

# 47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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## DESPATCH 45 January 2022



**Chuck Harris, President of the 47 RMCA, 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 1922 – 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021**

## From the Chairman

Dear Veterans, Families and Friends, welcome to this, the latest edition of Despatch. It's a particularly emotional edition for me as I've the sad duty to inform you of the passing of Chuck Harris, or Grandad as he was to me.

I, and I'm sure my whole family, wish to thank everyone for your kind messages over the past few weeks. It's comforting to know Grandad meant so much to so many people.

He was of course President of the Association, the Chairman before that, but above all a friend to all of us. It's not going to be the same not hearing his voice reading the roll of honour or singing "Bless 'em all" in the bar. He'll be missed, as indeed we miss all the veterans that have gone over the years.

The show must go on as they say, and in the true fighting spirit of the Men of 47, we have had some great times recently as well. We had a great weekend in Portsmouth, commemorations in Walcheren and wreaths laid at the Graspan Memorial and Eastney Barracks for Remembrance Day.

Also, as ever, the Committee has worked hard behind the scenes to keep the Association ticking over and plan ahead for 2022, so I thank the Committee for your unwavering support. Before I sign off, I want to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New year, and I look forward to seeing you all again very soon. [John Prentis](#)



*John and Grandad (Chuck) enjoying a pint, Fécamp 2019*

### **Cpl. C.J 'Chuck' Harris PO/X111981T HQ Troop 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021, age 98**

Grandad was born the third child to Percy and Clara Harris, a younger brother to his sisters May and Joan. His father was a Major in the Royal Horse Artillery in the late 1800's but re-enlisted into the Royal Artillery at the outbreak of the first World War.

He was raised at the family home in Redbridge, Ilford, where he had a firm upbringing and a happy childhood. At the outbreak of WWII, Grandad was 16 and was working for a potato merchant supplying fish and chip shops. He always told me this job built him up both physically and mentally for when he turned 18 and joined up. He'd seen first-hand the bomb damage to London caused during the blitz. This, along with the fearlessness of youth, meant he was eager to join the battle against the enemy. He chose the Royal Navy and joined the Royal Marines in 1941. This was also the year his mother died, succumbing to an illness she'd battled for some time.

His first action saw him in North Africa. With his vehicle knowledge he was assigned to the long-range desert group. In July 1943 he took part in the landings on Sicily (Operation Husky) but was wounded as he ran up the beach. A most likely victim of friendly fire as he was wounded in the rear.

He was evacuated back to England on board a Canadian hospital ship, but his whereabouts had not been accurately recorded and he was reported as missing, presumed dead. This is what his father was told back home, and understandably was devastated at losing his only son.

When Grandad arrived back, on the southwest coast of England, he had a job convincing the authorities who he was, his dirty uniform and all ID had been discarded during his hospital

treatment and thrown overboard. Eventually his father was called for to identify him, can you imagine!

It was during his continued recovery that he met a young Liverpool lass working in the Land Army on a nearby farm. I'm glad he did as this special lady later became my Nan. It was about this time Grandad decided to join the Commandos, and so was sent to Achnacarry for training.

By now it's 1944 and he's sent to join up with 47 Royal Marine Commando on the south coast. Training continued in preparation for the Normandy landings, but of course no one knew it.

June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 is a day in history we will never forget, but for Grandad it was the next operation and another beach he had to land on. I can well imagine that on the crossing he'd have joked with his mates telling them he didn't want another bullet in the arse.

On the way towards the beach his landing craft was hit and burst into flames. Many of the men on board were killed and Grandad, suffering from burns, had to jump over the side and get ashore himself.

In November that year he took part in the Walcheren landings. This he once said to me was the hardest battle and it was a miracle anyone survived, something echoed by many veterans over the years.

Back home on leave he married his sweetheart Joan in January 1945, and they remained married until Nan died in September 1999.

Grandad's War finished in 1946 when he returned home after serving under Lord Mountbatten, commander of the South Asia Fleet.

By now the first of his six children had been born and my Nan urged him to take a less dangerous career path. He chose the Metropolitan Police as this "less dangerous" career, joining in 1947. One night in 1948 he stumbled by chance upon a burglary in action. He proceeded to make an arrest and was shot in the leg and the arm as the thieves got away. Like a cat with nine lives, he survived and before long was back on duty. Now, posted to the police driving school at Hendon he took and passed several advanced driving and motorcycle courses. Most notably he rode as an out-rider for Princess Margaret's wedding and Winston Churchill's funeral.

He finally retired from the Met as an Inspector in 1972. This was probably a good year for him for another reason as well; it was the year his youngest daughter (my Mum) got married.

Over the following years he took on a couple of pubs and continued working at various jobs well into his 70's. In later years He and Nan moved a few times between Kent and Essex, but they were living in Broadstairs when in September 1999 my Nan passed away; they had been married for 54 years. Wherever they lived they were well known, great social people and loved by so many friends, and of course all the family. Grandad remained very social, with his old mates from the police and the RMA. Inevitably over time they passed away and old age prevented him travelling to visit any who were still alive. He loved to keep in touch however over the telephone, probably his last piece of independence, hearing aids permitting!

