

47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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DESPATCH 40 July 2019

From the Chairman

Dear Veterans, Families and Friends,

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of our association publication. But before I continue, I must express my personal gratitude to our outgoing chairman, Patrick O' Connell. Paddy as we all know him, has always been there for our veterans and members alike, and is one of the main reasons our Association is a thriving organisation at a time when many similar groups are struggling. This is true testimony to his style and commitment over the years. "From your ability of organising the Committee, to hosting our veterans and guests in your unique and splendid manner, Paddy, thank-you".

Our visit to Port-en-Bessin this year to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day was a huge success. Three of our veterans, Chuck Harris, Mark Packer and Norman Rose, travelled with us for what was a most memorable and enjoyable trip. It's been five years since Mark last came, again aided by his two granddaughters, but he doesn't look a day older, and Chuck's encounter with ten French nurses took twenty years off him, (more about that story later). We paid our respects to the men who didn't come home in the usual 47 way, with due reverence and respect at each ceremony followed by a remembrance 'toast' in the 47 bar. Our French hosts were as great as ever, and as always, assisted wherever they could to make it as comfortable for our veterans as possible.

We were lucky to have been joined this year by HM Royal Marine Band Portsmouth, which added something rather special to the whole trip, and quite simply demonstrated that they are the best in the world at what they do.

On the last day of our Normandy trip the Association was hosted by the city of Fécamp. They did a marvellous job of honouring 47, providing lunch and refreshment, and their gifts to the veterans of a medal and wartime photos of Fécamp reminded us of what it was like for our French friends, as well as our own boys, during the Liberation of Europe.

We have Walcheren 75 coming up, bus leaves on the 31st of October, if you don't want to miss it please contact Anne Marie 47rmcsec@gmail.com as soon as possible. This will again be a trip to remember, we have the unveiling of the new memorial, planned visits and each other to make it special, not to mention bagpiper Kelly Heathfield's 40th birthday party.

That's enough from me, warmest wishes to you all. John Prentis, Grandson of Chuck Harris.

Mountbatten Festival of Music 2019 – Part I

Geof Haywood

Each year the Massed Bands of the Royal Marines produce a superb evening of music from all classifications: classical, modern, jazz and military. This year with the story behind the music being 'Overlord' and 'D-Day' it was for us one of the best ever with a specially composed piece and finale. The display of film of the D-Day campaign and photos of our Veterans all linking with images of Ranks from today's Corp into a Royal Marine badge was amazing to see. (For those reading Despatch on their computer or tablet you can see the finale here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/sumt8vuq02f5a27/Finale%20MFM19.mov?dl=0>).



L-R: Jim Forbes, Lou Sartorel (rear) Pierre-Albert Cavey, Chuck Harris (seated) & Pierre Aubry

Our party for the Saturday evening performance was some 50 Association members led by Chuck Harris, with Pierre-Albert Cavey, Mayor of Port-en-Bessin and his wife Béatrice, and Pierre Aubrey, Deputy Mayor of Fécamp and his guest, Sophie. Whenever 47 was mentioned or a related film appeared, we literally raised the roof with our cheering. Pierre-Albert was amazed to see Port-en-Bessin featured (an article appeared the following week in La Renaissance, the local newspaper). Pierre Aubry, with his French air force background was totally impressed with the whole evening. As always, the RM Buglers we know called in to see us, as did other personnel keen to meet Chuck and our guests. After the concert many carried on with the evening socials until the early hours.

During their stay the two Mayors and their partners were hosted by Patrick in his home, escorted to various exhibitions and the sites of London, including the Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London followed by drinks in the private Yeoman Warders Club. Although our French guests had suffered some disruption to their journeys to London due to a strike by French Custom officers, they made it here and they certainly enjoyed their stay.

The following week, La Renaissance, the local newspaper for Port-en-Bessin reported: *"On Saturday, March 16, the mayor, Pierre-Albert Cavey, went to London to attend the Mountbatten Festival 2019 at the invitation of 47 Royal Marine Commando, liberators of Port-en-Bessin. Taking its name from Admiral Louis Mountbatten, head of combined operations in 1941 and creator of the commandos, this festival presents music from all units of the Royal Marines. A magnificent show in the prestigious setting of the Royal Albert Hall, in the presence of Prince Harry. Port-en-Bessin was honoured with presentation of archival films on the liberation of the town"*. The piece continued with the announcement that the band of the Royal Marines would be in Port-en-Bessin for the commemorations on the 7th of June.

If you would like to attend the Mountbatten Festival of Music in 2020 please see the details for our priority booking, courtesy of Geof Haywood, on the back page.

Mountbatten Festival of Music 2019 – Part II

Geert Bourguignon

This year, John Prentis took some 4 boxes at the Royal Albert Hall, some of which were occupied by the police. To be exact, they were the Koninklijke Muziekkapel Politie Antwerpen (KMPA) - Royal Music Chapel Antwerp Police, Drum Section. Geert Bourguignon explained how this happened:



The Drum section of the Royal Music Chapel Antwerp Police, L-R Serge Mertens, Mike Dandoy, Rudi Van Hoolst, Carla Van Volsem, Bart Peeters, Jean Dandoy, Patrick Feyt & Geert Bourguignon.

Driven by the beautiful music, the sense of pageantry and out of solidarity with Her Majesty's Royal Marines, in 2009 a group of friends from the KMPA decided to visit the Mountbatten Festival of Music. We knew of it because of our ties with the Royal British Legion Antwerp Branch. Then in 2016 we attended the commemorations of 47 Cdo in Port-en-Bessin. We were warmly introduced to the veterans and their relatives when we attended the ceremonies. After the official part was over, we were invited to raise a glass, and from that were created the strong bonds of friendship between us. World War II, D-Day, 47 Cdo, these mean so much to us who come from what was occupied Belgium. The Lifelines (that helped Allied soldiers and airmen return to Britain) and the armed struggle by the Resistance, that was often organized from within the U.K., along with the Allied Armies, helped us to defeat a ruthless enemy and recapture our democratic values.

We were very honoured that we could get to know several veterans, including Chuck Harris, the grandfather figure of the Harris - Prentis family. After a few conversations with John Prentis (Chuck's grandson) we came up with a plan to go together to the Mountbatten Festival of Music in London. At that time, we could not have known that we would get the chance to enjoy the Mountbatten Festival of Music this year with theme commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

We have made a promise to be back next year and hopefully for many more years to come, with a growing group of fans of the world-class musicians, the Bands of the Royal Marines. Hope to see you all soon again soon, Geert Bourguignon and friends.

