*

### FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Veterans and all Members,

It's been a proud six months for 47 RM Commando Association – from the award of the Legion d'Honneur to all Veterans, to the choice of Port en Bessin as the focus of the International Commemoration of D-Day. When Veterans first started the Association they never thought that one day their comrades would get the highest award for valour in France or that the world would come to Port en Bessin to hear of their exploits. We know that when John Forfar wrote his history of the unit, there were still people in Normandy who thought that the Americans had liberated P en B. So it was very moving to stand there in the Port with so many friends from all countries and see our 47 Veterans and their standard carried by Lou Sartorel.

Thanks go to the Mayor and his wife who were our guests at the Royal Albert Hall back in the spring. We were glad to present them with a print of *The Festival of the Sea* painted by the late Ted Battley of B Troop, donated by his wife, Lannah, and framed by his brother-in-law Fred Fearn. Our Secretary Ingrid balanced the itinerary perfectly to get us all there on time. The Padre, John Wasley has been learning French and led very moving services before hundreds of us. The town asked Marc de Bolster to host another Vehicle Parade and he did this to great applause and has earned us many new friends. Geof Haywood organised our ceremonies and liaised with the serving Royal Marines who attended in strength and Ken Cowdery led many of us on the walk from Asnelles – and we raised £1200 by sponsoring the miles we walked. The 47 Bar has a new and enthusiastic patron in Pascal and members made sure to break his rule of no singing or drinking without food in the main bar!

As serving Marines backed out of the Port in a modern day landing craft on the evening of the 7th June, the whole party stood on the Quay singing "We'll Meet Again". I feel sure we

will all be back on parade soon. – With France again under attack from terrorism, the sight of our Veterans who came across the sea under bombardment to liberate them, must still remain a great inspiration.

Patrick O'Connell

Chairman. Son of Captain Guy O'Connell HW Troop

### KAPELSCHÉ VEER

Mariel van Mierlo reports:

“On a Saturday in late January, Marc de Bolster and I drove down to Sprang Capelle to attend the ceremony at Kapelsche Veer. Despite the weather (wet, cold and stormy) there were quite a few people there.

After a short speech, act of remembrance and the Last post, wreaths and flowers were laid by the Canadian Military Attaché, Marc with our new Dutch member Jaco van 't Noordende, school children, Dutch Commando veterans, local remembrance groups and others.

We were invited for a coffee in a local school afterwards to warm up and have a chat. In the local newspaper the ceremony was mentioned together with a photo of our wreath layers. The lane where the coach used to park has been turned into a cycle path which was no problem to access by car. They've made a new road for cars around the field and there is a small car park (2 or 3 cars) opposite the existing memorial.”

**Marc later emailed to say that Mariel had forgotten to mention that the conditions were so bad that her car got stuck in the roadside mud and, fortunately, a man with a van helped pull the car out. (You have to admire our intrepid Dutch supporters! LB) There was also a report and photos in a local paper which is still online at <http://ow.ly/XT3W5>**

### MOUNTBATTEN FESTIVAL OF MUSIC 7th & 8th April 2016

Whilst listening to the BBC Proms on the radio our Chairman remembered it was the time of the year Geof ordered tickets from the RM Concert Office and had a bright idea! As he'd enjoyed the Royal Marines Massed Bands Mountbatten Festival of Music (MFM) at the Royal Albert Hall (RAH) on several occasions he thought it would be good to take the Veterans, families and Association members to the 2016 concerts. Added to this, the Mayor and Béatrice Cavey from Port-en-Bessin were invited to come over as well. “Let's get a box on each night, Geof” was the message.



So following an advertisement in Despatch, two Loggia boxes on the Thursday and Friday were booked and later increased to three on the Friday plus the Union Jack Club (UJC) was booked for accommodation.

For the Caveys, Mark Bentinck very kindly offered to host them at his home for a night plus to take them round Salisbury and with Béatrice's love of horses to see the New Forest ponies.

On Wed 6th Geof and Jill arrived in London and met the Caveys from the Eurostar. After a quick drop of cases at Patrick's flat we went to the Delacroix exhibition at the National Gallery. Later in the evening we had supper in a pub with Patrick before returning to his house for the night.