He loved his visits to Normandy and Walcheren each year. He loved seeing his friends again, meeting new ones, and of course he loved singing. He used to love dancing too before his legs got iffy.

He had been getting gradually weaker over the last couple of years but did marvellously well and was able to stay in his own home until earlier this year. A stay in hospital and a few weeks in a home for old people, I'm not surprised he called it a day. He lived a full life, full of love, laughs and happiness. A father of six, Grandad to 13 and a Great Grandad to 21, but above all he was a friend to all of us.

Rest in peace old friend. You excelled on earth and I've no doubt you'll be enjoying a beer in God's house right now. Until we meet again, your loving Grandson, [John](#).





## Photo Captions: Page 4

Top left: A teenage Chuck with his sister Joan, at his Nan's house in Oxford, c. 1938.  
" right: Chuck & Joan on their wedding day, January 1945.

Middle left: Chuck with his parents and sisters, probably in Littlehampton, c.1933.  
" right: In police uniform, 1949.

Bottom left: Family group with son and 5 daughters, plus some of the grandchildren' 1980.  
" right: On duty using one of the first radio equipped motorcycles in the Met, 1951.

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Top left: Chuck centre of attention, Port-en-Bessin, June 2014.  
" right: At Major Walton's grave, Fécamp, September 2019.

Middle left: A surprise kiss from Kelly Heathfield, Walcheren, November 2019,  
" right: - which made the front-page of the local newspaper!

Bottom left: Guest of Honour, with the Mayor of Fécamp, September 2019.  
" right: Chuck in fine voice, as always, at the 47 Bar, Port-en-Bessin, June 2019.

## Tribute

### Paddy O'Connell

What can be learned about the Greatest Generation and about ourselves from the example and character of Chuck Harris?

I'd like to begin a brief answer from 1953, when the foggy UK welcomed an unlikely visitor. The Communist Dictator of Yugoslavia - Josip Tito - arrived by boat on the Thames and was met by two people - Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, for the first time wearing his uniform of Admiral of the Fleet the year he become Captain General of the Royal Marines. And shortly after, Chuck Harris on a Triumph Twin Speed 500 as police escort outrider.

Chuck had been parachuted into Yugoslavia during World War Two for vehicle engine all-weather treatment. "*I've met you Mr Tito*" said Chuck. "*Yes, I think we have*" replied President Tito, and the two shook hands - shortly after the Prince and the President.

All his life, Chuck took people as they were, and offered himself up as he was. Can I call this 'Hail Fellow Well Met'?

He was approached some years ago on parade in Normandy to lay a wreath by a nervous daughter of a D-Day Veteran. "*My Father served with your unit, would you lay this tribute.*" Chuck replied: "*No. You do it. We will support you and salute.*"

I joined the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association when it was chaired by Chuck, a friend and comrade of my late father, and later I took over from him. I got to know him well over twenty years, stayed in his house, shared his generosity, his trips, his warm glow, and I am grateful to his family and proud to be asked by them and the Association Committee, to pay respects.

Over twenty years, I never really knew if I joined the 47 Association or the Harris Association. Both have had their share of bombs and bullets. Thank you, his family, for sharing him with us as liberally as you did, in bars, at home and abroad, on buses, in storms at sea and on land

You have learned well from him. He included people, he was a modern man who put women at the heart of his life and the affairs of the Veterans' Association he ran.

He took over as 47 Chairman after a scandalous period which tested UK-French relations. A previous incumbent had recently picked up a wreath laid by the Belgians in Port en Bessin and threw it like a Frisbee into the foaming sea shouting "*You Belgians weren't here!*"

Chuck cured division and used the talents of younger civilian and military people from countries including the UK, France, Belgium the Netherlands, and Germany. In his '80s, he worked with Bob Perry, Geof Haywood, Mark Bentinck and Dave Devenny to join with serving Royal Marines. He enlisted Marc-de-Bolster to fire-up a website attracting scores of new members researching their family history.

In Achnacharry in the 1940s, he was one of the first Commandos, and to this day these habits are seen as crucial traits of the modern Corps. Be the first to understand, and to adapt. That's what he did.

Yes, gave up his job as Chairman. He didn't want to at the time. But he was cheerful, courageous, independent, and kind. He was strong and fair. He was the Best of British, the best of men.

He gave us a sense not just of the decency of his generation but of decency in any. Integrity. Honesty. Independence. Loyalty. Strength of character and stronger still, the strength to adapt.

He won the lifelong affection of the French and the Dutch. In Port-en-Bessin liberated by 47 RM Commando he asked each year to pay tribute to the 30,000 civilians of France who'd died in the Battle of Normandy. Prompted by this our friends opened up. Michel Deserable, born in the middle of the battle lived in a wooden refugee hut for 5 years after the war. Pierre-Albert Cavey, the mayor until recently, had the roof blown off his house as Chuck arrived. "Good" he later said.

