

47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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From the Chairman

Dear Veterans, Families and Friends,

I have often been told that the men of 47 who survived the war once feared that their actions between 1943 and 1945 were at risk of being forgotten. Even in France, there were some who thought that Port-en-Bessin had been liberated by the Americans. So, the old 47 comrades made it their mission to honour their Royal Marine friends who had never returned home - men who never saw the freedom they fought for, and never grew old with their families and friends. They built up the Association and gave it a task to commemorate, support and honour the legacy of the unit, formed in Dorchester, trained in Scotland, and with battle honours across occupied Europe. Much was done in the 1980s and 90s. In the 2000's new memorials were built, and new blood came in from the serving corps. A great bond was built with the towns of Port-en-Bessin, Fécamp, Westkapelle and more.

In the past six months of 2018, we have paraded beneath the standard in Port-en-Bessin with serving Royal Marines and hundreds of well-wishers. We've opened a new 47 museum in Hurst Castle. We've re-traced the D-Day route from Asnelles with one hundred walkers. We've raised thousands of pounds through the 47 Charity. We've opened a new memorial at Kapelsche Veer. We've sung very badly at the Royal Albert Hall.

But we've also been to the funerals of some of these veterans who did grow old, and who did so much for the memory of their fallen friends. These men were all as proud of the Association as we were of them. They had no regrets for their time spent building memorials and building friendships to keep this work going.

Please enjoy the pages that follow, knowing that all that is done is thanks to the example of those 47 men. Thank you for helping us do this work, and please if you are reading this as a veteran do let us to come and see you to tell you personally of what's going on.

Thanks, from all of us to the Committee, the 47 Charity, the Standard Bearer, the Padre, the Editor, the Candlestick Maker, anyone who helps us. A special note to the retiring Treasurer Gemma - grand-daughter of Sgt Major Frank "Tiny" Tynan can be found inside.

Warmest wishes, Patrick O'Connell. Son Capt Guy O'Connell HW Troop

Rededication of the Monument at Kapelsche Veer

Allen Withington (47 RMCA Treasurer & 47 Charity Trustee)

"On the night of 13th January 1945, 'Q' troop of 47 Royal Marine Commando launched an assault on the island at Kapelsche Veer attacking the right, while a main force of 'A' 'B' 'X' and 'Y' troops of the Commando attacked on the left flank. The only possible means of approach to the enemy position was along the base of the dyke from the East or West.

Heavy enemy fire caused many casualties among the Royal Marines. By 0530 hrs it was obvious that the place could not be taken by a lightly armed elite force, so all were withdrawn. 47 Royal Marine Commando casualties numbered 38, of which 8 were killed and 30 wounded. Those killed lay buried at Werkendam Protestant Cemetery, Sprang-Capelle General Cemetery (Helstraat) and Bergen op Zoom British War Cemetery".

So reads the stone tablet to 47 RM Cdo that has been installed on the rebuilt Kapelsche Veer Monument. (Unfortunately, the bronze plaques on the original monument had been stolen, so the town of Waalwijk used it as an opportunity to create a larger memorial with fine landscaping).

The Monument was to be rededicated on the 31st January 2018 and 47 RMCA were invited to attend as part of the British delegation. Veteran Harry Prescott, of 'Q' troop, attended along with our Standard bearer Lou Sartorel, and Allen Withington. Two of our Dutch Association Members were also present; Jaco Van't Noordende and Honorary Vice-President of 47 RMCA, Mariel Van Mierlo, acted as local liaison.

As Harry well remembers, Holland in January is often wet, foggy and cold. For this trip the weather did not disappoint, but at least we didn't have snow like they did back in 1945.

The official programme started with a breakfast reception at the Community Centre at Sprang-Capelle, attended by many local dignitaries and representatives. It was here that the Monument was officially adopted by the local primary school (PCBS De Bron) with a signing ceremony and exchange of documents between the Burgomaster (Mayor) and the Head Mistress of the school. As the only veteran present, Harry was a magnet for the press and a TV crew. It was only after the interviews and filming had finished that we could set off for the ceremony at Kapelsche Veer.



Because of the wind and rain, a large open-fronted marquee had been erected. We were all sheltered from the elements, apart from Lou, who, soaked to the skin, carried out his duties beside the Monument, steadyng the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association Standard against the wind and rain.

Six enormous wreaths of white flowers were to be laid by the Burgomaster and representatives from the Embassies of Belgium, Norway, Poland, Canada and the UK. Unfortunately, the British Embassy had not been able to field anyone, so we were represented by Colour Sergeant Mick

Newton RM (a Landing Craftsman currently based at Den Helder with the RNLMC). Alongside Mick, Harry laid the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association wreath of poppies.

We then returned to the Community Centre by 'executive' coaches. Sabine Nölke, the Canadian Ambassador, was sat across the table from Harry. She now realised that he was the only person attending who was actually at the "sharp end" in 1945, and had been born and lived in Nova Scotia Canada as a boy. She quickly adopted him as "her own" and spent the entire journey asking him about his experiences in 1944 and 1945. All this time, across the aisle was the Burgomaster, dressed in his ceremonial chain, listening intently to the conversation and smiling quietly to himself.

Back at the Community Centre the banqueting room had been opened-up ready for lunch, with the walls and tables decorated with the flags of the Allies. Each of the official representatives gave a short speech. The Burgomaster then gave his speech, peppered with anecdotes and quotes he'd picked up on the coach from listening to Harry, including: "all I can say is I'm very lucky to be here".



Harry presents the Burgomaster with a 47 plaque

The representatives of each country were then presented with an impressive and very heavy carved stone replica of the tablet in the new memorial, along with two chocolate shoes (chocolate and shoes being products the area is famous for). Harry bore the adulation and applause from the assembled crowd in his stoic, self-deprecating way we all familiar with. His response was: "well I did my job as best I could and just got on with it".