Thursday 7th the Caveys went to Mark's via Waterloo and a stop in the New Forest.

Thursday evening Patrick, Jill and Geof headed to the RAH. For each night, so we could support the RM Charity, we helped with the bucket collection at the end of the concert – Jill, Lou Sartorel and Patrick on Thursday then Geof, Lou and Allen Withington on Friday.

On Thursday Pat Hagan, Chuck with Louis Myers and Norman Rose were our veteran guests with their families. We met up with several Buglers who had travelled to France or Holland with us – Tommo, Callum, Mark and Dave Nevatte to name a few and Dave made his off stage home one of our boxes for the two days!!

With so many RM and retired RM the MFM is like an RM Family Reunion and Geof met a friend he served with on board ships in 1963 and 1965 who he hadn't seen for several years! For the 47 Association too it was a reunion and over the two days it was good to see so many faces take a seat.

On Thursday during the interval the Royal Marines Senior RSM WO1 Phil Gilby RM presented Pat with his Legion d'Honneur in an informal but moving ceremony with two Buglers – Dave and Tommo - also in attendance.

Friday the Caveys returned to London and after a quick case drop at Patrick's flat headed with their "Blue Badge" guides Geof and Jill to see Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and Parliament Square before hopping on a bus back passing Downing Street, Trafalgar Square and the theatre area. A change and off via Hyde Park to the RAH. For Friday we had three boxes and with food and drink it readily became the 47 and Buglers Social Club. Over both days we all enjoyed the concert and great company. Ken Parker should have been with us but, sadly, was unwell – now on the mend and getting ready for France. Harry Prescott sat next to the Mayor and a Veteran friend of Ken Cowdery, Ken Watson joined us too.

The concert was superb on both nights truly displaying the musical skills of the RM bands. There was classical, Disney's Fantasia, Big Band, Jazz, Tango, amazing solos – on xylophone, trumpet, fiddle, sax and guitar to name a few, country and western plus of course military favourites. The Corps of Drums gave several fantastic show stopping displays including one with lights on their sticks and bodies!!

In true British style we all stood, sang at the top of our voices, waved our Union Jack flags and rocked the RAH with several choruses of Land of Hope and Glory – Harry sitting next to the Mayor led the way on Friday!

All attending enjoyed it so much that it may be repeated in 2017! The dates are 23rd-25th March with booking open in September 2016.

Geof Haywood

**It will be repeated. See details later in this issue for bookings - which need to be made now.**



## VE DAY DINNER

A Celebration Dinner was held at The Pavilion on the Sands in Broadstairs to celebrate VE Day on Saturday, 7th May 2016.

Ten WW2 veterans (including two ladies) from all services were Guests of Honour for the evening and included Chuck Harris and Lou Myers from 47 RM Cdo Association. The evening was a huge success with 'our' Tina Jonkers

performing WW2 songs (everybody joined in with gusto!) and there was a disco to finish.



It was great to see so many friends from the Association there, including Jürgen who raised a laugh when he was a winner on a game called 'Sink the Bismarck'! The veterans all went home with liquid gifts from the sponsors which, we hope, raised their indomitable spirits even higher! Our friendly photographer, Steve Hignett, took a recording of the evening, some highlights of which can be seen on YouTube <https://youtu.be/LHxoj0HmEXA> - look out for the special appearance of HM the Queen.

The hall has been booked again for next year!

John Prentis

**John, who is Chuck's grandson, is to be congratulated on his hard work and attention to detail in organising such a big and successful event. A glance at the YouTube video gives an idea just how big. There were 147 attending which included 22 from 47 RM Cdo Association. Details of next May's event will be in January's Despatch for all those keen and able to get to the Kent coast.**

**NORMANDY 2016**  
**International Recognition for 47 Royal Marine Commando**  
**by**  
**Major Bob Perry RM**

Although it was not expected that the 72nd anniversary of the Normandy D-Day landings would match the fitting programme of commemoration experienced two years ago, 2016 proved to be equally memorable.