Normandy 75: Part I - Overview

Bob Perry

In the annals of the Normandy landings on 6 June 1944 Port-en-Bessin will always remain a site of unique historical significance. It was the first port captured; its capture was also vitally important as the initial petrol supply point ensuring that the British and Allied armies had the supplies of fuel without which they could not operate; it was uniquely significant, as well as symbolic, as the demarcation point between the British and United States Armies. In fighting terms, apart from its strategic and historical significance, the capture of Port-en-Bessin by 47 Cdo represented a remarkable victory achieved in the face of daunting adversity. The Commando suffered heavy losses at the landing on Gold Beach, had to undertake a 12-mile march through enemy held territory and then attack the formidable concrete bunkers, pill boxes and barbed wire protected trenches and defences of the port, sited high on 200 feet headlands protecting the harbour. Despite the heavy casualties and a number of serious setbacks the 2-day battle was crowned with success.



L-R: Artist Jo Struyven greets Norman Rose & Mark Packer at the unveiling of the Normandy Panorama

(You can see the unveiling at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxocgH0hhUY> or to download and watch in HQ at: <https://we.tl/t-tuBqugpHci>)

The second project, commissioned by the Comité du Débarquement, was to display photographs of WW2 Service personnel on lamp posts stretching along the Normandy coastline. Due to the Association fully embracing the project at an early stage, photographs of 47 RM Cdo personnel stretched all the way from Port-en-Bessin to the outskirts of Ouistreham.

Our programme was as busy and memorable as ever. National events commenced early on the 6th of June with the main service of remembrance at Bayeux Cathedral followed by a service of remembrance at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery. Our veterans Chuck Harris, Mark Packer and Norman Rose, were joined by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall, Theresa May and her husband Philip, President Macron and other dignitaries for a moving service that recalled that momentous day 75 years ago. Once the service was over, the veterans retired for lunch in the Veterans Village, an enormous marquee, where they were entertained by the Central Band of the Royal British Legion, and the honoured guests had the opportunity to talk to our veterans.

Two unique projects had been commissioned this year; the first by the Belgian photographer Jo Struyven who had created a 90-metre-long panoramic frieze of the Normandy coastline as it is today, with photographs of the D-Day landing beaches beneath. The frieze, mounted on a framework on the sea front in Port-en-Bessin, was formally unveiled by our veterans.



Photos of 47 Cdo hung from the lampposts along the coast



Kelly Heathfield pipes in the first troop on their arrival at Port-en-Bessin

Elsewhere, 'In the Footsteps of 47 Commando' is now a well-established annual event on the 6th, that retraces the 12-mile route taken by the Commando from Gold Beach to Port-en-Bessin. Serving and former Royal Marines, many British and French friends and families (this year totalling over 200 people) 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 participated in the walk and raised over £16,000 in sponsorship for the 47 Charity.

We were also pleased to welcome the crew of the Sarie Marais, the RM Corps Yacht, and ten serving Royal Marines who had cycled from Dorchester (where 47 RM Cdo was formed on the 1st August 1943) to Port-en-Bessin to help commemorate the Liberation of the town.

The Liberation of Port-en-Bessin is commemorated by the local community and 47 RMCA on the 7th June. The first ceremony was at the 47 Cdo Memorial Garden on the Western Feature overlooking the harbour. The service of remembrance was led by Canon John Wasley RNR with Cpl Bugler Dave Nevatte sounding the Last Post and Reveille. The large gathering, including Matthew Lodge, the UK Deputy Ambassador at the British Embassy in Paris (and a former Royal Marine) along with the Naval Attaché, DCGRM, CO 1AGRM, CO RMR London, Deputy CEO of RMA, the RM Charity, Corps RSM, and many other serving Royal Marines and RMA personnel who had supported us the day previously. We 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



Mark Packer prepares to lay the 47 wreath at the Captain Cousins Memorial.

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 short ceremony followed at the bunker in Place Gaudin and an opportunity to pay tribute to the crews of the French battle cruisers 'Montcalm' and 'Georges Leygues' which supported the Allied Landings. We also remembered 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 (both Chuck Harris and Mark Packer were wounded during the assault and cared for by French families).



The reception which followed in the Salle des Fêtes was a mix of remembrance, hospitality and friendship and an opportunity to formally thank the Mayor, Pierre-Albert Cavey, for his ongoing support to the Association and our veterans. It was therefore a most noble gesture by the Mayor and town council to bestow honorary citizenship of Port-en-Bessin on our veterans.

Brigadier Haydn White, Deputy CGRM, shares a joke with Mark Packer & Chuck Harris in the Salle des Fêtes

At 3pm that afternoon a spectacular cavalcade of some 200 historic WW2 military vehicles passed through the town, accompanied at 4pm by the Band of HM Royal Marines Portsmouth, Jeeps with our veterans, marching detachments of Royal Marines and RMA personnel, along with the RMA Riders Branch competing with the band as to who could make the loudest noise. At 7pm the band performed a superb 'Sunset Display' on Place Gaudin, with Geof Haywood lowering the 47 RMCA flag. In all, it was a most fitting way to round off what had been a very special and momentous couple of days of formal commemoration.

On the 8th of June, when the official ceremonies were over, we took the opportunity to remember those veterans we had recently lost. We returned to Asnelles, near where 47 Cdo landed on D-Day, and Anne-Marie Nicholls, on behalf of the family of Harry Prescott, and the family of Ken Parker, scattered their ashes at the water's edge.

We then made our way to the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer, overlooking Gold Beach, where we laid our Association wreath at the Foundation Stone beneath the D-Day Sculpture that Theresa May and Emmanuel Macron had unveiled on the morning of the 6th. As we laid our wreath, Bugler Dave Nevatte sounded the Last Post and Reveille, what we can claim is a first for the Royal Marines at the Normandy Memorial. We then made our way to l'Abbaye de Longues to visit the recreation of the Field Hospital. After a long day on the road, veterans, families and friends all looked forward to the traditional Association dinner in the 47 bar. Our final commemoration was on the 9th of June when we made the journey to Fécamp where the city hosted the veterans and Association in the renaming of a square in honour of the Commando.