L-R: Lou Sartorel, Harry Prescott, Jaco Van't Noordende & CSgt Mick Newton at the grave of Lt Ian Adam RM Q Troop

find him. Harry was sat on the other side of the bar with two young English ladies, chatting away merrily. The three of them came and joined us, with Harry recounting the events of 74 years ago. As the bar closed, with hugs and kisses, the ladies left us. As Harry had ably demonstrated, your Commando training never leaves you!

After the official ceremonies were over, we went to pay our respects at the grave of Lt Ian Adam RM of 'Q' troop, who was wounded during the action and died later in the snow. Harry laid a cross on the grave of his Troop Commander who was killed at the age of 19.

With the formalities of the day over, we returned to our hotel. In the bar that evening, Harry excused himself for what we thought was to visit the bathroom. After 20 minutes or more had passed we thought we better go

Kapelsche Veer Extras

An Angel from Swindon

Ken Parker, of 'Y' troop, was also scheduled to attend along with Geof Haywood (who had done much of the behind the scenes organisation) but unfortunately Ken was suddenly taken ill en-route and had to travel by ambulance to the Great Western Hospital A&E in Swindon. There, under the watchful eye of Sister Daniella Merlo, he had a dedicated nurse looking after him. They soon learnt of Ken and Geof's journey and Ken's history and just couldn't do enough for him. He told some of his story as he progressed. Once settled, he moved into a larger section where the Sister came and asked more about his story, taking a real interest in all Ken could tell her. Ken asked her to listen to his chest and once she was close, he gave her a big kiss of appreciation.

Ken detailed Geof off to get pin badges and a book from the car, which he presented to the main nurse and to Sister Daniella. When he moved to the ward, goodbyes were said to the A&E staff along with thanks for their kindness.



Sister Daniella Merlo presents the 'Monument' to Ken at RMR Bristol

On Monday 19th February at RMR Bristol, Sister Daniella turned up to present Ken with a 'Monument' her 7-year-old son had made. She'd visited the RMA and RMR websites to find him and had arranged via the RMR Sgt Major to be allowed in to make her presentation. She didn't stop long because she'd just come off duty, having driven from Swindon to Bristol and then to return home.

We are all familiar with the kindness and dedication of those who work in the NHS, but this surely goes above and beyond the call of duty. Thank you, Sister Daniella.

The Mountbatten Festival of Music

This year the MFM was well attended by 47 RMCA. On Saturday 10th March we had a Loggia Box for the matinee performance and three Loggia boxes for the evening show. Two of our veterans attended: Ken Parker with his son David and Harry with his Grandson Kevin. Also attending was CGRM HRH Prince Harry, his first outing since succeeding the role from the Duke of Edinburgh in December last year. Harry was in the Royal Box above us but unfortunately, we weren't successful in persuading him to come down and say hello.



After the show most returned to the Union Jack Club for refreshments. Once again, our group made a concerted effort to be the last to leave the bar. As always, Harry and Ken were the centre of attention and spoken to by many others staying in the UJC; and by that the 47 story continues to be spread.

MFM 2019 will be on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th March. For those that responded to the flyer that was sent out in May, Geof Haywood has made a booking direct via the RM Band Service. We await confirmation of our request for a box for the Saturday matinee performance and six boxes and seats in the stalls for the evening performance.

If you want to go and haven't made a booking your options are: (a) to go on Geof's reserve list in case anybody drops out (at the time of writing he has three seats available) or (b) to book via the Royal Albert Hall box office when tickets go on sale to the general public in September (the Editor will let you know when these come on sale). You can contact Geof by email: geofandjillh@btinternet.com or by phone: +44(0)1202 888194.

From interviews carried out in France with our Veterans we have been told that the concert will highlight the 75th D-Day Commemorations and those interviews will be screened to give that special touch. A big thank you to our Veterans and again the 47 Story will spread to all at each performance. Standby with a pen for autograph hunters Guys!.

VE Day Dinner May 2018

John Prentis

Now in its third year, this year's VE Day dinner took place on the 5th May at the Winter Gardens, Margate. We had eight WW 2 veterans representing all the services with our very own Chuck Harris (Grandad) from the 47 RMCA. It was great to see so many other 47 association friends on the evening, and like so many of our get togethers it was like one big family party.



VE Day Dinner 2018 - Period uniforms and the new 47 whiskies

As this year marks 100 years of the Royal Air Force, the evening had an RAF theme, but Roger was in period 47 uniform and Bram looked an uncanny double for 'Doc' Forfar so the Men of 47 were suitably remembered.

Roger and Tina recommended (and also covered the cost of) Jane Darling, who entertained us with a great show of period songs and a sing-a-long to round off the evening. Her outfit and stage set up was excellent, and really made the night. Also, our very own Tina got up and treated us to a couple of songs too, well done Tina.

A well done must also go to Geof and Jill Haywood, excellent uniforms and great fun, especially Geof getting undressed, (apparently, he's gone viral!).

It was also a great night to unveil this year's new bottle size and label of the 47 whiskey, which worked a treat and will help to ensure the Men of 47 will always be remembered. Thanks to Lou, Steve and Operation Neptune for your aid and support on the Night.

47 Royal Marine Commando Association Return to the Oil Port

Bob Perry, Executive Secretary 47 Charity

This year our trip to Normandy to commemorate the 74th anniversary of the liberation of Port-en-Bessin was as busy as ever. Events commenced early on 6th June with a ceremony at Asnelles, close to the location on Gold Beach where 47 RM Cdo landed in 1944. Our travelling veterans, Chuck Harris, Harry Prescott and Norman Rose (combined age 282 years) were joined at the ceremony by comedian Eddie Izzard, who was taking a break from his touring show to learn more about the exploits of 47 RM Cdo.

Following the ceremony at Asnelles, concurrent activity was the next order with our veterans and many Association members paying their respects to our fallen who rest in the perpetual care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Bayeux War Cemetery. For our other more active members it was time to pull on the yomping boots and start marching! 'Following in the Footsteps of 47 Royal Marine Commando' is now a well-established annual event on 6th June that retraces the 12-mile route taken by the Commando from Gold Beach to Port-en-Bessin. Serving and former Royal Marines, many British, French, Belgian and Dutch friends and families walk the route at a comfortable pace, hearing the story of 47 RM Cdo's mission and actions at specific points along the route. A huge well done to all those who sponsored the walk and collectively raised a substantial amount for the 47 Charity.



