

47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

Committee:

*C J Harris President
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E Hartwell Hon Vice-President
Mrs Sandra Tebbutt
Hon Vice-President
K Cowdery
M de Bolster
G M Haywood
K W Parker
Mrs Ingrid Fearne Secretary*



Despatch Joint Editors:

*Lannah Battley, 16a Market Street
Musselburgh, East Lothian
EH21 6PT
Tel: 0131 6655371
Email: annah@btinternet.com*

*Dave Shorrock,
23 Primrose Hill Road,
London, NW3 3DG
Tel: 0207 722667 M: 07808 929290
Email: dave.shorrock@blueyonder.co.uk*

DESPATCH 37 **January 2018**

From the Editor

This is my final Despatch and I'm sharing the work with our new Editor, Dave Shorrock, who I know will be a great success. If you have items you would like included in the next issue and beyond, please get in touch with Dave, as above.

Sad though it is to give up, I shall have a little more time for writing. In case people would like more details, my website is at www.annahbattley.co.uk. Of course, you don't get rid of me that easily. I shall still be a member and may well submit the occasional article to Dave. Thanks for all your support in the past and my best wishes to everyone. Lannah.

From the Chairman

Dear Veterans, Friends and Families, Happy New Year!

I'd like to send heartfelt thanks to our editor Lannah Battley for whom this is her last copy of Despatch. For nearly twenty years, she has delighted us and moved us with hundreds of articles, photos and humour. She has done this without attracting any attention to herself, and with kind and fierce loyalty to 47 Comrades of her late dear husband Ted Battley. She is one of the many women in 47 Association who have worked without bluster or bother for the interests of both the veterans who survived the war, and those who did not. She has put her years of work to use, and is now a published author, all of us could buy her books as a way to thank her! I'd like to thank her personally here for all she has done. A Chairman's Party in her honour will follow! I am delighted to introduce Dave Shorrock as her replacement. Dave has joined us for the past five years as an energetic supporter. He has republished the Roll of Honour, listing the names of all who died, he has been Jeep driver, and friendly face in France with the veterans in Port-en-Bessin and also at Fécamp. He's agreed initially to work for the next three years.

In other news, I'm delighted to report to you that the memory of those who died serving with or alongside 47 has again been honoured at home and abroad by their comrades, historians and their friends and families. In November, a loyal party of Association members gathered beneath the 47 standard on Walcheren (full report inside) and an international group of British, Dutch

and French supporters walked the route the Commando fought in November 1944 from Westkapelle to the old windmill at Flushing, now re-named Vlissingen. This took us about six hours in bright sunlight with stops for food and drink - quite opposite to the original route taken! By co-operation with the Polderhuis Museum, this will now become permanent. For years to come, we will all retrace the footsteps taken by 47 RM Commando on landing against deadly fire, raising funds for the new 47 Charity. A new 47-memorial is planned at Kapelsche Veer (see inside.) A smaller gathering offered respects in Portsmouth at the old Eastney Barracks. In keeping with the fine traditions of singing and socialising set by our President Chuck Harris, an upcoming social is planned at the Royal Albert Hall early next year.

I'd like to thank all Veterans for allowing us a role in helping continue your traditions of memorial and members for their support. Special thanks to Ingrid our dedicated secretary and the whole committee of Marc (now based in UK), Geof, Ken C and Gemma, along with Lou Sartorel our Standard Bearer, Rev John Wasley our Padre and Mariel our Dutch Ambassador. Just as with the international support we have in France in June, and from Mayor Pierre Albert Cavey, we've been helped by our many Dutch friends over the last six months.

May I wish you all health and happiness for 2018, see you soon.

Patrick O'Connell
Chairman
Son of Capt Guy O'Connell HW Troop.

Walcheren 2017
Rushing to Flushing - The Battle of Walcheren
Commemorated by 47 Royal Marine Commando Association
Bob Perry
(47 RM Cdo Association and Executive Secretary 47 Charity)

As in previous years, the coach journey to our hotel in Middelburg started from the Royal Maritime Club in Portsmouth. This provided a welcome opportunity to share a tale or two with our 47 RM WW2 veterans, Norman Rose and Harry Prescott.