Normandy 75: Part II – Bayeux 6th June

Anne-Marie Nicholls

On what was a beautiful sunny day in Normandy I was asked to accompany 47 veteran Norman Rose to Bayeux Cathedral and the British cemetery. Sadly, Norman's wife Daphne hadn't felt up to the trip, so I was happy to step into her shoes (despite my shoes being odd ones, I think I got away with it. Thank goodness the photos didn't capture my feet).

The Royal British Legion had organised travel for some 300 veterans to attend the commemorative events and it was lovely to see them so well represented and beautifully turned out, proudly displaying their medals. Present from 47 were veterans Norman Rose, Mark Packer, accompanied by his granddaughters Louse and Tracy and Chuck Harris, accompanied by his daughter Jacqui Hearn.

The service in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Bayeux was very moving and entirely in keeping with the sombre occasion. It included an extract from 'Une jeunesse occupée' the story of a 15-year-old girl who had been woken and kept awake just before midnight on the 5th June 1944 by 'thunder'. As morning dawned: in the street, faces puffy from broken sleep, people cheered with excitement, "They've landed".

Once the service was over, we were ushered to the VIP Marquee, situated in the cemetery, by two Royal Marine Commandos from 1AGRM based in Plymouth. Mne Byron Fensom and Sgt Joseph Long kept us provided with refreshments and organised our seating in both the marquee and the cemetery. We were sat next to Jeremy Corbyn and behind Theresa May and the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall.

These two young men did their service great credit and were unceasingly polite and helpful. At the conclusion of a poignant service in the Cemetery our veterans were honoured to meet the Prime Minister and her husband as well as Prince Charles and Camila, Duchess of Cornwall, who were happy to talk and pose for photographs.



Theresa May spent over 10 minutes talking and laughing with Norman Rose. Eventually we managed to get them both to pose for a photograph, whilst keeping a straight face.

After missing the 47 coach back to Port-en-Bessin myself, Norman and the Association's Scouse contingent met up with Dan Snow running off to some other commitment, but not before obliging us with a photo.

Normandy 75: Part III – Sallanelles

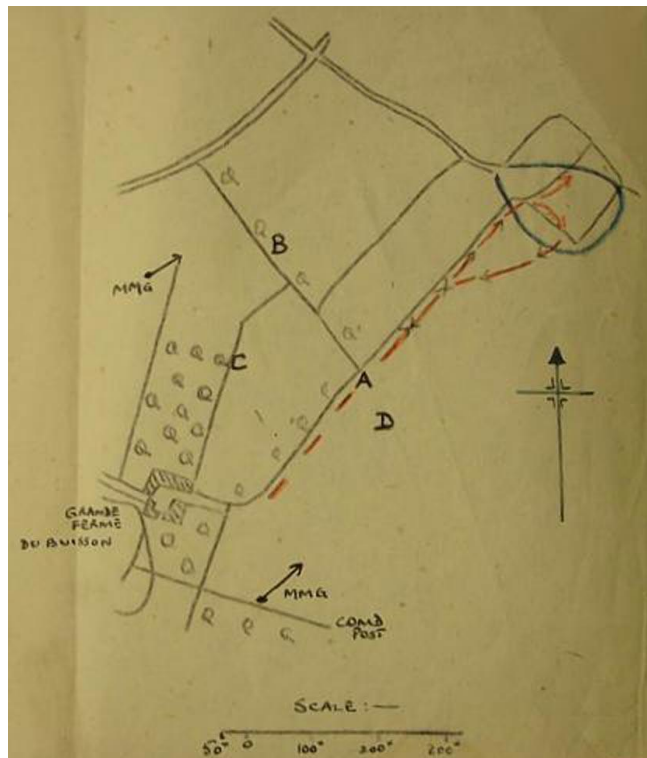
Claire Collison

Like many other veteran's children sadly it wasn't until long after my father's death in 1988 that I actually started to understand what 47 Cdo had achieved back in 1944. Our first visit was on the 70th anniversary, and since then with the help of the 47 Association, and in particular Marc de Bolster, we have really started to understand their story.

My father Ray Tullett and his brother Ron were both in B troop and played their part in the challenges of the landing on Gold beach on D Day and the liberation of Port-en-Bessin. On the 12th June they arrived in Sallanelles which was of strategic importance and under huge pressure from the enemy. Ron Tullett was a sniper and as such was often 'first in and last out' when carrying out patrols into no man's land. Sadly, on the 16th June he was shot and killed close to La Grande Ferme du Buisson. Ray recounted that he was outside a tent when he saw a senior officer walking towards him, instinctively he knew his brother had been killed before he heard those awful words. Ray was devastated by this news and although played a key role in the well documented fighting patrol of the 18th June where 47 pushed 500 yards into enemy territory, he was returned to the UK to other duties.

For our annual visit, in June 2019 my husband and I planned to spend more time in the Sallanelles area to research more about the what 47 did and most importantly to try and locate the spot where Ron fell. A few weeks earlier I'd emailed the local Marie Msr Greffin who had invited us to the service at the new memorial and a reception at the village hall afterwards. This is a fantastic tribute to 47 on top of the hill outside Sallanelles right next to the Maison Juvigny where Doc Forfar had his Regimental Aid Post (RAP). The weather was pretty wet and windy but the event was well attended by locals and those with links to RM Cdo including veteran Denis Donovan from 48 Cdo. It was lovely to hear both national anthems boosted by the local town band. I was truly privileged to be able to lay the 47 wreath.

We were delighted to meet several members of the family who moved into Maison Chevigny just after the war, they recounted what it was like living in such badly damaged but still very beautiful house. On one occasion the son, who was 7 years old, found a live tank shell in the garden and calmly carried it to his father proud of what he'd found. We also met the Kottlers again who now own the house, who recounted finding parachute material from a crashed Messerschmitt in recent years when planting a new tree in their garden. However, the most important task was still to locate where Ron fell and mark this spot 75 years on. Using lots of information from different sources, but notably an original pencil map Marc was given by a veteran's family, we were able to place a small cross on a very quiet footpath just east of the farm. Very quiet and peaceful, in complete contrast to what it would have been like 75 years earlier.



The original pencil map which helped us identify where we believe Ron fell.