L-R: Norman, Harry and Chuck at the Western Feature

The service of remembrance was led by Canon John Wasley RNR with Dave Nevatte flawlessly sounding the Last Post and Reveille. The large gathering, including 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, 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. 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,

The liberation of Port-en-Bessin is commemorated by the local community and 47 RM Cdo Association on 7th June. We were extremely pleased that we were joined for the whole day by Matthew Hodge from the British Embassy in Paris. Matthew is the Minister and Ambassador of GB and NI to UNESCO and is also a former Royal Marine. The first ceremony was at the 47 RM Cdo Memorial Garden on the Western Feature overlooking the harbour.

Pierre-Albert Cavey, and the local community for their ongoing support to our veterans and the Association. This was followed by a spectacular cavalcade through the town of historic military vehicles with their owners and many of their crews dressed in WW2 military uniform.

The following day we travelled to Sallenelles and laid a wreath at the 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. We then moved to Franceville-Merville to visit the 45 RM Cdo memorial and for our veterans to lay a wreath to remember fallen fellow commandos. Our next serial was a visit to Ranville War Cemetery with a final stop at Pegasus Bridge.

After a long day on the road veterans, families and friends all looked forward to the traditional Association dinner in our affiliated bar, Le 47ème, named in honour of 47 RM Cdo. The proprietors, Pascal (a former French paratrooper) and Geraldine and their staff, looked after us superbly and, as an added bonus, we were joined by the Mayor and his charming wife Beatrice. Prior to the dinner Cpl Bugler Dave Nevatte performed an outstanding solo Beating Retreat in front of our veterans.



Dave Nevatte performs a solo Beating Retreat outside Le 47ème bar whilst Paddy O'Connell stands ready with the rum ration

As an Association we realise how extremely fortunate we are to have attendance from the serving Corps at our commemorations and this year was no exception. Present were the CO and RSM along with personnel from 1 AGRM; the CO RMR City of London and the RMR RSM with other reservist and permanent staff; representing the Naval Attaché was Lt Col Tom Tarnowski RM.

In the footsteps of 47

Ken Cowdery (47 Charity Trustee)

On 6th June, for the 10th consecutive year, the Association organised its annual commemorative walk in the footsteps of 47 RM Cdo's D-Day mission - 74 years before.

Despite the grey weather, a cheery group of over 90 walkers set off from Asnelles and, with the prospect of a cold glass of beer at 47 Brasserie if we made it to the finish line in Port-en-Bessin. The cheery 'troop' included: veterans' relatives, serving and former Royal Marines, association members and friends, local French people and tourists. A few even took it upon themselves to adorn period 47 uniforms - including a Doc Forfar lookalike. Thankfully his doctoring skills were not put to the test!

As ever the walk started fittingly with a commemorative ceremony at Gold Beach - hosted by our friend the Mayor of Asnelles, M Alain Scribe and the community of Asnelles. We were



M Alain Scribe, Mayor of Asnelles, leads the commemoration

Before leaving the commune of Asnelles, we paused briefly, again with the Mayor, to lay flowers and have a moment of reflection at the memorial to our old friend Kell Ryan. This was a remarkable gift and tribute from the local Asnelles community for which we will be forever grateful.

Moving on, we headed inland via Le Buhot to La Rosiere - the scene of a serious skirmish on 6th June 1944 and where a Military Cross was won by Captain Walton. For the 10th consecutive year, Monsieur and Madame Moignard of Hotel La Rosiere greeted us with warmth like visiting family, serving us all refreshments (paid for out of their own pockets - and cleaned up the very muddy floor after we left!). Before leaving we were privileged to hold a short commemorative ceremony accompanied by veteran Alfred Barlow. Many a neck hair would have been raised during Alfred's powerful yet emotional exhortation '...We will remember them!' At this point we also said farewell to Linda Varley and the Stockport Normandy Veteran's Association - four of whom had joined us on the walk this far to raise money for the 47 Charity.

After setting off cross country again, it was not long before we reached our picnic spot. Not being the sunniest of days, we did not loll around for too long and soon set off toward our next waypoint. Within the hour having got a little lost (I won't mention that again, Alex), and after crossing M Hue's farmland with his kind permission, we reached the amazing l'Abbaye de Sainte-Marie near Longues-Sur-Mer. This beautiful ancient abbey is owned by the d'Anglejan family who have been long-time friends and hosts to our veterans and the Association. We were very grateful for the family for yet again allowing us to have a peak around their private home and grounds.

Leaving the abbey, we set off on a long stretch toward Mont Cavalier - or 'Point 72' as it was known to 47 Cdo back in '44. With some assistance from the Royal Marines we managed to clamber up some slippery slopes and made it to the top. From here, with a view across Port-

delighted to have D-Day veterans Les Birch, Harry Prescott and Chuck Harris with us. The Mayor attributed much of his discourse to the memory of Ken Parker, who had passed away recently. Soon after, Alex Wilson, co-organiser, translator and route finder extraordinaire (we won't mention the slight extended route option taken later in the day!), took point and led the walkers off to the sound of bagpipes played by our friend Kelly Heathfield, in period piper regalia.



Memorial to Kell Ryan

en-Bessin, we tried to imagine the scene 74 years earlier on 7th and 8th June. Point 72 was the overnight camp for 47, which became their HQ during the mission. It was eventually over-run by the enemy after repeated attacks had been repulsed by 47 Cdo, with just a handful of weapons between them. Amongst those involved in that defence would have been our veteran friend Ken Parker. The others left Point 72, led by local Gendarme Gouget in their mission to capture the Port. After fierce fighting they overcame the enemy positions and succeeded in the objectives.