We know now that to say these things about the French dead, with a German member of the Association, on the memorial to the British Dead of 1944, shows strength. The strength to be gentle. War is a terrible thing, and it's often those who don't fight it who create it.

He had a magnificent appetite. A heartfelt generosity. A magnetic singer. He was the best of British, a British gentleman who stood up for people and stood up for what he thought was right.

Such words are said about many of the men who set sail from Southampton in June 1944. All of us will have our day but it will be said of all of us what difference did we make?

When I took over from him Chuck gave me a book my Dad had given him. Guy O'Connell's name is crossed out and Chuck's name is written instead. So, what can be said about this name, Chuck Harris?

Chuck has left an enduring legacy. The amazing Harris Family. 47 Commando was rebadged and reborn 47 Commando Raiding Group Royal Marines. Many people can only guess what this meant to a D-Day veteran to see a unit reborn, but I can tell you since I've seen the letters and I've spoken to the men who were there they were, and are, proud as punch, and could this have happened without the years of work of Chuck Harris? No.

For years, he rode the association coaches sitting behind the driver, comrades behind, to his left the trusty secretaries: Betty Field, then Ingrid Fearn, and visited the graves, the beaches, the bars, and his friends the French, and the Dutch built new memorials.

Wherever we are, I am confident that we will all raise a glass and say a prayer in honour of one of the most charming and well-loved men we had the privilege of calling our friend.

Chuck who so loved singing gave us a tune to hum, and I urge you listening not just to remember it, smiling, but sing it in harmony.

To you in the room who served in the Corps, he was proudest of all to wear the uniform and the green beret of the Royal Marines.

Rest In Peace Chuck Harris - we will remember you.

After Paddy's Tribute, Dean Martin's "King of the road" was played and we all sang along.

Here is a link to Chuck's funeral shot by our own Steve Hignett [https://youtu.be/\\_RgH0Jeu798](https://youtu.be/_RgH0Jeu798)

## 47 RMCA Weekend in Portsmouth 6th – 9th August: Part 1

Geof Haywood

Due to Covid restrictions once again we were unable to travel to France or to Holland for our usual ceremonies and importantly the social get-together we have on such trips. John Prentis, our chairman, suggested a weekend in Portsmouth with us all ideally staying in the same hotel. This was set up and the RMA-RMC also arranged to be there as well, likening it to the usual D-Day trip they would have arranged.

We arrived on the afternoon/evening of Friday the 6th of August with 30 of us booked into the Royal Maritime Club (RMC) or hotels nearby. Our first event was a transfer by minibus to the RMA Portsmouth Club which is on the old Royal Marines Eastney Barracks sports field. It was the Cricket Pavilion and was paid for originally by 'a day's pay' from the then serving Marines in memory of those lost in WW1. Lined up at the end of the dance area were all the 'pop-ups' John had produced and it was good to see our departed friends there with us.



*Our departed friends in the Cricket Pavilion*

We were made most welcome and with drinks at a reasonable price plus a curry buffet and the evening went well. Saturday was to be an early start, so a few headed back to the RMC early, before the minibuses came, and had a few extra beers at the RMC bar.

Saturday morning, we were bussed to the D-Day Story Museum on Southsea seafront. It was well worth a visit, with a very full display accompanied by videos and detailed information on all the exhibits. Outside the Museum was the newly restored Landing Craft Tank (LCT), similar to those that landed the vehicles on D-Day, and which took the Cdo onto Walcheren.



*The newly restored Landing Craft Tank (LCT) at the D-Day Story Museum, Southsea*

We then made our way to the Memorial Garden at Eastney Barracks. With the RMA parties lined up, four D-Day Veterans and the families, a short service was led by our Padre Rev Jane

Ball. The 47 Role of Honour was read out including the names of those lost after D-Day in the ongoing Normandy Campaign. "Our" RM Bugler Cpl Dave Nevatte sounded Last Post and Reveille and wreaths were laid at each D-Day Cdo's Memorial. Kevin Allen, Harry Prescott's Great Grandson laid the 47 wreath. After the Service a group photo was taken on the steps of the old Officers Mess.



*Geof reads the Roll of Honour for the men of 47 Cdo lost in the Normandy Campaign*



*Kevin Allen with the 47 RMCA wreath*

We then walked round to the RMA Portsmouth Club where a Mess Beating by four RM bandsmen dressed in period uniforms was presented. It was delayed by the rain, but a break came, and the display commenced, and then so did the rain. The bandsmen bravely carried on regardless and everyone agreed it was a brilliant effort from them.

John then presented souvenir gifts to the Veterans of a box of chocolates on which was printed the faces of those no longer with us. He then passed 47 labelled bottles of whisky, as thanks for their support, to the RMA, Portsmouth Club, the bandsmen, and others who had helped set up the weekend.