This year, the Comité du Débarquement (D-Day Commemoration Committee) decided that the annual international ceremony would be held on 6 June in Port-en-Bessin, the vital oil-port liberated by 47 RM Cdo on D-Day +1. This was the first time that the internationally respected committee had held the ceremony at a location outside the main British, US or Canadian D-Day sectors. It was therefore a significant honour for the town, our veterans, the 47 RM Cdo Association and the Royal Marines. The prestigious event was attended by a French Government minister, eight National ambassadors and military attachés with DCGRM (Brig Spencer OBE ADC) and the Corps RSM (WO1(RSM) Gilby RM) leading a strong contingent of serving Royal Marines which included: CO (Col Armour) and RSM



(WO1(RSM) Davitt RM) along with personnel and a landing craft from 1 Assault Group RM, Royal Marines Reserve City of London Honorary Colonel (Col Hatt-Cook OBE RD\*) accompanied by the CO (Lt Col Moorhouse RM), the Royal Marines Reserve RSM (WO1(RSM) Campbell RM) with other reservist and permanent staff.

One of the important aim's of the Comité du Débarquement is to pass

down to younger generations what the fight for freedom in June 1944 was about and prior to the ceremony secondary school students from Port-en-Bessin, Longues-sur-Mer and Bayeux

met with our veterans, Norman Rose, Ken Parker, Harry Prescott and Chuck Harris, to listen to their stories and ask questions.

Amidst tight security the main ceremony commenced at 1600 hours, enough time for those participating in the 12-mile commemorative walk, following the route that the Commando marched in 1944 from Gold Beach at Asnelles to Port-en-Bessin, to rejoin other Association members, families and veterans inside the event arena on the sea front. Following the national anthems and flag raising, each ambassador paid handsome tribute to the high achievement of 47 RM Cdo before one of our veterans, Harry Prescott, led the laying of wreaths at the Monument du Port Pétrolier. The reception which followed in the Salle des Fêtes was a mix of remembrance, hospitality and friendship and was an opportunity for our Chairman, Paddy O'Connell, to thank the Mayor, Pierre-Albert Cavey, for his ongoing support to the Association and to Jean-Marie Lefranc, President of the Comité du Débarquement.

The liberation of Port-en-Bessin is commemorated by the local community and 47 RM Cdo Association on 7 June. The first ceremony was at the 47 RM Cdo Memorial Garden on the Western Feature overlooking the harbour. The service of remembrance was led by Rev John Wasley RNR with Bugler Dave Nevatte sounding the Last Post. The large gathering, including DCGRM and Royal Marines who had supported us the day previously, then transferred to the Captain Terence Cousins Memorial on the Eastern Feature for a



similar service.

Captain Cousins is recognised as playing the decisive role in the battle of Port-en-Bessin; his outstanding qualities of leadership, determination, initiative and courage that he displayed during the attack on the enemy fortifications, near where the memorial now stands,

continue to be an inspiration to the current generation of serving Royal Marines. We were fortunate to be joined by Essie Cousins, niece of Captain Cousins, and her brother David and his family from New Zealand, who laid a wreath in honour of the gallant troop commander who lost his life leading his men in battle. A further ceremony followed at the bunker in Place Gaudin and an opportunity to also remember those French civilians who, as the battle for the port raged around them and while the outcome was still unknown, gave so much assistance to the wounded of 47 RM Cdo and took them into their homes despite the threat of reprisals.

During the the post ceremonies reception in the Salle des Fêtes, Harry and fellow veteran Chuck Harris were presented with the Legion d'Honneur, a most fitting way to round off what had been a very special and momentous couple of days. This was followed by a spectacular cavalcade through the town of historic military vehicles with their owners and crews all dressed in WW2 military uniform.

The following morning was spent visiting Bayeux War Cemetery, the final resting place for forty-two men of the Commando killed during the D-Day assault, the approach march and subsequent battle for Port-en-Bessin. We were joined for the short Service of Remembrance, Last Post and wreath laying by the girls from St George's School, Ascot, who afterwards

were keen to chat to the veterans and hear first hand of their wartime experiences. Later that day we travelled to Sallenelles and viewed the recently refurbished memorial to 4th Special Service Brigade - the memorial honours the men of Brigade HQ, 41 RM Cdo, 46 RM Cdo, 47 RM Cdo and 48 RM Cdo who gave their lives during the defence of the River Orne bridgehead.