John Forfar lookalike and Alex “it’s this way” Wilson

With their achievement in mind and accompanied by a fine bunch of serving Royal Marines, it was inspiring to follow in the footsteps of 47 Cdo for the last section of the walk, pausing briefly to lay a wreath at the memorial in Escures. For some of us, the pace had slowed almost to a crawl and we thought we would never make it to 47 bar for that much anticipated ‘Ice Cold in Alex’ moment - but it was worth the wait!

Finally, a few words of thanks. Firstly, to my co-organiser Alex Wilson for taking the lead and for all he does to help organise this event every year. Also, to 1AGRM and RMR London who accompanied us and inspired us all en-route. But a very special thanks to those who used the walk to fundraise and all those many people who sponsored them. We have raised in excess of £6,000 and this will go a long way to supporting and honouring 47 RM Cdo’s veterans and to keeping their story alive.

A short video of the walk has been produced by the Digital Training Cell, Commando Training Centre RM: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1F3ICEU7NM04Thpipp1w1zEa8NdqEnCFr>

47 RMCA Normandy 2018 Commemorative DVD



For those who would like a souvenir of their trip to Normandy this year, or those who were unable to come and would like to see what they missed, Steve Hignett, a professional broadcast cameraman, has once again produced a fine recording that captures all the events, commemorations, celebrations, tears and laughter of the trip.

The DVD's cost £12 each, all of which goes to the 47 RMCA funds. If you would like a copy (or copies), then you can email Steve at: steve.hignett@hotmail.co.uk or call him on: +44(0)7971 848137.

Steve has been filming our trips to Normandy for a number of years now and has recordings going back as far as 2011. If you would like copies of any of the previous trips, let Steve know and he will send you copies, again priced at £12 each.

Absent Friends



Fred Wildman, 16th January 2018, aged 95 years, S-Troop (Heavy Weapons), CH/X107841

Fred Wildman turned 18 in 1940, the year described as the war's Darkest Hour. He applied for the Navy but was redirected to the Royal Marines. "You'll have sea service and a smashing blue uniform", promised the Recruiting Sergeant. The nearest he got to a blue uniform was watching the bandsmen and the nearest he got to the sea was in landing craft, but all his life he never regretted joining the Royal Marines.

During 1941 it wasn't at all clear what he was going to do in A Company of the 10th Battalion. He even picked crops. Soon he was put to work on three-inch mortars, each bomb weighed around ten pounds, the barrel alone forty, and Vickers machine guns. The Vickers could fire five hundred rounds a minute, weighed fifty pounds, and required a crew of several men. Firing the mortars needed a special brass sight that weighed the same as about two bags of sugar. A point we shall return to.

In August 1943, Fred joined the brand new 47 Royal Marine Commando - Heavy Weapons Troop. Life he said became a lot more interesting. To win the coveted Green Beret, he was sent to ground breaking and back breaking training at Achnacarry in Scotland, what was nicknamed 'Castle Commando'. Arriving by train in freezing December he knew something was up when he was told to exit not onto the platform but to jump down on the other side onto the tracks for a long march to camp.

He left Scotland as fit as a lion and early in 1944 was sent on a cliff climbing course. Arriving at the foot of the rocks by landing craft, he splashed into the sea and those Vickers machine guns had to get up the cliff with him, along with that weighty mortar sight.

By May 1944 he was sent to Herne Bay in Kent with instructions not even to speculate about their mission; "Loose lips sink ships". Then in June he arrived in Southampton alongside thousands of Americans. Fred who at eighteen had wanted some sea service was about to join the largest Armada ever assembled and round his neck was that trusty mortar sight.

This was D Day ... one day later than planned. The sea filled with battleships converted ferries, frigates and more. The skies buzzed with planes, the noise was deafening. Six miles out from France his ship weighed anchor and the crew cheered as the men of 47 Royal Marine Commando slipped into their landing craft, thirty men in each, and headed for the beach.

The craft soon came under constant fire and most of the landing craft were sunk. Near the shore, the front was blown off Fred's craft. He was thrown into the sea and began to sink. His webbing straps expanded, and his equipment dragged him beneath the waves. He just managed to release that weighty mortar sight, saving his life. When he found Cptn O'Connell soaking next to him he explained his lucky escape. His Cptn replied: "Marine Wildman, the wrong object has reached the beach".

47 Royal Marine Commando was now at around half strength and with much of their equipment lost. They marched behind enemy lines for twelve miles and eventually captured their objective, Port-en-Bessin. The small fishing port was picked as the crucial petrol port for the Allies after the landings.

Identifying some of his dead comrades, Cptn O'Connell stooped to move one of those who'd lost his life. A live grenade lay beneath the man, the pin out, and the trigger trapped shut beneath the weight of the boot. Fred sprang over, grabbed the grenade with his finger firmly on the trigger and threw it over the wall where it exploded. This saved the life of his Captain and the two men fought the rest of the war side-by-side.

More heavy fighting followed in France before 47 Royal Marine Commando launched another amphibious landing on the Dutch Island of Walcheren in November, in order to allow river access to the liberated port of Antwerp. From a destroyer came a voice over loud-hailer: "You may now go in 47 and good luck to you all".

For the second time in six months, Fred faced ferocious fire from Hitler's Atlantic wall. Many of the Veterans have told us this operation was worse than D-Day. Somehow Fred had become separated from the rest of Heavy Weapons Troop and was on the wrong landing craft. This was hit by a shell and he prepared to dive into the sea. He gave a yell to Cptn O'Connell who shouted something uncomplimentary but brought the Buffalo Landing Craft round to Fred. By this time his Cptn had learnt all too well that this was an object that was needed on the beach. Fred had become the unit's Number One Mortar Man. After heavy losses in freezing conditions, the combined efforts of the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and all the other wartime Commando Units, 47 achieved its task.

Fred was injured in Port-en-Bessin, not during the war, but on his last trip for the 70th anniversary of D-Day. He was travelling with his beloved wife Rose and his son Tony, but he slipped and cut his head and hand. He was stitched up but unfortunately had missed the coach to the service at Bayeux cathedral.