Sunday morning and we all met at the Dockyard gate to be led by Phil Gilby to HMS Victory where we were met by two RM SNCO's who were on today's 'Ships Company'. They gave a safety brief and then led us to the Main Deck for the start of the tour round, whilst those less able were taken to the Senior Rates (SR) Mess to await our return. Our 'tour guide' was CSgt 'Rasher' Bacon RMB, who told stories of the days of Nelson and of the slang much of which we still use today; all interesting. We went under the Ship and saw where in WW2 a German bomb had been dropped in the basin and damaged the keel, but Nelson's Flag Ship 'sailed' on and is still in amazing condition. After the Tour we were taken to the SR Mess where drinks were served generously 'on the house'.

After the visit many looked around the remaining sites open to visitors, such as the Mary Rose, or went to the nearby shopping centre or refreshed themselves in a local 'ale house'.

Our evening meal, or 'Last Supper' was in the RMC with a choice of either a self-service carvery or specials ordered from the menu. The RMC staff kindly provided table service for our drinks. As John was about to commence his presentations, he was caught out before he started, by a thank-you and gift of a bottle of Pussers Rum from the Association, in appreciation of all he does behind the scenes. Meal over, we adjourned to the bar for a continuation of a very good social evening.

Our stay completed on the Monday with breakfast, and then we all headed home after what was said to be a great weekend and chance, after so long, to meet up with all our 47 Friends.

## 47 RMCA Weekend in Portsmouth 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> August: Part 2

Anne-Marie Nicholls & Phill Chappell

In a delightful relief from the doom and gloom surrounding 18 months of Covid 19, our chairman suggested a weekend of events for Association members and veterans in Portsmouth in August.

The last time the Association had met up en masse was for Walcheren 75 in November 2019 in what now seems a time of blissful ignorance of what was to follow hard upon its heels. The world was heading for a different kind of war than the one we would be remembering. For a short time, we could put that all behind us and celebrate the joy of seeing each other again and commemorating those fallen and those who returned from war.

Upon arrival we met up at the RMA Club at Eastney where some of us drank way too much and regretted it the next day! Speaking entirely for myself this follows a familiar pattern of the first night of any of the 47 reunions!

It was also lovely to meet up again with the RMA bikers and riders as well as Veteran Jim Forbes and his son, John. Jim was a Merchant Seaman who during the war served on tankers and subsequently had a full career after the war captaining Shell tankers.

Portsmouth was a little blustery and moody by the sea front the next day as we made our way to the D-Day Museum where we had a tour of the inside of the museum. This included video footage of the D-Day story and individual accounts of different combatants; some very moving and some very distressing.

After the tour we visited LCT 7074 just outside of the museum, which; during the war played a vital role in supporting men and supplies across the English Channel. On board there were two tanks, a Sherman and a Churchill, which look out over Southsea Common. All remarkably well preserved. LCT 7074 had examples of day-to-day living conditions such as toilet facilities and a kitchen area. All compact and maximising space as one would expect.

After lunch at the museum where I could not resist the pull of purchasing a pair of 'DON'T Panic' socks at the shop we walked along the sea front; passing Southsea Castle which was an artillery fort originally constructed by Henry VIII in 1544.

This walk took us past Southsea Pier, the Rose Gardens, various people flying kites, walking dogs, joggers, etc., until we stopped in our tracks to admire the imposing Yomper Royal Marines Statue at Eastney, marking the way to the barracks.

On a personal note, this is the barracks where my dad was stationed at some point during his service with the RMC. I always got the impression that he really liked Portsmouth and now I could finally see why.

At this point during the day's events, we were somewhat early for the Remembrance Service and huddled under shelter of the barracks from the pouring rain. The grey and wet weather persisted until the appearance of our 47 Padre the Reverend Jane Ball; at which point the clouds magically dispersed and the sun came out to bless us for the service. The company included the Royal Marine bikers and cyclists and several standard bearers. Our 47 standard bearer Lou Sartorel stood proudly with them carrying the distinctive 47 RMC standard designed by our own Ted Battley.



*The RM Yomper statue at Eastney*

Kevin Allen laid a wreath for 47 and the memory of his Great Grandad Harry Prescott, Dave Nevatte bugled The Last Post and it was as if the long wait had been worth it for this very special moment.

Afterwards we returned to the RMA Club where we witnessed the Corps of Drums display. They braved the high winds and lashing rain to give us this spectacular performance.



*The Corps of Drums perform impeccably whilst completely oblivious to the rain*

The next day we were invited on board HMS Victory for a private tour of the ship given by the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines. HMS Victory is best known as Lord Nelson's Flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar and is still a serving ship of the line; and his place of death for which he was measured up with his bed serving as his coffin.

The tour, which was organised by the RMA, included his bedroom and extremely grand dining room which is sometimes now used as a wedding reception venue.

The room most prized by all on board was the bar to which we were invited to try Pussers Navy Rum by the tour guide. For some reason I was given several of these tots; grimacing with each one seemed to spur on the supply.

Displayed in the bar was a painting of HMS Pickle which was a small ship of the line which took the message of the victory at Trafalgar back to England. A more sinister image displayed was the death mask of Lord Nelson.

All felt the privilege of being invited onto this iconic ship, an historic national treasure.

To finish off the day some of the group took the opportunity to steep ourselves further in the realms of history by visiting The Mary Rose. These two amazing examples of British History are alone worth a visit to Portsmouth.