The next morning, on 1st November at the Polderhuis Museum, Westkapelle, we were welcomed by Dr Leon de Witte OBE, President of the Foundation to Support the Liberation of Walcheren, for the ceremony and wreath laying at the Liberty Bridge. This impressive wooden structure, was built by volunteers of the museum in memory of Royal Marines, attached personnel and other allied forces killed in action during the assault and subsequent operations. The bridge connects a Sherman tank on top of the dyke to a landing craft in the museum



At the Polderhuis Museum, Westkapelle

garden. It is also a visible reminder of the very strong links that exist between the Royal Marines and the people of Walcheren. We then moved to the lighthouse and laid a wreath at the monument for the civil victims of Westkapelle; approximately 200 civilians were killed

during the bombing of the dyke that preceded the landings and subsequent flooding. Following this we all formed up at the Erika beach memorial. The service of remembrance was led by our Chaplain, Reverend Canon John Wasley RNR, with Bugler Kimberly Hare sounding the Last Post and Reveille. During all the ceremonies we were joined by Peter and Hubert Leicester whose father, Brigadier 'Jumbo' Leicester DSO, had been the Brigade Commander in 1944.



Civilian Cemetery, Westkapelle

Concurrent activity was the order for the next day when a small intrepid band set out early to follow the route taken by 47 RM Cdo from the location of the landings at Westkapelle to Flushing (now known as Vlissingen) and the link-up with No 4 (Army) Cdo. It was the first time the 15 km walk along the sand dunes had been attempted but we hope to make it an annual sponsored event worthy of the Commando's landing and actions between 1st-3rd November 1944. Under the expert guidance of Ivo van Beekhuizen, Curator of the Polderhuis Museum, we stopped at all of the prominent historical locations including the row-upon-row of concrete 'dragon's teeth' tank obstacles that severely hampered vehicle support during 47 RM Cdo's advance and the remains of the formidable W11 battery, the Commando's main objective. During the walk we met up with our veterans and other Association members at Dishoek tourist church to lay a wreath at the 47 RM Cdo plaque which bears the names of all 34 members of the unit who were killed during the assault on Walcheren. It was fitting to end the walk on the sea front at Uncle Beach, Flushing, where a wreath was laid at the No 4 Cdo memorial and also at the nearby memorial honouring the Landing Craft crews who took part.

Our last night dinner, as always, was a strongly supported affair under the auspices of our Chairman, the BBC broadcaster and presenter, Paddy O'Connell. It was also an opportunity to thank all those French, Belgian and Dutch friends who continue to support the Association and our veterans.

Prior to our journey back to the UK we visited Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery where most of those killed serving with 47 RM Cdo during the Battle of Walcheren and subsequent operations in the River Maas area are laid to rest. During a solemn service conducted by our chaplain, their names and ages were read out and the Last Post sounded.

The 2017 visit to Walcheren would not have been such an outstanding success without the hard work and generosity of so many people; in particular a special thanks to Association members Geof Haywood (ceremonial organiser and First Drill), Lou Sartorel (standard bearer), Chaplain John Wasley and to our tremendous secretary, Ingrid Fearne. Further heartfelt thanks to the committees of the 47 Charity and D-Day Revisited for their generous grants which enabled our veterans to make the journey and to keep the 47 RM Cdo story alive.

Operation Infatuate II, the codename for the landing at Westkapelle and subsequent battles in the dunes, appear to be a largely forgotten theatre of operations; that is why it is important that

47 RM Cdo Association continues to commemorate the Battle of Walcheren. It was rather disappointing for our veterans that there was not a single representative from the British Embassy in attendance or any serving Royal Marines (with the exception of the RM bugler (paid for by the Association) or a UK senior officer to mark this significant event in Corps and WW2 history - a fact that did not go unnoticed by our Dutch hosts who remain eternally grateful to those who fought for their liberty in 1944. Perhaps the general lack of awareness was appropriately summed up by the late Professor John Forfar MC, 47 RM Cdo Medical Officer 1942-45, who recorded in 'Amphibious Assault - Manoeuvre from the Sea': '*If the assault on Walcheren had failed it would have been as famous today as the gallant airborne landing at Arnhem*'.