Once again, Marine Wildman had somehow become separated from his unit. He spotted a wartime Jeep driven by friends from the 47 Association, clambered in with Rose by his side and Tony in the front, and sped along the roads of Normandy, reaching the cathedral before the coach.

Once again Fred Wildman had beaten the odds and completed the task he'd been set, to serve his country.



Fred & Rose being greeted by crowds in Port-en-Bessin

Arthur Delap, 18th January 2018, aged 97, A-Troop (PO/X114524)



Arthur was born in Byker, in the East End of Newcastle, in July 1920. He left school at age of fourteen and started training as a joiner in the shipyards before moving to Vickers, the armaments manufacturer. When war broke out, as he was in a 'protected profession' he was not required to serve in the forces. However, he was keen to do his bit for King and country and decided to join up, with a preference for the Navy. But at the recruiting office he was rejected for the Navy because he was colour-blind. Fortunately, a Marine Sergeant Major overheard the conversation and said that they would take him on. Arthur thought about it, and cheekily said he would sign up for the Marines, as long as he was able to work on ships.

For the 65th anniversary of D-Day in 2009, Arthur was interviewed by the Daily Telegraph, under the title: Heroic Battle in Port-en-Bessin. *Captain Cousins had discovered that leading up the side of the Eastern feature was an apparently undefended zigzag path. Under cover of darkness, Cousins led a party of 25 men as far as he could go up the hill unobserved. Then, in true commando style, yelling, screaming and firing from the hip, they charged the enemy bunkers. At the forefront of the attack was pint-sized Geordie Bren-gunner Arthur Delap. "When the grenades went off in front of us it was terrible," he recalls. "There were big flashes in front of my eyes. No pain, but my ears were ringing a lot and I was deaf and concussed for a few seconds. Then I started shooting again and after that they put their white hankies up and surrendered."*

Arthur, firing his Bren-gun in the assault on the Eastern Feature, is depicted in David Rowlands painting 'The capture of Port-en-Bessin'. The painting graces the cover of John Forfar's book: 'From Omaha To the Scheldt, The Story of the 47 Royal Marine Commando'. The book would be noticeably thinner if it didn't include Arthur's exploits, from Port-en-Bessin through to the battle for Walcheren, along with examples of his talent as a battlefield cartoonist.



Arthur points to himself in David Rowland's painting

Arthur's Geordie humour and acute observation is captured by Forfar: "One morning on patrol Marine Delap was ordered to move forward through a gap in a hedge and take up a better position with his Bren gun. When he apparently refused, he was threatened with being 'put on a charge' to which he replied, "if I go through that gap in the hedge you will never put me or anyone else on a charge". A wire across the gap was fastened to the withdrawal pins of two grenades. Had it not been raining Delap would not have seen tell-tale raindrops hanging from the wire.

Arthur returned home to the Northeast in 1947 and went back to shipbuilding. In 1950 he married his sweetheart Molly, the boss's daughter that he had met and courted whilst working in Vickers.

Arthur was good at making things and very artistic. Having missed out on joining the Navy, Arthur decided to build his own sailing boat, a little Enterprise racing dinghy. His sons Keith and Trevor helped with the construction and once completed it was launched on Derwent reservoir. Arthur became a good sailor and took part in the national Enterprise races all over the UK. It had taken Arthur a long time to get to sea in a boat, but he got there eventually.

Kenneth Gerald (Geri) Sibley – 5th April 2018, Age 94 (PO/X117466) HQ-Troop



Ken was born in 1923 and was the youngest of 7 boys and 3 girls. The entire family lived in a 2-up and 2-down in Teddington; then a small town but now a suburb of London. Life would not have been easy for the family with very little money and so many children to clothe and feed in this small home. All the children had to learn from an early age to help with putting food on the table. They would forage for berries and fruits and go fishing or hunting for rabbits and ducks in Bushy Park. If they didn't have success, they would go hungry. They were hard times, but the Sibley family would have no more nor less than their neighbours.

Being the youngest Ken was not expected to go to school but to stay at home to care for his ailing father and run errands. He taught himself to read through comics; the Dandy and Beano as well as Knowledge magazine, a subscription encyclopaedia.

Ken was, however, a star pupil in the School of Life. He discovered how to be resourceful and self-reliant; he learned how to make and mend; to care for others and to earn his way independently in life. As a boy he would pick flowers locally, then walk the many miles into London to sell them before bringing his hard-earned income home to his mum.

In 1939, and at the outbreak of WWII, he and a friend were given an antique rifle with 4 bullets and sent to protect Kingston Railway Station from the 'invading hun'. Shortly afterwards he presented himself at the recruiting office and was designated sufficiently fit to become a Royal Marine Commando and dispatched to Achtnacarry in Scotland for training. Ken's birth certificate actually records Gerald as his first name and so to other marines he was known as Geri.

In 47 RM Cdo, Ken was assigned to HQ-Troop as a dispatch rider and he saw service in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Of his medals, the one Ken valued the most was his Dutch medal commemorating the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Leiden, received when he returned in 1995 with other surviving members of the 47. He felt a strong connection to the people of the Netherlands; his unit having been billeted there with local families during the war. He saw how the local people struggled to survive; how thin and hungry the children were and was determined to do what he could to help. And so, he would 'liberate' food from the allied stores to give to the families they boarded with. It was his Robin Hood moment.

After the war Ken served as a Military Police Officer and then once demobbed, always resourceful, Ken used his good ear for music to make a living playing the piano and accordion around the local pubs, sometimes making as much as £5 a night, a fortune back then. It was while he was in one of those pubs, that he met a certain June Lillian Barber. This was probably around 1946 when Ken was 22 and June was 16. They started going steady, love blossomed and the rest as they say is history!

They waited till June was 21 before they married. To afford their simple wedding Ken sold his accordion and so married life started - and his music career came to an end. They started their married life in 1952 in a flat in Teddington and Ken now earned his living as a lorry driver. They didn't have much materially, but they were young, they were happy, and they were in love. In 1953 they welcomed their baby son, also named Kenneth into the world.