After a long day on the road veterans, families and friends all looked forward to the traditional Association dinner in our affiliated bar, Le 47eme, named in honour of 47 RM Cdo. The proprietor, Pascal (a former French paratrooper) and his staff, looked after us superbly and, as an added bonus, we were joined by the Mayor and his charming wife Béatrice.

The 2016 visit to Normandy would not have been such an outstanding success without the hard work of so many people; in particular a special thanks to Association members Geof Haywood (our Chef des Ceremonies), Ken Cowdery (commemorative march director), Lou Sartorel (standard bearer), Rev John Wasley RNR (chaplain), Paddy O'Connell (linguist, raconteur and chairman), and last but not least to our indefatigable secretary, Ingrid Fearne. Their dedication and commitment to excellence ensures that we will wholeheartedly continue to support our remaining veterans, commemorate the exploits of 47 Royal Marine Commando and, most importantly, to perpetuate the memory of the 114 men serving with the Commando who made the ultimate sacrifice during the liberation of Europe:

At the going down of the sun

And in the morning,

We will remember them.

(The Association's focus now turns to commemorating Operation Infatuate, the amphibious landings at Walcheren, conducted by 41 RM Cdo, 47 RM Cdo, 48 RM Cdo and No 4 Cdo. This important Corps memorable date will be commemorated at Westkapelle on 1 November - see you all there!)

**This article by Bob is due to appear in the next *Globe & Laurel*, July/August 2016 together with photos.**

## Normandy Extras

**The Mayor** was presented with a framed a print of late veteran Ted Battley's painting of the Port during the Festival of the Sea. When a tea towel showing the same print was presented, Patrick joked that the print was really for his wife, Béatrice, and the tea towel for the Mayor.

**Asnelles** Before the walkers set out from Asnelles bound for Port en Bessin, they attended a ceremony at the monument by the beach. The Mayor of Asnelles and other local dignitaries and people from the locality attended along with our RM Bugler, our Standard and standard bearer, chaplain, John Wasley and Association members.



During the wreath-laying, Norman Rose laid one on behalf of 47 RM Cdo Association and local schoolchildren pinned poppies onto a Union Flag.

**St George's School** Ingrid received a letter from Lydia Jackson of St George's School, Ascot who is in charge of their trips to France. She enclosed a letter from each girl (32 in all) thanking our veterans for speaking to them about their war experiences. Lydia also enclosed a

donation to the Association of £300 from the school, quite unexpected but very much appreciated, of course.

### IN MEMORIAM

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

**Ben “Jack” Brooks** 30th January 2015, Derbyshire, aged 93.

Jack served in A Troop and on D-Day his landing craft hit a mine. He managed to swim ashore, about a hundred yards, but had to ditch his kit or he would have drowned. So he was one of the many who began the invasion unarmed. He was wounded while in action in Port en Bessin and sent back to hospital in England via an American Field Hospital. Jack rejoined the unit in Walcheren after his recovery and remained with 47 until he was demobbed. Like many, Jack didn't talk much about his service but he was very proud to have been a Royal Marine Commando.

**Peter Spear** 1st February 2016, Bingley, West Yorkshire, aged 71.

Peter, who died after a long struggle against cancer, was for many years the Vice-Chairman of the Association.

His father was Company Sergeant Major Bill Spear who was killed in Walcheren aged 26 when Peter was about six months old but Peter didn't know that for many years. His mother's house had been bombed and two of his siblings became ill and died so Peter spent some time in a British Seamen's Orphanage. He didn't get on with his step-father, who made him discard all the photos and mementos of his father. Peter eventually changed his name from that of his step-father to Spear.

He worked for 20 years on oil rigs and, no doubt, inherited the courage of his father. On one occasion he saved the lives of three men trapped in high seas on a lower level platform, carrying one man up on his shoulders in gale force winds, against the advice of his boss.

He and Blanche lived in France for about ten years. Capt Peter Winter and Capt Mickie O'Brien would often stay with them, breaking their journey from Spain to Port en Bessin.