*Bob's report is due to appear in the *Globe and Laurel*, Jan-Feb 2018 issue which also includes some historical background for their readership. It's now in *Walcheren Extras* below.*

Walcheren Extras:

Why are we waiting?

Our usual coach company's smallest vehicle had far more seats than we required and, naturally, didn't justify the huge expense. The Association took the sensible decision to switch to a company offering a smaller vehicle at a lower price. All proceeded well, and we arrived at Dover Ferry Port in good time only for the coach driver to inform us that he had forgotten his passport; cue a six hour wait for the travel document to be couriered from Bedford. Ingrid kept Annechristal, the manager of the Arneville Hotel, informed and they provided an excellent meal at 10.30 that night. It meant that she had to pay her staff overtime, which shows how much they value 47 RM Cdo Association and its members. We are treated as family. And of course, the bar remained open.

Bob's historical background:

A few years ago, a very senior Royal Marines officer rather ashamedly remarked to me that he had never visited Walcheren, the scene of the most recent Corps Memorable Date, during his entire 34 years' service. Despite his obvious regret he was probably very much in the majority of serving and former RM personnel. Yet the saucer shaped island guarded the entrance to the River Scheldt estuary and required a successful assault on one of the strongest sections of Hitler's Atlantic Wall.

The Battle of Walcheren was such a significant and pivotal engagement that Sir Winston Churchill remarked: 'Many other notable feats were performed by Commandos during the war, and though other troops and other Services played their full part in this remarkable operation the extreme gallantry of the Royal Marines stands forth'.

In September 1944, three months after the D-Day landings in Normandy, Arnhem had failed, and the Allies were running out of vital supplies. The port of Antwerp, already in Allied hands, would have to be brought into use but the enemy guns of Walcheren were denying shipping access to it. A costly opposed landing at Westkapelle, against formidable coastal batteries, was followed by fierce fighting in awful weather conditions, along sand dunes mounting heavy guns in bunkers surrounded by machine gun and mortar positions. The 4th Special Service Brigade comprising three Royal Marines Commandos, 41, 47 and 48 along with No 4 (Army) Cdo were involved and their successes against overwhelming enemy forces resulted in a free waterway to Antwerp, which was key to the final liberation of the Netherlands. In three days of heavy fighting 47 Royal Marine Commando captured the final six miles leading from Zoutelande to Flushing.

Fécamp 2017

Kisses and Calvados

Dave Shorrock & Allen Withington

The town of Fécamp has a standing invitation to 47 to attend the commemorations of their Liberation on the 2nd of September. Ken Parker and Harry Prescott had represented us in 2015 and this year, Paddy O'Connell managed to muster them both again. We (Dave and Allen) were co-opted to undertake advance reconnaissance and logistic support (i.e. check out the hotel and identify suitable restaurants and bars).

Friday the 1st found us all meeting for lunch at Reidroc, a beach-front restaurant with a terrace overlooking the sea. We were joined by our hosts for the commemorations: Pierre Aubry, First Deputy Mayor responsible for Veterans Affairs, and Luke Foubert, Head of Communications for the town. Pierre had been in the Armée de l'air and flown Gazelle 'tank-buster' helicopters in Germany before finishing his service as an Air Accident Investigator in the French Ministry of Defence. Luke, in his previous career, had been a radio journalist, so could share stories with Paddy.

Whether it was our lively conversation or the fact that we were with the Deputy Mayor, there was a constant stream of passers-by greeting us. As the terrace emptied, the owner of the restaurant, Monsieur Cordier (Reidroc is his name spelt backwards) joined us. After he was introduced to Ken and Harry he quietly slipped back into the restaurant to return with a bottle of 20-year-old calvados. The lunch continued late into the afternoon as the bottle emptied. As we broke up, Pierre leant forward and quietly asked Ken and Harry if they would be wearing their berets tomorrow. When they said yes, his face lit up.

The commemorations on the 2nd started at 6pm, but Luke had planned a full day of activities for us. First stop was the headland above Fécamp, a mirror image of the White Cliffs of Dover, with views down to Etretat, Normandy's equivalent of St Tropez.