Normandy 75: Part IV – A walk in the Normandy countryside; In the Footsteps of 47 Commando

Robert Wilson

Seventy-five years on, one might expect the level of interest in commemorating D-Day to be waning. Not so, at least for those who have connections to 47 Royal Marine Commando and the residents of Port-en-Bessin, a fishing village the lies between what were known as Gold and Omaha beaches on the Normandy coast. On June 6, 2019, around 200 people gathered at a 'Blokhaus' about 15 kilometers east of Port-en-Bessin and then, in commemoration, followed the inland route that the 47 Cdo took to approach and attack the town from the rear.

The group was surprisingly diverse. There were, of course, many like my brother Alexander and me who have family connections with the events of June 6, 1944 but there were also French tourists who had heard about the walk and others whose curiosity made them join at the last minute. There was also at least one former US Marine, a chunky, taciturn man of about 40 who had seen active service in both Afghanistan and Iraq and a larger than ever group from Port-en-Bessin itself who have seen this annual walk grow over the years and who now feel that it is part of their history.



Piper Kelly Heathfield & the Mayor of Asnelles lead off at the commencement of the walk 'In the Footsteps of 47 Cdo'.

Marshalled brilliantly by volunteers and briefed impeccably by Stephen Blevins, we all set off in five 'troops', just as the 47 Cdo had done, but with some important differences. We were sent on our way in bright sunshine by the Mayor of Asnelles after a moving ceremony that involved the Last Post and we were accompanied by 50 serving Royal Marines who walked up the beach to be greeted by a group of school children with French flags, handshakes and hugs as gifts. The first, and not last, lump in the throat of the day. Our departure could not have been more different to that of the 47 Cdo whose landing on a cold, stormy morning was violently opposed and who lost 29 men killed or drowned. Fourteen landing craft brought the 47 Cdo to the shore. Only two made it back. While some

who had landed re-joined the main group later, only around 320 of the 420 who had set off from England started their march inland, most without weapons and with no radios. What must they have thought and talked about as they began their 20 km march towards Port-en-Bessin?

Our walk, in contrast, was a delight. The weather was perfect, the route well marked, and at several places, we stopped to be briefed by the CO of the Marines on what had happened on the day. At almost every occasion along the way that we crossed a road, we saw groups of people dressed in period military costume and driving perfectly maintained WW2 jeeps. Respectful commemoration or dressing up that celebrates warfare? Even after many of these walks, I have no idea which it is, and I am bemused by it still. One part of it, I think, is that

these people are nostalgic for a day when there was, to the Allies at least, a clear difference between the good and the bad and when America and Britain 'won'. In some way, we all pine for a simpler world but should they be doing this? I think not, for many reasons including that to me it's silly, and also that I have learned to hold front of mind the fear, horror and tragedy of that war, but presumably, so have they. So, I do not judge. Perhaps it is a genuine form of respect. One of the strange things about the whole day is that no-one discussed why they were here, and I now understand that. Commemoration is as much a private as a public act.



Our departure could not have been more different to that of 47 Cdo whose landing on a cold, stormy morning was violently opposed.

Quite early in the walk, I fell in with a group of three of the Royal Marines and noticed that one was carrying what looked like a policeman's truncheon. I had to ask and did. "It's the handle of a stretcher" I was told, and a sergeant went on to explain that it was the symbol of a charity that supports service men and women whose lives have been blighted, physically or psychologically, by war. The charity is called 'The Baton'. There are four such batons and all were cut from a stretcher that saw much use in Helmand Province in

Afghanistan. The Marines carry them at public events to raise awareness of, and money for, the charity, whose mission is described on their website in these words "To the men and women of our armed forces... be assured of our pride, respect and thanks, for your professionalism, humanity and dedication to the task. Even though you may be serving in the furthest corners of the globe you will always be in our thoughts and prayers... out of sight will never be out of mind". How unlike the unforgiving attitudes of our army back in 1944 towards the welfare of its soldiers?

After an hour or so, I got to chatting with a French group from Limoges who had not planned to take part but joined the walk at the last moment. There were four adults who soon found themselves fascinated and their four teenage kids, who did not; they had clearly not expected to be sent on what must have seemed to them to be a pointless walk among strangers and were bickering among themselves, to their parents' displeasure. Anyway, in my capacity as 'deputy team leader', I got their attention with a map and a bar of chocolate and, as we passed a point where a sign explained that a sniper had killed one of the 47 Cdo, the conversation turned to what Dad had done on June the 6th and 7th. Soon, everyone, young and old, was talking and truly sharing an experience. The group walked for about an hour with us and then headed back to the coast. As they left, I looked at the eldest of the kids. He was a slender, almost lanky, handsome lad who was in his last year of high school so must have been 17. Seventy-five years before, Lt Wilson had been just two years older than him.

It was almost nine hours after we had set off that we got to Port-en-Bessin, having had a day in which every moment had its own contradictions. We had walked in bright, warm sunshine, chatting amiably while the 47 Cdo had yomped in cold, damp greyness, fearing snipers. Our

'march' had been both a commemoration and yet a celebration. Theirs was a journey into enemy-held territory with danger around every corner. Many moments of our walk were poignant, none more than when we stood on the hill behind Port-en-Bessin, imagining what 320 tired, wet, cold, under-equipped young men must have felt as they headed towards what they knew was one of the most heavily defended places on the whole Normandy coast, manned by the German 352 Infantry Division whose direct orders were that all captured Commandos should be shot. It seems now almost inappropriate to say, but other moments were just a pure delight, such as when I had to work hard to keep up with a lovely woman from Port-en-Bessin who described how walking had become her great joy and who suggested that I should try 'sea walking' under the cliffs in the winter. No, thank you! In so many ways, the day was contradictory and confusing and yet it was also at every moment worthwhile, life-affirming and right. And that's why I will come back again and again.

During the two days of June 6 and 7, 1944, 47th Royal Marine Commando had 116 casualties, 46 killed and 70 wounded. Port en Bessin was taken and the 'Pipeline under the ocean'



Lt Gordon Wilson in the foreground, Chuck Harris & Harry Prescott to the rear.

(PLUTO) was soon operational, providing much of the fuel without which the invasion would have stalled. On June 7, Lt Wilson and one other officer led A Troop in an attack on the Western feature. It failed when two flak ships in the port opened fire on the Marines who were exposed on the cliff side a few hundred yards away. 12 Marines died and 17 were injured. That evening, Lt Wilson was part of Capt Cousins' team of 25 who attacked the Eastern feature. After hours of fighting, the feature was secured. Seeing this, the Germans on the Western feature surrendered. General Sir Brian Horrocks, commander of the British 30th Corps in Normandy, wrote of 47 Royal Marine Commando's capture of Port-en-Bessin: 'It is doubtful whether, in their long, distinguished history, the marines have ever achieved anything finer.'