Peter was a great help to Secretary, Betty Field when she was less mobile, doing all the running around on trips, especially with regard to getting us through HM Customs at Portsmouth and Dover. He also acted as standard bearer for several years.

For Peter, 47 Cdo became an important part of his life and he was very unhappy that he could no longer take part in activities. However, over the years, he has served 47 RM Commando Association well in a very active and productive way and is much missed for that.

### EASTNEY MEMORIALS

**Mark Bentinck** following mention of our memorial at Eastney in the last issue, kindly got in touch on our behalf with Bob Bruce, former RM Museum Director but now the RM Advisor to the National Museum of the Royal Navy which now incorporates the RM Museum.

In a recent letter, Bob assures us that our monument and those of other units in the Memorial Gardens at Eastney will certainly not be abandoned and continues that the Trustees intend that the Gardens and all the memorials in it should remain in situ and be maintained in perpetuity.

He adds that a final decision cannot be made until plans for the disposal and development of the site are agreed but, “We will, of course, keep the wider Corps Family and all the interested parties involved as things develop.”



A Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £13.87M will enable the RM Museum to move to the Historic Dockyard in Portsmouth (just a step from the Royal Maritime Club) and should open early 2019.

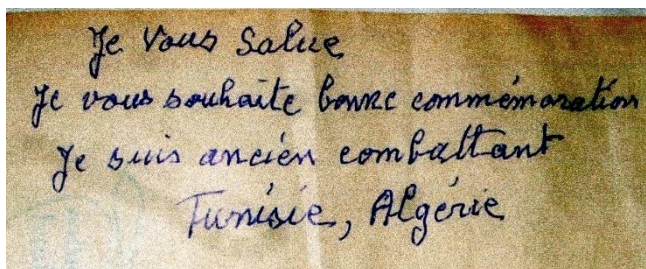
Thanks to Mark and Bob for the update.

## OTHER NEWS

**David Forfar** had an article in the Winter 2015 issue of “Resource” the newsletter of Scotland’s National Academy about his father being honoured by the street named after him in Walcheren last November. He mentions that six of our veterans were present when the street sign was unveiled and includes photos of the sign: “John O. Forfarstraat”. He also mentions the naming some years before of “Allée Professeur John Forfar” in Port en Bessin also with a photo. The article can be seen online on page 10 of “Resource” about halfway through at <http://ow.ly/1CVN3027NUo>

**Harry Prescott** was on the front of in his local paper “The Swindon Advertiser” as well as “Renaissance” in France. This was back in March when he first received his Legion d’Honneur. There’s a good photo of him holding the medal. Thanks to Kevin Allen his great grandson for sending the link – <http://ow.ly/E9LZ302as1k>

**Geof Haywood** often goes round and tidies up the wreaths at our memorials when everyone’s gone. (Ex-Sergeant Majors particularly like tidiness, I believe). He found this message and thought our veterans would be pleased to know that they are admired by fellow



veterans from France who also took part in bloody battles. A rough translation: “I salute you. I wish you a good commemoration. I’m a veteran of Tunisia, Algeria”

**Marc de Bolster** sent news of the Dutch Commando Corps (Korps Commando Troepen) which had its origin in No. 2 Dutch Troop 10 Inter Allied Commando. In March they were awarded the highest Dutch military award, the Willemsorde (Order of William) for showing bravery in 170 operations in Afghanistan from 2005 to 2010 in which they had seen 110 battle actions. It was presented by King Willem-Alexander who, during his speech, said that they can measure up to any other special force in the world.

Congratulations to the Corps for a well-deserved award. Members of the Dutch Troop 10 Inter Allied Commando landed and fought with 47 RM Commando in Walcheren and many received bravery awards.



### **MOUNTBATTEN FESTIVAL OF MUSIC 2017**

After a very successful two days this year we will again be taking boxes at the next Royal Marines Band Service Annual Mountbatten Festival of Music at the Royal Albert Hall, London – **23rd and 24th March 2017.**

Yes, it's a long way ahead but advance booking to get priority seats is in September/October this year. If you want to attend please **BOOK** with Geof **NOW!**

Veterans and escorts go free and will be found accommodation. Association members will be charged the seat rate for a Loggia Box, this year £47 each.