Looking back now on his childhood Kenneth (junior) realises how idyllic it was. His dad would take him fishing in Bushy Park, shared with him his love of music and paid for young Kenneth to have piano lessons; he would teach his son new skills as they worked alongside each other on D.I.Y. tasks or tinkered with the motorbikes which were a passion of Ken senior. This was a passion that his son was to inherit, and Kenneth vividly remembers all their travels on motorbikes with him bumping along in the side car, fondly known as the silver coffin.

Ken enjoyed a laugh and had a wicked, somewhat bawdy sense of humour. He was also very flirtatious, and age did not dim his ardour!

As well as his piano playing Ken enjoyed entertaining family and friends with a song; his party piece usually something traditional like 'Roll Out the Barrel'. Ken's hearing and sight began to fail in his last years, but he still enjoyed listening to his son playing the piano. True, the generosity of his praise usually stretched to "Well, that was no too bad". But when Kenneth played the piece 'Close to Home', composed by Lyle Mays, Kenneth knew that his dad was listening with particular appreciation.

Kenneth William (Pixie) Parker, 14th April 2018 Age 91 (PLY/X113045) Y-Troop



Dad was born on June 18, 1926 to parents, Alfred and Ada Parker. He had a brother (Alfred), two sisters (Annie and Doris) and a half-sister (Jean). As he grew up, he was subject to many experiences that ultimately led to the Ken Parker that touched all our lives. He was kind, humble, generous, loving, amusing, headstrong and outspoken. He was a husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. Dad was loved by his family and friends, he was a Royal Marine Commando, a war hero, a window cleaner and milkman. I'll pick out just a few experiences I feel were key in shaping him. This is not a comprehensive list.

When he was young (5-6 years old) he had an incident with a box of matches that removed some of the hair on the family dog. He was strongly reprimanded by his grandfather, but this prompted Dad to respond with an expletive while running off down the stairs. Grandfather gave chase, caught him and gave him a slapping, but then gave him a halfpenny piece saying, 'that's for speaking your mind and standing up to me'. This must have given him much encouragement later in life to speak his mind.

In 1935 his father died. Dad left school at 14 with good exam results, particularly in arithmetic and he became an important bread-winner for his mother. In May 1942 he was working at Georges brewery. He was just under 16 years old. There was a strict policy of no smoking on the premises. You guessed it, Dad was caught having a crafty smoke in the toilets and was sacked on the spot.

On the way home, he came across a recruitment office for volunteers to join the armed forces. The Navy Petty Officer didn't believe him when he claimed he was 18 and directed him to another desk where the Royal Marine Sergeant said he could join at 17, provided his parents

signed the form. His mother was surprised when he came home so early that day, asking why? Dad said 'the bad news is, I got sacked. The good news is, I found another job, but you have to sign this form'. She signed the form not realising she'd signed him into the Royal Marines. She was furious.

After training in Lympstone, Deal and Achtnacarry, Dad went off to war in Normandy in June 1944 as a Corporal and a Royal Marine Commando. He saw action in the liberation of Port-en-Bessin, Fecamp and Walcheren, places he would revisit later to honour fallen comrades.

At the end of the war, Dad came home on 28 days leave. On 28 July 1945 he married my mother. But he was recalled to Plymouth two days later to be issued with tropical kit, and three days after that he was on his way to the far-east. They'd had just two days together as a married couple!

After serving in Sri Lanka he was finally de-mobbed and came back home in August 1946. He got a job as a window cleaner and started his family. Two children came along, Linda in 1947 and me in 1949. Things were looking very rosy!

Then tragedy hit, Dad fell off the ladder while cleaning windows at Bristol Museum. He smashed his ankle and was off work for nearly a year. The family went through hard times as sick-pay was minimal. He returned to work but then had another fall cracking his ribs. Mum was very unhappy and demanded he find a less dangerous job. That's when he became a milkman.

He rapidly rose up the ranks and by the time he retired from the milk he'd become the District Manager for Unigate. This was a very successful career to support his family and Mum and Dad had full and happy lives together, firstly in Southmead, then in Withywood, Hartcliff and from 1972, Pucklechurch. Mum and Dad made many friends in Pucklechurch and joined in many local social activities.

In 1996 tragedy hit again, Mum died a week after her 70th birthday. We were all heartbroken and Dad was inconsolable. The hurt never ever went away for him, but gradually he began to build a new life around his family, friends and the Bristol RMA for which he was later proud to become their President. He was also heavily involved with the 47 RMCA, an organisation for RM commando veterans and their families. Each year Dad visited France and Holland where he was able to join others in remembering comrades who didn't return from the war. Dad became very well known and loved by many friends in Port-en-Bessin and Fecamp in France and Zeeland in Holland.

Latterly, Dad had a number of health scares, but always seemed to bounce back. Sadly, after a short illness, Dad died in hospital on April 14th, surrounded by his family. So goodbye Dad, we were there for you at the end. You were my Dad, and I was proud to be your son. We will never forget you. Rest in peace. [David Parker](#)





**JOHN GERARD 'GERRY' ARCHBOLD 2nd May 2018
Age 93 (PLY/X108541) B-Troop**

Gerry joined up in 1943, aged 17. After training at Achnacarry, because of his age he was assigned to guarding airfields (possibly Rosyth – or Crail). But it was not all boredom, he fondly remembered being taken up for a spin in a Swordfish by one of the pilots.

It was after D-Day that Gerry joined his colleagues in 47 Cdo as they trained for the assault on Walcheren. He was a radio operator and was on board a Buffalo amphibious vehicle as

the attack began. As they saw the two Buffalo's in front of them hit, his sergeant told him "to get that thing off your back". It was timely advice because soon after their Buffalo was hit by tracer fire and they all jumped into the water to escape the burning phosphorous. As Gerry swam ashore, he grabbed the hand of one the other men in the water, but when they reached the beach he realised his colleague was dead.

On the beach, Gerry realised he had serious burns to his leg and could barely walk. He managed to hide himself in a water filled foxhole until help arrived. His next recollection was waking on a stretcher and hearing German voices from either side. At first, he thought he'd been captured, but then he realised he was in safe hands and the Germans were POW's who were being taken to the same hospital ship.