In the Footsteps of 47 Commando – Facts & Figures

Unfortunately, Ken Cowdrey, our sterling walk organiser, had to return to the UK on the 5th of June to attend to family matters. His friends Stephen Blevins and Rosemary Lever stepped in at very short notice to prepare for and run the event. Despite never having taken part in the walk before, they did a splendid job, helped in part by the enormous amount of effort that Ken had put in and the detailed supporting material that he had created. Thanks also to Michel Laulier, our man on the ground in France, and to Sgt Danny Rose of RMR London.

Some 47 Information Points has been erected along the route of the walk and each of the Troop Leaders had detailed information covering the points. The story of 47 was told by Royal Marines at five locations along the route, along with historic 'real-time' Situation Reports read by Lt. Col. Jason Durup. Alex Wilson was our expert translator for our French guests. The number of walkers varied between 210 and 230 as some participants left and others joined. The current amount raised for the 47 Charity totals £16,262 including Gift Aid.

Normandy 75: Part V – 75 Years of Liberation

Tina Jonkers

In addition to the 75th anniversary of D-Day, it was the 10th year that our Willys Jeep "Booper Trooper" came to Normandy for the commemorations of the landings of the Allied forces. What once started as an interest in the Willys Jeep, inherited from Roger's father, turned out over the years into a real passion for everything that has to do with WWII. In these 10 years we have had the pleasure of getting to know the 47 Cdo veterans and their families. The cold water of the North Sea is certainly no reason to stand in the way of warm friendships.

Many people wonder why we drag our Jeep behind our camping car for almost 600km to Normandy each year. The answer is quite simple: we want to thank the liberators of Western Europe for the sacrifices they have made, by bringing the vehicle (which saved many lives and was so useful in those days) back to where it once served.

Naturally, with a vehicle should come a suitable uniform. We have always tried to wear our uniforms as correctly as possible. Talking to the veterans and reading biographies has been crucial here. In the beginning these were mostly American, but gradually we switched to British uniforms and civilian outfits. Perhaps the cordiality of British veterans and their families is the cause of this change. Meanwhile, "Booper Trooper" has also been converted to a vehicle in British markings. On the morning of June 6th, around 6 am, it is a tradition for Roger to go to the nearest beach. Just a moment of silence and reflection, because of what happened in 1944 on these very beaches. This year, for the first time, I did the same. There were no masses of vehicles and people, like in the bigger tourist places. On the 'shell beach' of Port-en-Bessin, there were just the three of us and the sound of the salty sea surf. Sometimes silence takes you to the core of life.

This year was also a first for us. The American WWII field hospital that we have collected over the years, was established for the first time in the Abbaye de Longues sur Mer, thanks to the hard work of Bram Dermout (our Doc Forfar lookalike) and friends. The participants on the 'In the footsteps of the 47' walk stopped there for their lunch and had the opportunity to look around the field hospital, which had been set up inside the former refectory of the Abbey.



Bram Dermout, Doc Forfar lookalike.



The field hospital in the refectory of Abbaye de Longues sur Mer, being filmed by CNN on the 6th of June.

For us it was also the closure of an active re-enactment period. Due to health problems, we have decided to hand over our field hospital to Bram. This small intimate ceremony took place in the abbey on D-Day; another memorable moment in this special year.

Back home, the Normandy feeling wasn't over yet. We watched a few recorded shows about the D-Day anniversary. We heard a British Veteran saying the festivities surrounding the commemorations have unfortunately become a carnival-like affair over the last few years. I can hardly blame him. Not only are some re-enactors disrespectful of uniforms and equipment, some commercial operators take advantage by raising prices. Maybe we tend to romanticize history too much, but we must not lose the essence.

Finally, the foremost aim is to honor our liberators and to commemorate the victims, as well as celebrating the liberation of our people who suffered for four years under the Nazi regime. These heroic deeds should never be forgotten, because only the knowledge of the past can save us from repeating the same mistakes in the future.

Normandy 75: Part VI – Tribute to John “Doc” Forfar

John Prentis

This year in Normandy we were joined by David Forfar, the son of John "Doc" Forfar. I hadn't met David before, and had only exchanged a couple of emails and had a phone call prior to his visit, so for me it was a pleasure to meet him in person.



L-R: David Forfar with Bram, his father's lookalike.

Over the past few years it was noticed that Bram Dermout had an incredible likeness to the photo we have of "Doc" and to that end he decided to pay tribute to 47 and "Doc" in particular by wearing the correct uniform and putting together the most accurate re-enactment of a British WW2 medical station possible. With David Forfar with us this year a trip to visit Bram had to be on the agenda, and this we did on the 8th of June.

Bram not only hosted our visit, he re-enacted the surgical procedure for removing a bullet from a patient, which closely resembles a war painting by the famous War Artist Leslie Cole of Doc Forfar operating on Royal Marines in 1944.

I must express my thanks to Bram for his tribute to Doc, and to his assistants which made the whole experience realistic, Bruno, Patrick and Nicole (and the plastic dummy on the operating table).

As a footnote I'd like to add that John "Doc" Forfar won the Military Medal (now the Military Cross) for going forward to attend to the wounded while under fire in Walcheren in November 1944.

Normandy 75: Part VII – Liberation Parade

Marc de Bolster



I have been organising an annual historic vehicle cavalcade on behalf of the Association and supported by the town council and Mayor's office since 2014, the 70th anniversary of the Liberation. As this was to be the 75th anniversary, it had to be something spectacular.

Quickly the number of vehicles wishing to join the parade exceeded 200 which forced me to close entry for additional vehicles as of the 1st of January. Participating vehicles ranged from Jeeps and motorcycles to Austin ambulances, big trucks like the Matador, Bedford and Scammell, Chevrolet Gun tractors and Heavy Utility vehicles, staff cars, a DUKW amphibious vehicle, a Morris Minor, a Lynx reconnaissance vehicle and many more. In addition, the owner of a Weasel amphibious as used by the Commando on Walcheren in 1944 contacted me asking permission to paint 47 RM Commando vehicle markings on it for the occasion.