Next was the recently opened Memorial de Bruneval, where we were greeted by François Auber, Mayor of Bruneval, who arrived with a wicker basket containing coffee and biscuits. Fellow 47RMCA member, guide and interpreter from Port-en-Bessin, Alex Wilson, also joined us.

The Bruneval Memorial has a plaque containing a description by Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, of the raid on 27th/28th February 1942, as the first truly combined operation. The Royal Air Force dropped paratroopers who removed vital components of the new German radar station and completely destroyed the rest of it. Reaching the beach, commandos then covered their withdrawal by landing craft. The flotilla was escorted back by the Royal Navy and chasseurs of the Forces Navales Françaises Libres with the RAF providing air cover. Valuable lessons were learnt from this successful raid. The very exact planning and execution were possible through photo-reconnaissance and excellent intelligence from the French Resistance, especially the network set up by Colonel Gilbert Renault in France under the codename 'Remy'.

Lunch followed at Le Belvédère with views of the cliffs and sea. The wonderful food actually surpassed the Michelin Guide's entry. As we were leaving, the chefs and kitchen staff came out to thank us and wish us well. With that, we were off back to our hotel for a short rest and then dress for the evening's formalities.



“Our Liberator” Major D.H. Walton.

Unfortunately, Major Walton, having led the Liberation parade on the 2nd September, was killed on the 4th when his Jeep ran over a landmine. The commemorations continued with a sombre procession through the cemetery, laying wreaths at the memorials to those that had been deported to work camps, concentration camps and the victims of other wars. We then headed back to the Town Hall where we regrouped before parading through the town to the memorial in Place Charles De Gaulle where the Mayor, Ken and Harry, laid wreaths.

We returned to the Town Hall, first to recreate the 1944 photograph of the Liberation on the steps of the Town Hall, before going inside for the speeches. The Mayor thanked Ken and Harry and presented them each with a gift of a bottle of Bénédicte. In return, Paddy thanked her and the town for their kindness and hospitality. He then presented her with a framed postcard posted from South Shields (Harry’s home town) to Fécamp dated 7th November 1944 and sent by air-mail, to demonstrate how quickly things had returned to normal after the Liberation. The Mayor was delighted and proceeded to read it aloud. It was from a French gentleman who was complaining bitterly about not getting any news and not being able to find any socks (presumably because of rationing). Smiles began to spread across the faces of all assembled. Ken then asked for the microphone and also thanked everyone. He then asked the Mayor if she would marry him. By now everyone was in stitches. That was the signal to open the bar and sample the pastis.

Later in the evening we returned to Reidroc, and as the evening was warm, and the young crowd inside the restaurant was noisy, we sat on the terrace. Gone midnight, with dinner over and another bottle of 20-year-old calvados empty, we went inside to pay. Monsieur Cordier quietened the music and announced to all that “these are our Liberators”. The restaurant erupted, everyone was on their feet. Selfies were taken with Ken and Harry, there were hugs, handshakes and kisses.

The commemorations began at Le Val aux Clercs Communal cemetery. We arrived to be greeted by the Mayor, Marie-Agnes Pussier-Winsback, assorted dignitaries, and of course Pierre Aubry, now proudly wearing his blue Armée de l’air beret. The wreath laying began at the Belgian memorial and war graves before moving to the British memorial and grave (which, thanks to efforts by Bob Perry, has now been restored by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission). Our 47 wreath was laid at the FFI (French Resistance) tablet to “Our Liberator” Major D.H. Walton.



“Madame Mayor, will you marry me”.

The commemorations in Fécamp were very sombre and moving yet there was a lot of laughter. The town has an enormous amount of respect and fondness for 47. Harry said that Ken's ambition was to kiss every woman in France. I think we can say that Ken, after Fécamp, is well on his way to achieving his goal.



The Town Hall steps 2nd September 1944.... ...and 2nd September 2017

The Globe & Laurel

These days *The Globe & Laurel* almost always has a mention or two regarding 47 RM Cdo, mainly about CTCRM and Young Officer training groups who visit Normandy as part of their courses. As a result, photos of groups at the Western Feature often appear alongside articles.