*Is Nelson's Death Mask looking disapprovingly at the guests in the Senior Rates Mess?*

## 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Fécamp

Dave Shorrock (Ed.)

With the French 'Pass Sanitaire' app on our phones to prove our vaccination status (essential not just to enter France but also to visit a bar or a restaurant), five members of 47 RMCA were able to attend the commemorations in Fécamp on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September this year. We were Paddy O'Connell, son of Capt Guy O'Connell, Alex Wilson, son of Lt Gordon Wilson, Allen Withington, nephew of Mn John Withington (killed at Port-en-Bessin on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June '44), Roger Fidelin, one of our French members and standard bearer, and me.



*The wreaths of 47 RMCA and the town of Fécamp at the plaque to 'Our Liberator, Major D.H. Walton'*

As in previous years, at 18:00 we commenced our sombre parade through the cemetery of Val aux Clercs, laying wreaths at the War Memorial and the memorials to the young men deported to the work camps and to the men and women deported to the concentration camps. The parade continued on to the Belgian First World War graves and then to the British memorial and graves. Paddy and Alex laid our wreath at the memorial to Major D.H. Walton, "Our Liberator", (killed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June as 47 Cdo turned to capture the port of Le Havre). From the cemetery, we made our way to the courtyard of the Town Hall to recreate the photograph of Major Walton greeting the Mayor on the steps, sealing the freedom of the town with a handshake. We then walked outside to Square du 47 Royal Marine Commando where Allen laid our wreath at the 47 Commando plaque in front of the Mast of the Liberation.

Our final wreath laying was at the war memorial in Place Charles De Gaulle, where I had the honour of laying our Association wreath. The sapeurs-pompiers (fire brigade) provided a guard of honour and led the parade back to the Town Hall for the speeches and presentations.

The Mayor Marie-Agnès Poussier-Winsback invited us to join her and the other dignitaries on the steps of the Town Hall before giving a very moving speech. *"Today we commemorate the Liberation of Fécamp. At noon on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1944, a detachment of the 47 Royal Marine Commando, under the command of Major Walton and Lieutenant Armstrong, entered Fécamp via rue Queue-de-Renard. On this day, we were freed from the Nazi yoke and were able to turn the page on a very long black period".* She went on to describe how back in June 1940 as German tanks attacked the city *"at the same time the Royal Navy provided cover for the Allied troops to retreat and for the French sailors and fisherman to escape to join the Free French forces".*

In her speech the Mayor stressed the importance of commemoration: *"It is essential to remember what our parents or grandparents experienced. Because what is commemoration if not a sharing of experience, a relay between generations? Let us not forget that it is to these young Englishmen of the 47 Royal Marine Commando that we owe our Liberation, many of whom were barely over 18".* She then quoted the words of veteran Ken Parker (from his visit to Fécamp in 2017): *"Share love, avoid war. I was 17 when I arrived on the landing beaches. On June 18, I turned 18. Before coming back here, I visited the Bruneval memorial. Every time that we testify about this time, and even more here, it is necessary to tell the truth, to avoid war".*

She continued: “After the war, the English, the Germans, like the Italians, Belgians, Dutch, Luxembourgers, and French, understood how crucial and fragile peace is. On still hot ashes, they who no longer want to wage war have made Europe. They made it a promise of renewal based on the very essence of the human being, exchange. They understood that our differences were not just a source of conflict but so much wealth to share. And what better tribute than to follow in their footsteps, than to consolidate all their achievements, to support the projects of the future.

Each generation makes its own contribution. This is how we can continue to move forward united in the face of adversity and meet the challenges that present themselves to us. Long live free Fécamp, long live the Republic, long live France”.

Alex Wilson replied to the Mayor on behalf of our Chairman, John Prentis: “I regret that I am unable to be with you in person to celebrate the anniversary of your Liberation, and to remember those who lost their lives during the Occupation and during the fight for freedom, but as ever I am with you in spirit.

Two years ago, my grandfather (Chuck Harris) and I had the huge honour of being with you and join you in your services of remembrance. Chuck often talks of his visit to Fécamp, and of how lovely you all were to him. He thoroughly enjoyed himself and had a wonderful time here. His health unfortunately has deteriorated, but he asked me to send you all his best wishes.

On such occasions as today, I think back and try to understand just how dark the war years were for the people of France. Occupied for 5 years, living in constant fear for the safety of loved ones, food shortages, and the constant threat of Nazi reprisals against the people must have made life almost unbearable. It is a tribute to you all that even in the darkest times you remained true to your values, values you still hold and values which we share with you. And as the battle of Normandy raged, getting closer to Fécamp week by week, with the faint scent of victory on the wind, did anyone dare dream of being liberated?

It was your Liberation on the 2nd of September 1944 that united the people of Fécamp and 47 Royal Marine Commando, and we are still united today. The bond between us is strong and will continue well into the future, I'm sure. To further strengthen our bond of friendship please accept these small gifts”. At this point Alex handed a bottle of whisky and a box of chocolates to the Mayor and to her Deputy, Pierre Aubry. Both the bottles and the chocolate boxes were customised with photographs of our veterans.