Churchill in an RAF Staff Car gives his famous salute

At 3pm, just as the parade was about to commence, a Gendarme told me to hold there seemed to be a problem along the route for the big vehicles. Two civilian vehicles were parked on both sides of a road so they were unsure whether the vehicles could pass, so we had to make a trial run first. The trial run was a success and the start was only 15 minutes later than planned. The parade route ended at Place Gaudin with parking for a large number of the participants to put their vehicles on display, so the public had a chance of having a closer look at them all.



A youngster on his mobile phone oblivious to a heavy truck bearing down on him. Does he know that vehicles of this age don't need an MOT and the luxury of working brakes?

Despite this minor problem, and with the help of the new municipal police officer Violène Maloubier, the historic vehicle parade ran smoothly and, as in previous years, several participants gave feedback saying this parade was the highlight of their Normandy trip. The Mayor, Pierre-Albert Cavey was very pleased and complimentary on the organisation of the parade. I'd like to give special thanks to my partner Dany, who is a French native, for her support and help in liaising with the Mayor's office.

Normandy 75: Part VIII – Chuck & the Nurses

John Prentis

For the parade of the 7th June, Chuck was invited to sit in the lead Jeep. It's something he does every year to the great delight of the crowds. Unfortunately, as he was climbing into the Jeep, he caught his leg causing the skin to tear and for it to start bleeding. Of course, 75 years ago Doc Forfar would have patched him up in no time, but unfortunately, we had no Doc and the bleeding wouldn't stop. This meant a trip to hospital was the only option, much to the distress of Chuck as he had left a beer on the table at the bar.

The French health service was on full standby for such a situation it seems, as upon arrival he was treated instantly by several medical staff, who gave him their undivided attention. It seems that several women in nurses uniform has the remarkable ability to make you forget your ailments and be able to stand like a young Royal Marine and enjoy their company. It's obviously some kind of miracle.



Thanks to the highly skilled French nursing staff Chuck is soon back on his feet & as sprightly as ever.

After being patched up, and several photograph's later, Chuck got back into Port-en-Bessin by late afternoon and joined back in where he left off, with a beer in the 47 bar.

Normandy 75: Part IX – Fécamp

Dave Shorrock (Ed)

As part of their 75th anniversary commemorations of the D-Day landings, the city of Fécamp decided to name the square at the front of the Town Hall in honour of 47 Royal Marine Commando. For those who know their Corps history, 47 Commando liberated Fécamp on the 2nd of September 1944, some 10 days ahead of the liberation of the port of Le Havre.



The square itself has great significance, being at the end of Place du Général Leclerc (it was Leclerc's men who fought their way to liberate Paris) and the site of the Mast of the Liberation with its memorial to the French Resistance.

The inauguration was on Sunday the 9th of June, perfectly timed for the Association returning from the commemorations in Bayeux and Port-en-Bessin. As our Veterans, Chuck Harris and

Norman Rose arrived, they were greeted with kisses by the Mayoress Marie-Agnès Poussier-Winsback and warm handshakes by Pierre Aubry, the Deputy Mayor responsible for Veterans Affairs. Once they were seated, and as photographs were being taken, other ladies took the opportunity to step forward to kiss and thank Chuck and Norman.

The ceremony began with Pierre Aubry thanking the men of 47 Commando for liberating them from five years of occupation and for giving us the freedom which we now enjoy today. After the French and British national anthems were played (accompanied by the mating calls of a pair of seagulls perched overhead), the Union flag was raised over the square by Geoff Haywood and Les Pike. As a wreath was laid Lou Sartorel bore our standard and our Bugler Dave Nevatte sounded the Last Post and Reveille. The Mayoress, Deputy Mayor, and Paddy O'Connell then walked around the square, unveiling the new name signs with a flourish. The ceremony concluded with the Mayoress presenting Chuck and Norman with the medal of the city and as well as making them honorary citizens of Fécamp.



Ceremonies over, all 40 of us were invited down to the beach front restaurant, Le Reidroc, for a fine lunch. Our reputation must have preceded us because the tables were already set with aperitifs and carafes of wine. The lunch was a fitting end to our visit. As we looked out to sea, we were reminded that it was only last year on the 2nd of September, that Harry Prescott danced the night away.

The Mayoress bestows Honorary citizenship of the City of Fécamp on Chuck & Norman.

A short (2 minute) video of the inauguration produced by Fécamp TV can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtF6jbYyEAU>.

Normandy 75: Part X – In Pictures





A D-Day Prayer

For those who never reached the beach
 Enfold each one we Thee beseech.
 For those who sank and surely drowned
 Now may they in your arms be found.
 For those whose feet ne'er touched the sand
 So, may they rest beneath Thy hand.
 For those who reached the shore at length
 Help them endure through all Thy strength.
 For those who suffered wounds and pain
 Restore to them their health again.
 For those who brought us to the shore
 Our gratitude for ever more.
 For those who o'er us hourly flew
 Our thanks to you who saw us through.
 For all those there, both rank and file
 Remember us for just a while.

John Wetjen Q Troop PO/X119263

Courtesy of Sandra Tebbutt,
 John's daughter



Absent Friends

James Patrick (Pat) Hagan, 4th February 2019, aged 93 years, HQ-Troop

When Pat came into the world, the mould was thrown away. Patrick was unique, a generous man, a resilient man, a hard-working man who would often tell us that “he had never had a day off sick in his life”. He was known for his energy, determination, his sense of humour. Exactly, how much of his character was derived from the experiences that life threw at him we will never know. His life was not easy but then Patrick always did say that “life was not meant to be a straight pathway to the stars”.



Pat with his Legion D'Honneur in 2016 (Photo: GrimsbLive)

He was born on the 6th of May 1925 in Louth and although christened James Patrick, was always known as Pat or Patrick. His family moved to Grimsby, where Patrick started at Welhome School and always claimed he only went to school ‘for shelter’. He started his career in fish and chips at an early age when he helped his brother, Danny in his fish and chip shop near Grimsby docks. Patrick often remarked, ‘that if there hadn’t been a fight before 9 pm they hadn’t been busy’! It

was so rough that Patrick said he joined up at 16 in 1942 to get away from it (or as he once told his sergeant whilst on parade, ‘for a rest’). Apparently, the sergeant didn’t laugh.