However, the July-August 2017 issue could be called the 47 RMCA Bumper Number. Firstly, the front cover has Joyce Stephens's terrific photo of the Commandant General RM, Maj Gen R A Magowan CBE talking to Ken Parker and Harry Prescott at the Western feature. Inside, Ken Parker appears again, photographed with members of Plymouth detachment of the RM Reserve, Bristol who have moved to new premises. Named the Walcheren Building, it was appropriate to have Ken as a VIP at the official opening.

The issue also has Bob Perry's excellent account of the June trip, "Following in the Footsteps of 47 Royal Marine Commando" which covered all the activities in Normandy as well as the "walk". It also included the items in 'Normandy Extras' from the last *Despatch* and the photo of Chuck in a jeep on the Historic Vehicles Parade outside the 47 Bar.



There is also a photo under the Stourbridge RMA report showing the Mayor of Dudley shaking hands with '47 RM Commando veteran Dennis Bolter'. As he's not a member and not on any of our listings, Geof Haywood has been trying to get in touch to tell him that, as a veteran, he's entitled to free membership, but with no success at the time of writing.

Then our President Chuck Harris appears outside the 47 Bar (again) with Capt P Burlton RM and Capt M Walton RM, officers of the City of London RM Reserve. This is an amusing account by Capt Burlton of the unit's trip to the Port in June to take part in the ceremonies.

All good stuff but my co-editor Dave pointed out that the next issue, Sep/Oct 2017 had a report of 1 Assault Group RM's Normandy visit for D-Day events. This had both RM and RN personnel and was written by a matelot. Unfortunately, the date of the Port en Bessin commemorations is given as 8th June and apparently a Geoff Howell kindly arranged their accommodation camping on the football field. That surely should be our own Geof (one f) Haywood. Slapped wrists in order, at least.

I'm reliably informed that Chuck does occasionally go inside the bar.

News & Comment

Joshua Gilbert Sadly, Joshua, the grandson of the late 47 veteran Aubrey James, died suddenly of heart failure while playing rugby on 16th September 2017. Josh, only 25, joined and thoroughly enjoyed the Association's visit to Walcheren in 2015. He was an enthusiastic member of many local associations and over 600 people attended a celebration of his life in October.

His parents, Howard and Anita Gilbert, intend to remain members and support the Association just as Aubrey did. We hope they will accept our heartfelt condolences for their tragic loss.

Bob Perry Bob commented on the photo in the last issue of Chuck at the farmhouse where he was given aid and Calvados in 1944. Bob recalled that the brother seated nearest the camera is Michel Cairon. Michel owns the land that includes Mont Cavalier/Point 72 where 47 stopped on the night of 6th June 1944. In 2007 he very kindly allowed the serving marines to camp on the feature and to hold the barbecue/singalong on the night before the Memorial Garden was dedicated.

Bob's letter continues: "As a token of our thanks we presented him with a 47 tie that he proudly wears each year on 7th June when he attends all of the town and 47 commemoration events. He is also a key player in keeping the flower beds and grass adjacent to the 47-totem pole at Commes in such pristine condition.



On many occasions I have sat at that same kitchen table drinking coffee (or more often Calvados) and never knew that Chuck had been spread out on it all those years ago! I asked Michel this year why he never mentioned the Chuck link before – he just gave a classic Gallic shrug of the shoulders and said 'un problème avec la langue'.

It is such a small world and a true reflection of the close and enduring relationship between the local community and 47."

St George's School, Ascot It's become a tradition that we meet with the third year girls on their school trip to Normandy. Sadly, Lydia Jackson who has always organised the trip and met us there has now left St George's for another post. From speaking to Lydia in Bayeux Cemetery, Ingrid thinks that the girls will continue to visit France and will still wish to chat with any veterans who travel.

Heather Johnson continues to archive materials, originally held by our late President, Prof John Forfar, for the Royal Marines Museum. Now part of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Heather is the National Archives Officer. She is working her way through and continues to send photographs to us now and then in the hope that we can put names to some of the unknown faces.