*Having laid the 47 RMCA wreath at the Mast of the Liberation in Square du 47 Royal Marine Commando, the Mayor holds out a comforting hand to Allen. He's never had his hand held by a mayor before!*

Once again, our visit to Fécamp was a great success and hopefully a fitting tribute to what those young men of 47 Cdo achieved 77 years ago.

## Commemorations in Walcheren November 2021

An account from the scene – Paddy O'Connell

In bright sun and cold gusts of North Sea gales, a dedicated party gathered. In the teeth of the pandemic and advanced years, the surviving veterans of 47 RM Commando who took part in Operation Infatuate remained at home. Due to restrictions on organised bus trips and group travel there was no official 47 Association trip possible.

However due to the many friendships that have been sparked over the years, our Chairman John Prentis was there to represent us with pride on a personal visit watched by a handful of freezing friends who'd made the trip. These included Mariel Van Mierlo, Kelly Heathfield, Alex Wilson and your scribe.

### Westkapelle

At 10:30 on November 1<sup>st</sup>, around one hundred people gathered at the Polderhuis Museum with the band playing in bright blue tunics. The tank atop the Dyke had recently been renovated and many took a trip up the Liberty Bridge in winds which have long threatened to lift our standard bearers into the sea.

A service of commemoration began at 11:00 with a strong international presence of VIPs, and Dutch and British friends gathered standing together. Mayor Rob van der Zwaag spoke of the sincere and everlasting gratitude and respect of the people of Westkapelle for the bravery and sacrifice of the allies and the Royal Navy and Royal Marine Commando units which landed in 1944.

Among the party were senior military figures from Norway the Netherlands and Belgium as well as the Ambassadors of Norway and Belgium and the Defence Attachés of Canada and the UK. Proudly representing the UK was Colonel Mark Maddick, a Royal Marine who has befriended the veterans and members of 47 Association and who was on parade for us in his last official year in the post. John Prentis laid a wreath on behalf of 47 Commando Association and wreaths were also laid for 41 and 48 RM Commandos.

Perched by the tank above us all Kelly played the lament, in her Royal Marine tartan and glengarry. The sound of the pipes travelled far - as had the men who landed in 1944, many never to return. This small but powerful service upheld the proudest traditions of memorials seen in the town over the years, and it was once again clear our Dutch friends hold the cause as closely to their hearts as the British supporters who rely on their friendship. Ivo van Beekhuizen who organises this memorial has met our 47 veterans for twenty-five years, earning their gratitude for preserving the memory of their comrades in a humble and powerful way. Few who watch the local schoolchildren lay single white roses can feel unmoved.

The group then moved to commemorate the civilian losses at the lighthouse where so many Dutch family members died on one night, trapped in a windmill as flood waters rose. This service was hosted for the first time by the local primary school, and children from the town played a central role reading out the names from the graves. During the bombardment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1944, forty-seven people went inside for safety but only three came out alive.

The final commemoration on 1<sup>st</sup> of November was to the Erica radar station and lifeboat. We stood staring out to sea at the exact site of the gap blown in the Dyke where the Commandos landed. It was a moment to recall the accounts of the time when the sea would have been full of fire, as the Royal Navy Support Squadrons sacrificed themselves in the face of heavy shelling from the Atlantic Wall. Aiming for the gap, many landing craft were hit. 47 Royal Marine Commando lost much equipment in the chaos and confusion as troops were separated on the North and South side of the gap, where we now stood in commemoration. Wreaths were laid and the party retired for lunch.

### November 2<sup>nd</sup>

In driving rain, a plucky party arrived at Westkapelle for the annual Rushing to Flushing walk. Many Association members reading this have taken part in this over the years, with blisters to prove it. They will be intrigued to know that this year the walk ended half-way, at Dishoek, which perhaps offers a good template for future years.



*The service at the lighthouse at Westkapelle, led by the local primary school.*



*Few who watch the local schoolchildren lay single white roses can feel unmoved*



*The children place a wreath at the Erika beach Memorial, assisted by the Mayor Rob van der Zwaag*

Here it was in the dunes at 11:00 that a short service led by Renee Heinrichs was conducted at the new 47 memorial. We were all hosted by John and Suzan Daane - "bunker John" who has now added the small house next to W11 to his museum collection. Together they long-ago adopted the men of 47 and their welcome over the years has warmed so many of us that it was a fitting and proud moment to see them in charge at the new Dishoek memorial. November 3<sup>rd</sup>

Mariel and I attended Bergen Op Zoom and laid a wreath on behalf of the 47 Association. Linda Warren of the newly closed 48 RM Commando Association had sent individual crosses to be laid at all the graves of the men lost to 48. She sent a map and Mariel and I picked our way through the graves, and were again reminded of the many young lives lost from all units involved in 1944.