He passed out as a Royal Marine and volunteered for hazardous service undertaking commando training, in the wilds of the soggy Scottish Highlands. This started a theme that was to haunt Patrick throughout his war career – that of getting wet through. He was very proud to pass out and attain the highly prized ‘green beret’.

One of Patrick’s first assignments (aged just 17) was to the small-scale raiding squad when, having landed by parachute in France, night raids were carried out on German positions, before finding their way back to the coast to be picked up covertly by the Royal Navy.

On D-Day he landed with the French troops on Sword Beach. As he was disembarking from the landing craft, he fell into a shell hole on the seabed ending up completely submerged to get soaking wet yet again. The landing craft lurched and went over his head and, with the weight of his signaller’s pack on his back, if his mate hadn’t reached down to pull him up - well, that would have been the end of his war.

Having successfully negotiated the ravages of the D-Day landing, he was assigned to support Lord Lovatt at the crossing of the famous Pegasus Bridge. He spent 83 days in continuous action alongside 6th Airborne Division holding ‘the left of the line’ during which time he only had one shower and probably the one time he could have done with more water.

He then fought on through France and into Belgium. Patrick would recount the story – that he was sent into Bruges with 2 colleagues in plain clothes - the aim being to contact, a member of the Belgian Resistance – to find out if it was known whether the Germans were going to

defend the City. To get to the rendezvous, they had to pass the guards at the gates of the German HQ in Jacobi Street. He walked alongside a woman and pushed her pram in order to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. He discovered that the Germans were planning to blow up the bridges and move on. We like to think that maybe this contributed to the bigger decision for the British not to attack this beautiful city a place which Patrick and my Mum returned to many times in later years.

His unit then moved into Bruges to prepare and re-equip for the allied attack on the German position of the island of Walcheren in Holland; this was a strategic island needed to ensure supplies into the port of Antwerp. Pat said that this was a more difficult landing than D-Day as it was more heavily defended. His landing craft was pierced by a defensive shell which although it didn't explode, meant he once again had a lucky escape and got soaking wet! He went on to serve in Germany, India and Hong Kong before being demobbed in 1946 aged just 21.

Throughout his life and maybe because of his war experiences and the mates he left behind, when asked if he was having a good day, he always replied "Every day is a good day". His first job in civilian life was travelling the east coast buying herrings for a Grimsby firm. He loved this. After this he spent a year on a trawler out of Grimsby, The Prince Victor, which was so dilapidated he often said when laying on his bunk he could see the stars through the rust holes. This was a very hard job, and he said at times tougher than his war experiences. But, but he did it to earn the £500 to buy the fish and chip shop in Aswell Street from his father – then housed in a 300-year-old building. Later on, buying the premises next door and eventually re-modelling both sites to become the legend that was 'Mr Chips'.

Whilst in his mid-thirties he married Elsa, and Catherine and John came along. With his mind often taken up by business, Catherine recalls the time when at the age of 7 whilst hand in hand with him sight-seeing in Blackpool she was distractedly steered into a fire hydrant.

Early business was tough, and Patrick worked long hours and supplemented his income by dealing in Government surplus equipment. One of the more unusual items he purchased was a full length, pressurised iron lung. What became of it I wonder?



Pat, the centre of attention for handshakes, kisses & photographs in Port-en-Bessin, 7th June 2014.

Sadly, Elsa passed away after 14 years of marriage and in 1978 Patrick's life changed once more when he married Christine and expanded his family with Ann and me. Family life continued in High Holme Road now with four adolescents all moving through their teenage years which Patrick tolerated with much patience and eye rolling. John recalls the story of coming home late one evening slightly worse for wear and thinking he could get into the house without being noticed and placed a ladder up to his bedroom window. During his precarious ascent, he happened to look down, only to see Patrick steadying the bottom of the ladder. All his teenage children had to be well behaved as Patrick invariably got reports in the shop from customers as to where we had been, who we were with and what we had been up to.

After meeting the challenges of several potato shortages and the hike in fish prices caused by the Icelandic Cod Wars, Patrick with the courage of his convictions and lots of hard work steered the award-winning business into one which became a regular destination for locals and visitors alike.

Patrick believed in getting the fundamentals right and he applied this in many areas of his life. Good fish, good potatoes and good groundnut oil to fry them in but he also did things his way. His customer relationship and staff management skills were unique, and I have yet to see them in any business textbook. This included putting radios in the fridge if the staff played them too loudly.

He would often on a busy market day lunchtime direct his customers from behind the pans to the next available server with cries of "Move along now - Don't be shy madam". I can't help but wonder looking down at us now if he would see the first few rows and think "we can squeeze a few more in there".

A strong work ethic was very important to Patrick, he worked hard and expected his staff to do the same. He gave many young people their first experience of a part time or Saturday job and had many long serving members of staff who were fiercely loyal to him.

He was devoted to Gran and Grandad Appleby. One cold wet Christmas Eve night he was on his way to pick them up for Midnight Mass when in his rear-view mirror, he saw the winking blue light of a police car attempting to pull him over. This could be because he didn't believe in indicating to other road users until the last minute. He drove on for two streets until he stopped outside Gran and Grandad's house. When the rather irate officer finally was able to ask him why he hadn't stopped earlier, he replied 'getting my mother in law to church on time is far more important'.

I'm not sure that Patrick actually ever retired (he continued to get up at 6 am and go down to work well into his eighties). but when John and Catherine took over the business this did allow him more time to do other things. He and mum travelled to many of the places he'd been to during the war and to others that allowed him to indulge his love of art and sculpture.

Patrick's love of collecting transferred to the benefit of Louth's charity shops. On one early foray into this habit he came home with two rather large, outlandishly painted china ducks. I think it's fair to say that mum didn't exactly share the love and after a while, discretely rehomed them to a different charity shop. Imagine her joy then, when Patrick proudly came home not long after 'with 'another two' to add to his collection!

His veteran status earned him a number of invitations to the Not Forgotten Association garden parties at Buckingham Palace. His annual visits to both Normandy and Walcheren to commemorate and remember his fallen comrades were also extremely important to him. In 2016 he received the Legion D'Honneur for his part in the liberation of France. He was

awarded the prestigious Paul Harris Medal by the Rotary Club and the Nottingham Diocesan medal for his wide support of this church over many years.