Remembrance Sunday at Eastney Pauline Harris, daughter of our late Secretary, Betty Field, again attended the Ceremony at the remembrance gardens at the RM Museum site with her husband Malc. They very kindly laid a wreath at the 47-commemoration stone on behalf of the Association. Pauline wondered whether, as the Museum is no longer functioning on this site, there might be fewer numbers than usual. In fact, there was a good turn-out with the RM Band, RM Cadets marching and five buglers at the top of the Museum building's steps. All the memorials had a representative to lay a wreath, many from Portsmouth RMA. Our thanks to Pauline and Malc for keeping up Betty's tradition of always laying a wreath for us on every Remembrance Sunday and also for keeping the 47-commemoration stone clean and tidy.

Pauline also sent us a local newspaper report about a commemoration of Walcheren held the week before, also at 'Eastney Barracks'. Unfortunately, she didn't know about it in time and nor did we. Royal Marines veterans and the Corps Regimental Sergeant Major P S Gilby MBE RM attended and wreaths were laid in the remembrance garden. We think this explains why there are now 2 wreaths laid at the 47-commemoration stone. They are remembered.



Further to this Tom Busby who organised the original commemoration last year sent a full report from Portsmouth RMA, straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, and also gave us the heading:

Four-Seven remembered at Portsmouth

Former Royal Marines, Royal Navy personnel and their families gathered in the Remembrance Garden at Eastney Barracks on 1st November to remember their comrades who fought at the battle of Walcheren as part of Operation Infatuate in November 1944. The battle is not well recognised by many and previously only a single RM had travelled down to Portsmouth to lay wreaths.

The Royal Marines Association in Portsmouth plan to change that and this year it has raised the numbers attending to over 30, with visitors from the Isle of Wight. Poole, Norfolk and London as well as RMA Portsmouth. Three standards were on parade. Among those present were Lt Col Charlie Wilson, RM, (RMA Chief of Staff), Major Bob Bruce RM (RM Advisor to the NMRN) and Major Peter Backlog RMR (whose family member had served aboard an LCT during the battle). All three retired officers said how pleased they had been to attend the commemoration and hoped it would continue to grow in popularity

A simple but moving Service was conducted by the Reverend Colin Noyce OCM RN (Honorary Chaplain to HMS Warrior) supported by RM Bugler James Horner, giving a flawless Last Post and Reveille. Wreaths were laid on individual memorials to Four-One by Colonel Michael Reece, OBE, RM (Rtd) (the last Commanding Officer of 41 Commando, Royal Marines), to Four-Seven by WO1 (Corps Regimental Sergeant Major) Phillip S Gilby MBE RM and to Four-Eight by Tom Busby, HQ Roll

The service was followed by refreshments in the RMA Clubhouse where Mike Mizen RM, a member of the Guild of Battlefield Guides, gave an excellent description of the events leading to the battle and the actions of 4 Special Service Brigade over its seven-day duration (1st - 8th November) which was very well received by both RM and RN members who understood and appreciated the parts played by their respective services and the sacrifices they had each made.

The whole of the service was videoed by Mike Beel, one of Portsmouth's leading photographers and can be seen on <https://youtu.be/-F0CI9PzZiQ>

Ian Thomas, RMA Portsmouth

Good to know that the Corps RSM laid the 47 wreath.

Royal Marines Museum The Museum always has articles in the *Globe & Laurel*. In the September-October copy it has an article headed, "The Yomper Statue to Stay Put". With the Museum's move to the Historic Dockyard in Portsmouth, there was some doubt about where it would end up. Now, as the result of a poll, it will stand at the edge of the Eastney site facing the sea as it always has. The article also confirms that the 47-commemoration stone and others will also remain:

"The Yomper will stand as a very public reminder of the long RM heritage of Eastney and also act as a signpost for the Corps Memorial Gardens which are due also to remain at Eastney."

There is also a report on the Corps Family 'Make History' Appeal. This has made a good start towards the RM contribution towards the new museum but, of course, still a way to go to reach the target of £250,000. Details about making a contribution are at www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk/make-history. The Association has already sent £400 to ensure our name is "front and centre" on the donators list.

Bill Harvey emailed Christmas greetings, as usual, to the Association via Ingrid and me. Some members may remember meeting him in Walcheren though not recently. Sadly, his father, who served with the Army, was killed during the liberation of the Island. I liked the snowy view of the Commando Monument which he included. Very pretty but most of our vets as young men training in conditions like this probably didn't stop to admire the scenery and, of course, there was no monument then.