### **Social & tittle-tattle**

The small group stayed in different locations. Alex and I headed for Domburg where the small side streets and cafes are a great hit with tourists. John and Mariel stayed with Kelly in Middelburg. For one night we gathered in the small hotel there favoured by Ken and Clive Porter. The bar has a parrot which enjoys speaking as much as the Chairman John Prentis, and the two became firm friends. My ventriloquist skills were put to use as the parrot appeared to say, "Pieces of eight," "Two pounds of bananas," and other remarks too rude to print in this upstanding newsletter. Talking with the landlord it was plain that many happy memories remain of hosting Ken including the news that each morning he had his own boiled egg with "Ken's Egg" written on it. Again, through the forced changes of the pandemic it was interesting to learn and see new sights on a familiar trip.

Readers can feel reassured that the solemn ceremonies were carried out with respect and dedication. The great friendships formed in the long years travelling with the veterans are alive and well - a tribute to the kind and inclusive style of Chuck Harris and his comrades who landed not just on the sands of Walcheren but into the hearts of those who live there. Thanks to our many hosts and apologies for names unintentionally left out. See you in 2022!



*The Defence Attachés and senior military personnel salute the Memorial at Erika beach*

### **CORRECTION John Baker, Royal Marine**

Some years ago, just one veteran travelled alone by train to commemorate the sacrifices of Operation Infatuate. He was John Baker. A great friend to many over the years he was the proud owner of two berets - the Green of the Royal Marines and the White of the Arctic convoys. In a previous article I incorrectly wrote that he was not a Royal Marine, and his daughter Kim wrote to put me right. I mixed up my terms as Kim explains here "As you correctly state, Dad was not a Commando. Dad served his time at sea on the HMS Penelope, HMS King George V then Landing Craft (Guns). Dad's Service Records note that at the age of 17 years, 8 months and 4 days, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1938 he enrolled in the Royal Marines at Whitehall Recruiting Office and his service was terminated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1951". John was high in my thoughts as I took the same journey myself this year by train to Middelburg.

The Westkapelle commemorations can be found at: [Herdenking Westkapelle 2021 - YouTube](#)

## Royal Marines Graspan Memorial 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Tom Busby, Allen Withington and me (Ed) joined with the RMA City of London Branch for the commemorations on the 11<sup>th</sup>, at the Graspan Memorial on The Mall. Tom placed a wreath for two RM Battalions still active that were part of the Royal Naval Division at the end of WWI and Allen placed our 47 RMCA wreath.



*Wreaths from left to right: 3 Cdo Brigade Air Squadron RM , RMA City of London Branch, Royal Naval Division RM Battalions, and 47 RMCA..*

After lunch, we moved to the Garden of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey. Allen planted a cross for his uncle, Mne John Vernon Withington and Tom laid three crosses: one for a great uncle lost at Cambrai in November 1917, another for a Marine Busby lost soon after the Battle of Gavrelle (April 1917) and one for another Busby who's grave the family found when visiting the Bayeux Cemetery in 2014. As Tom explained: *"Neither of the last two are related to me but the last was a private who served four years in England with the Worcester's, shipped out as a replacement to the South Staffs on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July and was killed in action on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August. Just 16 days!"*



*RM crosses in the Garden of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey.*

## Absent Friends

### Edward George 'Ted' Hartwell, A-Troop, 13 November 2020, age 97



Ted was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1923 and lived in Lawford Road, Rugby with his parents, five brothers and two sisters. When Ted left school, he went to work on the railways repairing rolling stock, afterwards he became a butcher at the Co-op, before joining the Royal Marines on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1943.

During training an extract from his book reads: "One day we went out the camp and over the mountains taking with us our dinner of two lamb chops, potatoes and carrots, when it was time to cook

dinner no one had a dry match or lighter, raw potatoes and carrots were alright but the two lamb chops were a bit tough, but I managed to eat mine".

D-Day came on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, and Ted who was No 1 Bomber in 'A-Troop' of 47 Royal Marine Commando, lost his weapon on the way over to France.

An extract from his book read: "We had orders to re-arm ourselves, then as we moved off the beach, I saw a dead soldier lying on his rifle. I rolled him over and took it from him. I didn't like the look of the rifle as it was covered in blood, but it was better than having no weapon. We moved off the beach onto a narrow road and each time we stopped because of enemy fire, I grabbed a handful of grass and cleaned up my rifle. I wondered if the rifle would bring me bad luck, but it didn't".

Ted brought his carpentry skills to the fore, when another extract from his book read: "Sergeant Ainsworth told me to dig a new latrine (toilet). I dug a trench, three feet by one and four feet deep. Then, to make it more comfortable I got a branch from a tree and supported it with a short branch each side to make a seat. I thought it was good, but Sergeant Ainsworth found fault with it".

Ted's war efforts were awarded with ten medals and later he was elected as Honorary Vice President of the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association.

Back in civvy street Ted went back to his old job as a Co-op butcher then after a short time he became a Co-op Milkman until he retired.

In his spare time Dad had developed the love of carpentry and would spend hours in his shed at the top of the garden making furniture for the home and fulfilling orders for coffee tables and table lamps for his milk round customers. Dad would lose all sense of time when he was inside his shed and so Mum had to switch his shed light off and on from the kitchen cupboard to get him down for his dinner.