He returned to blighty and convalesced in Portmeirion in Wales. Unfortunately, the village was dry, so to speed their recovery Gerry and a colleague 'borrowed' a boat in order to find a local hostelry.

Once recovered, Gerry was drafted into the Military Police and spent the last 6 months of his service as a driver in Germany.

Returning to civilian life, he worked in a factory making sash windows, where he met Thelma, soon to be his wife. In the 50's he joined Associated Ethyl Ltd (the makers of the anti-knocking compound found in petrol) as a rigger/scaffolder and remained with them until his retirement.

Gerry had an active retirement as "a big union man" and volunteer for his local MP, Andrew Miller. It was only at the age of 90 that his family persuaded him to take some rest.

To quote Councillor Tony Sherlock "*I am proud to have been a close friend and comrade of Gerry on Ellesmere Port and Neston Trades Council. Gerry had a great sense of social justice and worked quietly and tirelessly in a very detailed way to secure the rights of those less fortunate than himself. Never seeking fame or recognition for the work he had done for others.*

Gerry helped to set up the 'One Fund for All' which helped to fund the Unemployed Workers Centre where Gerry worked daily as a volunteer. Gerry was also part of a tiny band of volunteers who helped the thousands of people over the years with their welfare rights after being made redundant. Many of these people had long service, non-transferable skills and had worked loyally in the same industry for so long they had become almost institutionalized.



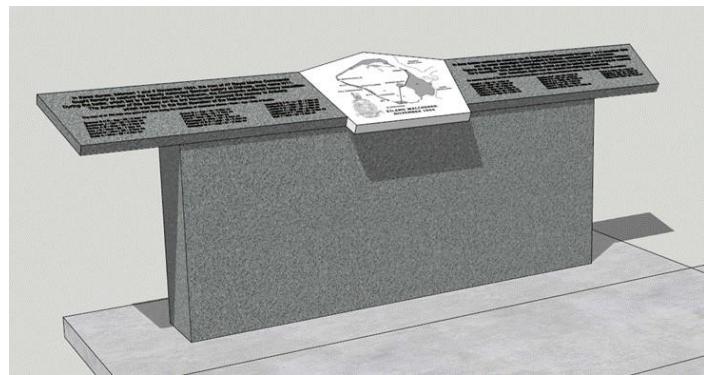
Gerry quietly helped them through their depression and despair and helped them to adjust all for no reward or praise. He did all that and kept a sense of humour.

If ever you wanted a job to be got on with and done well Gerry was your man; the safest pair of hands in the business”.

The Dishoek Memorial

Bob Perry

The final design for the new Memorial has been agreed between your Memorial Committee and the Dutch Historical Society in Walcheren. The design is based on the PeB Western Feature but with the information being in Dutch and English. We have received £5,000 towards the costs from the Royal Marines Charity, £1,000 from the 47 Charity and the Dutch have received excellent support from the Municipality of Veer and another Dutch Charity. By these donations the cost is covered, and we hope to have additional support to cover the cost of an Information Board to be placed in the Cafe/Dishoek car park. John Daane's bunker 'Whisky Eleven' has, after some major and very hard work, been open to visitors. We expect that it will get even more visitors once the Memorial and Info Board are unveiled which, at the moment, is expected to be in November 2019.



The Normandy Memorial

The Normandy Memorial will be inaugurated next year to mark the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings. The site selected by the Normandy Memorial Trust is a field overlooking Gold Beach in the town of Ver-sur-Mer. (More details at: <http://www.normandymemorialtrust.org/>)

The Trust has spent the last 12 months researching the names of the 22,254 British servicemen and women and those from the civilian services who lost their lives under during D-Day and the Normandy Campaign (between 5th June and 31st August 1944). This is a unique collection of names which has never before been recorded and will be engraved on the Memorial.

Bob Perry has checked the Trust's Roll of Honour to ensure that the details of each of the 64 men serving with 47 RM Cdo who died between the dates above are correctly recorded. He found anomalies with six of our personnel: The three No 10 (IA) Cdo personnel, LCpl Harry Andrews, Sgt Eugene Fuller and Pte Ernest Webster had 'Unit Unknown' recorded along with an incorrect date of death for Harry Andrews; Doc Forfar's medical assistant, LCpl Alfred Chatfield also had 'Unit Unknown' at time of death; finally, the full names of Mne Arthur Carter and Mne Bartholomew Reynolds were incorrectly recorded. Corrections have been forwarded to the Trust's Lead Historical Researcher who has acknowledged receipt.

Walcheren Trip 2018

This year the trip to Walcheren will run from Wednesday, 31st October to Saturday, 3rd November, i.e. 3 nights – the same as last year. We shall again have Dinner B&B at the Arneville Hotel in Middelburg, and I have been quoted €289 per person per stay. Single occupancy will be €30 per person per night extra. The cost of the coach/ferry travel is as yet

unknown. The more people travelling the better the value. If you plan to come please let our Secretary, Ingrid Fearne, know as soon as possible, sending a £25 per head deposit to:

Mrs I Fearne, 138 Beauchamp Road, Upper Norwood, London, SE19 3DB. Cheques should be made payable to '47 RM Commando Association'. (Ingrid can also be reached on: +44(0)20 8239 0145 or email: ingrid.fearne@blueyonder.co.uk).

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).

Fécamp Trip September 2018

47 RM Cdo liberated the town of Fécamp on the 2nd September 1944 and we have a standing invitation from the town to attend their commemorations. If any veterans or members of the Association are interested in attending this year's event, please contact the Editor, Dave Shorrock (contact details on the back page). This year the 2nd is a Sunday this year so we would in all likelihood go out on Saturday the 1st, returning on Monday the 3rd.