He was disciplined. Maybe from his wartime experience he knew that orders had to be followed – unless of course they got in the way of what Patrick wanted to do. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he would often fall back on an anecdotal yarn to make his point. In later life he was president of both the Lincolnshire Commando Association and the Area branch of the Royal Marines Association. He would give talks about his life and experiences in the military. Whilst having many stories to share (sometimes funny, sometimes poignant) he wanted to make sure that his audience were left in no doubt about the horrors of war. He said many times: “there is no glory in war”.

Looking back on Patrick’s life – he was right – it wasn’t a straight pathway to the stars just like he said. [Pat’s obituary is from the eulogy given by his son Richard.](#)



John Kenneth (Ken) Coulson, 11th February 2019, aged 98 years. HQ-Troop, PO/X101048

Husband of the late Eileen, father to Tony and Chris, father in-law to Ingrid and Monica. Grandfather and great grandfather.

Ken’s son Chris had made contact with the Association a couple of years ago on his father’s behalf. Sadly, Ken’s health was a problem and he was unable to attend our events. But Chris told me he always spoke with pride about his time serving in 47 Cdo. John Prentis.

Les Pike and Lou Sartorel represented the 47 RMCA at Ken’s funeral and paraded the 47 Standard.

Normandy 75: Part XI – Memories & Souvenir

Our ace cameraman Steve Hignett has once again produced a superb video of this year’s commemorations. You can watch on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/1FUFpR47Xcs> or you can order a DVD for only £12 (all proceeds to the 47 Charity) by email: steve.hignett@hotmail.co.uk or phone M:+44(0)7971 848137.



Walcheren 2019

Our trip to Walcheren from Thursday 31st October, returning Monday 4th November is almost fully booked (both the coach (3 spaces remaining) and hotel accommodation (3 rooms, 2 people per room). If you would like to go, or join the reserve list in case anyone drops out, then please contact our Acting Secretary: Anne-Marie Nicholls by email: 47rmcsec@gmail.com as soon as possible.

The outline itinerary is:

- 31 Oct: 07:00 Royal Maritime Club Portsmouth: Board coach for Dover
09:30 - 10:00 Dover Passenger Terminal
11:10 Depart Dover
13:20 (local time) Arrive Calais: Travel to Domburg
Early evening: Arrive hotels in Domburg
- 1 Nov: 10:00 Leave hotels for Polderhuis Museum
10:30 Welcome at Polderhuis Museum
11:00 Ceremony & wreath laying. RM Band Plymouth in attendance
12:00 Lay wreath at civilian cemetery – the Lighthouse
12:30 / 13:00 Wreath laying at Erica Beach
Lunch
14:30 Visit Polderhuis Museum
15:15 Visit 48 RM Cdo Memorial & Church
19:00 Concert by RM Band at Middleburg Town Hall
- 2 Nov: 09:00 Leave hotel for Dishoek Church
10:00 Unveiling of the new 47 RM Cdo Memorial Dishoek
11:30 Reception at Duinlast Café. RM Band display at 12:00
13:00 Visit Whisky 11 Bunker Dishoek
15:30 Lay Wreath at Commando Memorial & LC Memorial, flushing / Vlissingen
16:00 Meet up with walkers & return to Domburg
Evening – Kelly Heathfield's (our renowned piper's) Birthday
- 3 Nov: 09:30 Leave Hotel for Bergen op Zoom
11:00 Wreath laying at British Military Cemetery
12:00 Lay wreath at Lt. Adams grave
12:30 Lay wreath at the Kapelsche Veer Memorial
19:30 Last Night Dinner, Domburg Café
- 4 Nov: 10:00 Depart Hotel for Calais via Ostende for lunch
17:55 Depart Calais
18:25 Arrive Dover
22:30 Royal Maritime Club, Portsmouth.

The Dishoek Memorial, which will be dedicated on the 2nd of November, bears the following inscription in both English and Dutch: *'In these dunes, between 1 and 3 November 1944, the men of 47 Royal Marine Commando fought fiercely to capture the heavily defended German battery at Dishoek, code name W11 (Whiskey 11). During the battle, which led to the liberation of Walcheren, the Commando suffered heavy casualties. The surrender of the battery on 3rd November secured the seaway to Antwerp which was key to the final liberation of the Netherlands.'*

Mountbatten Festival of Music 2020



Next year's Mountbatten Festival of Music will be on Friday 6th of March at 7:30pm and Saturday 7th March at 2:30pm and 7:30pm. Once again, we are privileged to have priority booking before the tickets go on sale to the general public.

Loggia box seats are £52 and Stalls are £42. Veterans of course go free.

If you would like to attend, please can you let me know by **10th August** which day and time you would like, either by email: geofandjillh@btinternet.com or by phone: +44(0)1202 888194.

Please can you also make payment for your tickets either direct into the 47RMCA account at Lloyds Bank, the

details of which are: Sort Code: 30-97-12, Account number: 03793869, remembering to include MFM and your name as the Reference. If you wish to pay by cheque, please make the cheque payable to 47RMCA and post to our Treasurer: Allen Withington, 23 Primrose Hill Road, London, NW3 3DG.

From the Editor

I hope this issue of Despatch has managed to capture at least some of the atmosphere of the 75th anniversary commemorations in Normandy, thanks to everyone who submitted articles and photographs. I'd also like to thank all our Committee members and 47 Charity Trustees who worked so hard to make our successful trip happen. Particular thanks to our Secretary, Ingrid Fearne, who arm wrestled with the Royal British Legion in order to get our accreditations for the events in Bayeux. To try and help out, Allen and I volunteered to drive to the Prefecture in Caen to collect our 52 badges and lanyards. We counted them three times and still couldn't agree we had the correct number. So, we then went through them one-by-one, name checking each of them off the list. When we got to the end, whose did we find was missing? You guessed; it was Ingrid's. The embarrassed staff hurriedly printed off another badge.

On the subject of accreditations, those of us who were at the cemetery at Bayeux will know that it was only those with a 'Veteran Support / Family Member' badge who were allowed into the VIP Marquee where they could mingle with Royalty and the Prime Minister. Despite not having the correct badge, somehow, I managed to get in. Imagine my surprise when I met two other Association members who also didn't have the correct badges. And that's when I realised, all three of us were Scousers.

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.

Editor:

Dave Shorrock
23 Primrose Hill Road
London, NW3 3DG
T: +44(0)207 722667
M: +44(0)7808 929290
E: dave.shorrock@blueyonder.co.uk