Mountbatten Festival of Music – Royal Albert Hall



This year's Mountbatten Festival of Music is now sold out, but **Geof Haywood** still has some Loggia Box seats available for the afternoon matinée on Saturday, 10th March. If you're interested, please contact him:

Geof Haywood,
10 Elizabeth Road, Wimborne.
BH21 1AX,
Tel: 01202 888194 or email:
geofandjillh@btinternet.com

Ceremony at Kapelsche Veer January 2018

You are warmly invited to The Netherlands to attend the rededication of the memorial to 47 RM Commando at Kapelsche Veer. This battle in January 1945 was a bloody chapter for 47 with many losses. A new brass plaque will be dedicated in front of veterans Ken Parker (Y Troop) and Harry Prescott (Q Troop). Lou Sartorel will carry the standard. Geof Haywood is organising the trip and Mariel van Mierlo will also be there as she has often been in the past as our 'Dutch ambassador' and translator.

Time is now short, so if you are interested in attending please contact Geof as soon as possible, contact details above.

VE Day Dinner May 2018

John Prentis, Chuck's grandson, is again organising a VE Day Dinner. He sent the details as follows:

This year's VE DAY dinner is on Saturday the 5th May at the Margate Winter Gardens. Also, Steve (47's intrepid cameraman) is organising a BBQ on the Sunday 6th to which all 47 are invited to. We've got entertainment by Tina and Roger, plus a late disco courtesy of Jonathan (a friend of Roger and Tina's). Anyone needing info etc can always email me any time

This will be the third VE Dinner John has arranged. All 47 members are invited to both events. Booking and further information from John: john@jprentis.co.uk

Normandy 2018 Booking

The coach will leave early on the 5th June from outside the Royal Maritime Club but the exact date of return is not settled. Because of fewer numbers travelling and the greater expense of the coach we may return a day earlier than usual as with the Walcheren 2017 trip. This isn't decided as yet but please do let Ingrid know if you are intending to go or if you have any queries please contact:

Mrs I Fearne, 138 Beauchamp Road, Upper Norwood, London SE19 3DB
Tel: 0208 2390145 or email: ingrid.fearne@blueyonder.co.uk

There is no need to send a deposit for bookings yet.

Membership Renewal 2018

It's January again so the annual subscription of £15 for 2018 is now due. To save hunting for your cheque book, why not set up an Annual Standing Order, (so that you will never forget to renew) or make the payment by Bank Transfer. The 47 account details are:

Lloyds Bank,
Sort Code: 30-97-12
Account No. 03793869

Please remember to include your name (or all names if paying for more than one family member) as the Reference.

If you prefer to pay by cheque, please make the cheque payable to '47 RMCA' and send to Gemma our Treasurer:

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

Prompt payment is always very much appreciated. And, of course: **Veterans have free membership.**

'Bless 'Em All

Bringing out *Despatch* over the last dozen years or so, I've occasionally included a silly joke, often sexist. Here's a final one:

Everyone died and arrived at the Pearly Gates. Saint Peter came out and looked them over. "Right chaps," he said. "I want all the men to form two columns; those who dominated their women in one line here and those who let their women dominate them just there. Meanwhile you women come alonga me."

When he returned, the column of men dominated by their women was so long it disappeared into the distance. In the other stood just one man.

"I'm appalled that you were all so feeble in your earthly lives," he shouted, "but I'm truly proud of this one man. Perhaps you could tell these fellows how you managed to be the only one in this line." The man shrugged. "I dunno. My wife told me to stand here."

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, join the Association if they 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. Well worth a visit! Marc now lives in southern England, so it will be easier to send him photos, documents etc.

Contact him first at marc.de.bolster@outlook.com or via the website www.47Commando.org.uk.

Acknowledgements

Photos in this issue courtesy of Bob Perry, Joyce Stephens, Dave Shorrock/Allen Withington, Pauline Harris, Geof Haywood and the Fécamp Town Hall archives. Thanks to Joyce for making her photos available to all via Dropbox.