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

### **WALCHEREN 2016 BOOKING**

The trip to Walcheren will run from Monday, 31st October to Friday, 4th November 2016. We shall again have Dinner B & B at the Arneville Hotel in Middelburg. That and the cost of the ferry and coach travel will be included in the price, as yet unknown. The more people travelling the better the value. If you plan to come please 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

Cheques should be made payable to '47 RM Commando Association'.

The coach will pick up (very early) at the Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth, and at the ferry terminal at Dover. If you wish to stay at the Royal Maritime Club overnight on the 30th please book as soon as possible, saying that you are with 47 Cdo, Membership no 4600 (or you get charged more), and that you require a packed lunch in lieu of breakfast. (Advance bookings: 0239 2837681).

Ingrid can also be reached on 0208 2390145 or email: [ingrid.fearne@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ingrid.fearne@blueyonder.co.uk)

## MONEY MATTERS

**THE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION** of £15 per annum is now due for 2016 if you haven't paid already. Please make cheques payable to "47 RM Commando Association" and send to the Treasurer:

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

Veterans have free membership.

There are still lots of people on our listings who haven't paid. Please send your cheque as soon as possible if you haven't. It's unfair to those who do pay and so cover our expenses on your behalf.

**and**

**MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO PAY PROMPTLY AND REGULARLY**  
**We couldn't survive without you.**

## GEOF'S EMPORIUM

Geof has the following wares available:

RM Crested Mugs £5

47-plaque crested coasters £2 each

WW2 RM Commando figurine - £21 – limited stock and a Special Purchase

"From Omaha to the Scheldt" John Forfar, new edition - £20.

"From Gold to Omaha" - £12

47 RM Cdo Plaques - £26

47 RM Cdo Baseball Caps - £8. 47

Table Flags - £8

"The Capture of Port en Bessin" prints: Unsigned £20. Signed by artist David Rowlands £35

All items plus postage:

He also has free of charge, p & p only:

Copies of booklets by French schoolchildren with questions sent to 5 veterans, their answers, 4 interviews, photos and other work. Mainly in French but some in translation.

Copies of '47 RM Cdo, Cemetery and Memorial Register'. A comprehensive record, with photos, compiled by Major Bob Perry RM. Bob received an award from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for this.

Plus 2 copies of the Bessin local paper "Renaissance" with photos of our veterans Chuck, Harry and Ken.

All from:

Geof Haywood, 10 Elizabeth Road, Wimborne. BH21 1AX

0044 (0)1202 888194 [geofandjillh@btinternet.com](mailto:geofandjillh@btinternet.com)

### **From the Editor**

It's said that short story collections don't sell, unless you're Hilary Mantel, of course. By my more modest expectations, my collection *The Liar's Tale and Other Fibs* which was published in May, isn't doing too badly. However, I could do with a few more reviews on Amazon <http://ow.ly/OtGm9> preferably 3 to 5 star. Just a hint! My novel *Either End of the Tunnel* is also on that link.

The recent EU referendum result came as a rude shock to some of us. I hope our members in France, Holland, Belgium and Germany will realize that we still value their wonderful support and friendship and always look forward to seeing them at reunions. Certainly, there is plenty to show that an 'entente cordiale' still exists here. Following the atrocity in Nice, flags were flown at half-mast from many public buildings in the UK, including the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff. At the First Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, the London Symphony Orchestra opened with La Marseillaise. The audience rose to their feet and afterwards applauded loud and long.

I think we will always feel that, through 47 Commando, we have a special link through our overseas members, with the rest of Europe.

Lannah

### **47 RM COMMANDO WEBSITE**

Our thanks are due, as ever, to Marc de Bolster for his time and expertise in administering and maintaining the website. People from far and wide are able to find us and get in touch, join the Association if they so wish and get answers to all manner of queries. The website provides a huge amount of information on the history of 47 RM Commando and its personnel as well as Association events. It also provides an extensive photographic record.

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



[Asnelles](#)



[Renaissance!](#)



[Vive le Commando!](#)

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