Normandy Trip 2019

You may have already heard that the US Embassy has booked out two entire hotels in Port-en-Bessin for May-June next year. Because it's the 75th D-Day anniversary, the demand for accommodation of all types is incredibly high. There are very few hotel rooms available, so if you are planning to go, please contact Ingrid Fearne (contact details as for Walcheren). As there was for the 70th anniversary, we are expecting a security cordon and vehicle restrictions, so the sooner you can let us know, the better.

Given the acute shortage of rooms, the Association is offering accommodation in the form of a campsite, open to all members, at a reasonable rate. Camp 47 onsite facilities will include: toilets, showers, washing machines, galley, BBQ, bar and a marquee tent with a dance floor and music. Breakfast will be available at a reasonable rate.

The campsite is approximately 3 miles outside Port-en-Bessin, on the D6 (the road to Bayeux). Members must bring their own Tents, Caravans, Motorhomes, Yurt's etc., and there will be electrical hook-ups for lighting. The price will depend on numbers, so if you are interested, please contact Steve Hignett:

steve.hignett@hotmail.co.uk or phone: +44(0)7971848137.



All fresco dining at Camp 47

Treasurer Cashes Up

Patrick O'Connell

After twelve years of keeping the books of the Association, Gemma Davison is moving on. Her time as treasurer saw both the bank balance and the membership grow. Her grandfather would surely have been proud; he was Sergeant Major Frank "Tiny" Tynan, whose daughter Sandra Tebbutt also did so much to help run the Association. Gemma's daughter Brisen



SgtM "Tiny" Tynan

became the youngest-ever member, nominated whilst still in the womb, by Captain Mickie O'Brien MC. He wrote "I enclose the subscription fee for a more distant future Chairman or Lady Chairman." In 2005, John "Doc" Forfar welcomed the baby Brisen in a letter to read when she grew up in which he added: "Your Great Grandfather was a very distinguished Sergeant-Major. He was very brave in battle when fighting the bad men. Soldiering is a dangerous occupation and he was wounded at a Dutch island called Walcheren. He had to ensure that the soldiers who he commanded behaved well. In the Marines, behaving well is a thing called discipline. Sometimes a Sergeant who enforces it is *Frank* not popular. Your great-grand-dad on the other hand was very popular and greatly respected by all. He was also a good boxer which helped!"

We all wish Gemma and her whole family a well-earned rest from the Association money but hope to see them all for a party soon.

47 RM Cdo Local War Memorials Project

You might recall that a few years ago, Major Bob Perry produced a cemetery and memorial register to honour the 114 men of 47 Royal Marine Commando who rest in the perpetual care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. He has now embarked on a poignant new project and he needs your help.

Recently I visited one of my local war memorials for the first time and one name caught my eye - W Tyndale-Biscoe - who I knew had been the Second in Command of 47 RM Cdo up until his untimely death in a road traffic accident in January 1944. This got me wondering as to how many of the other 47 RM Cdo fallen are commemorated on local war memorials in the United Kingdom.

My initial research revealed that there are more than 100,000 war memorials in the UK. They take many forms, including cenotaphs, plaques, gardens and books. As a project starter I visited the CWGC website and compiled a list of the towns where the next of kin of our fallen



Mme Goude Charlwood War Memorial, Surrey

lived - it seemed to me a strong probability that our fallen are commemorated on the respective local war memorial where they lived prior to enlistment.

The CWGC website showed that 87 of our fallen had next of kin in the UK and a further one attached rank had parents in Brazil. The remaining 26 of our fallen had no next of kin recorded; this included Captain Cousins, although I knew where his wife had lived and discovered that he is commemorated on a plaque inside a church at West Parley, Dorset (just around the corner from where I live!).

So far, I have conclusive evidence that 22 of our fallen are commemorated on the local war memorial where their next of kin lived. I have so far visited four of these memorials: Major

Tyndale-Biscoe (Broadstone), Captain Cousins (West Parley), Marine Goude (Charlwood) and Lieutenant Adam (Hayward's Heath).

So, do you know if anyone who served with or was attached to 47 RM Cdo who made the ultimate sacrifice in WW2, is commemorated on your local war memorial or in another town close to where you live? If you are interested in helping me with this long-term project to visit/photograph/record the local war memorials that commemorate our fallen then please get in touch. And to get you out exploring I will send you the next-of-kin list.

Bob Perry, email: bobperry@live.co.uk, or phone: +44(0)7500 967515.

Acknowledgements

Our trips to Walcheren and Normandy were supported by grants from the Royal Marines Charity, the Royal Marines Association and the 47 Charity, for which we are most grateful. We were joined in Normandy again this year by Cpl Bugler Dave Nevatte, kindly funded by the RM Charity. Continuing the musical theme, special thanks to Kelly Heathfield, whose playing of the pipes brought so much pleasure to all.

Thanks to the Digital Training Cell, CTCRM for permission to link to their video, and to the Royal Navy Imagery Database for the photograph of Prince Harry at the Mountbatten Festival of Music. Finally, thanks to all Association members, too numerous to mention, who submitted articles and photos to this issue of Despatch.

From the Editor



This is my first attempt at steering Despatch, but thankfully our former Editor Lannah has kept a hand on the tiller to ensure I didn't run aground.

The reason why my Editor's piece is last is not that I want the last word (tempting though that is), but as I explained at our dinner in Port-en-Bessin, I'm the least important person in the Association. Despatch exists because of all of you; who organise events, raise money, take time to write articles and send photographs. Without your energy and enthusiasm, Despatch would not exist. Thank you.

I'd like to thank Geof Haywood and Lou Sartorel for all they do and the comfort and pride they give to the families of the veterans. And finally, I'd like to leave you with a memory that will always stay with me. On the 6th June at our commemoration at the cemetery in Bayeux, Dave Nevatte played the Last Post. After the silence, instead of Reveille, Kelly Heathfield, the piper, struck up 'Flowers of the Forest'. After ten seconds, she turned and walked slowly away into the trees, the sound of the pipes drifting away with her. As our thoughts turned to absent friends, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Next Issue: January 2019

If you could please send me your articles and photos by the end of December deadline I'd be grateful. And please feel free to email or call me if you would like to discuss any ideas for future issues.

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