Dad converted a Morris Minor car into a Morris Traveller. Then after that, his biggest project was building a four-berth caravan for family holidays to Caister Holiday Camp. Dad bought an old roadside tea wagon, stripped it completely down to the chassis and custom built a superb caravan. On one occasion when towing the caravan he shouted, we've lost the caravan. After stopping dad soon realised that the caravan was still attached to the car, but all the lights had gone out.

In the early sixties Mum and Dad tried a package tour to Majorca. This started the love of holidays abroad and together they visited many countries by air and by cruise ships.

Holidays in Britain in their retirement began when they travelled on Jamesway's first coach holiday. Mum and Dad enjoyed British holidays by coach and would be away somewhere every month. As a result of being the first couple to travel with Jamesway they were invited as guests of honour to cut the Company's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cake.

Dad was never happy using mobile phones. After having a phone conversation, he would leave the phone connected and you could then hear him talking until you cancelled your phone.

Dad loved bingo and attended sessions every week with Mum. He also liked to do the football pools. Once he got eight draws on his coupon and was looking forward to his jackpot cheque in the post on Monday. Mum fetched the mail and indeed there was an envelope from Vernon Pools. She made his cooked breakfast for when he had completed half his milk round. Mum put the breakfast on a silver tray together with the Vernon's envelope and presented to Dad on his arrival. What a disappointment. The cheque was for a few pounds and not the jackpot expected. This was because although he did select eight draws, they did not fit the football plan he was using. Needless to say, he did not do the pools again.

Ted was a devoted and inseparable husband to Kathleen. They shared their wonderful life together for seventy-five years and had two sons Gary and Bryan who are married to Vi and Rosemary respectively. They have two grandsons Steven and Kevin and one great granddaughter Chloe.

Dad will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him. [Gary Hartwell](#).

## **Betty O'Connell 25<sup>th</sup> July 1925 – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

[Paddy O'Connell wrote this obituary of his mother for The Times](#)

Betty O'Connell who has died aged 95 was a strong supporter of the 47 Association behind the scenes. She was the widow of Captain Guy O'Connell of Heavy Weapons Troop and visited Port en Bessin many times after his death. On the last occasion she sat with Mint Birkenshaw, Mickey O'Brien and their families' enjoying drinks and memories. A WREN at Bletchley Park during WW2, she had signed the Official Secrets Act and so could not tell her husband Guy how she worked on D-Day preparations working on code-breaking in May 1944. He died before she was free to talk. At a party she asked an old Colonel "And what did you do in the war?" and he replied, "My dear I'm afraid I can't tell you. And what did you do?" To which she replied " My Dear, I'm afraid I can't tell you either." She donated funds for the first publication of John Forfar's book and was in correspondence with Chuck Harris until earlier this year. She sent him a poem whose meaning is that young people often mistakenly look upon the older as weak or losing their marbles:

*"When your words become distant relatives who seldom visit you,  
When all dates are one and all times the same.  
And what you put down you can no longer pick up,  
Remember that you, now helpless who used to be a fighter  
Make fools feel brighter."*



This is Mum on the left with her Bletchley Park friend Irene Dixon, (right). The two of them shared a billet in 1943 and met again recently and gave talks on computing etc. Here they are appearing on the Jeremy Vine show on Radio 2.

## Les Birch, Royal Engineers, 21 November 2021, age 99



*Les participating in the D-Day tournament at the Omaha golf course, Port-en-Bessin, 2014.*

We have received the sad news of the passing of Welsh veteran Les Birch, (his adopted name, he was born George Leslie), from his daughter Hilary. Les, his daughter and other family members attended the ceremonies in Asnelles for many years. Sometimes he read the exhortation for us, and he made it a regular habit to attend the 47RM ceremonies in Port-en-Bessin on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June each year.

Les was a Royal Engineer and left the port of London on June the 5<sup>th</sup> 1944, in a convoy of ships that passed close to the coast of Pas-de-Calais where they came under fire from high calibre guns located near Cap Gris-Nez. On June 7<sup>th</sup> they landed between Asnelles and Ver-sur-Mer.

The French newspaper La Renaissance noted that Les spoke “remarkable French, combining verve and benevolent humour”. That humour is well illustrated by the email exchange Les had with Ken Cowdery, in which he very much played down his own involvement in the Liberation. In his own words: *“I did six years of French starting in September 1933 when I went to grammar school in Manchester - took to it like a duck to water from the very first lesson, always top of the class and finished with distinctions at both School Certificate and Higher SC. I started my career with HMSO in June 1939 and then between June 1940, the fall of France, and my enlistment in September 1941 we had a succession of Free French soldiers and sailors spending their leave at our home, following an appeal from the French Consul in Manchester. This kept my French pretty fresh and of course I used it extensively from June 1944 onwards.*

*I was at the time a very disillusioned young soldier even though delighted to be going to France (with the Royal Engineers (RE)). I had some 18 months or so earlier answered a call for volunteers with language skills to apply for transfer to the Intelligence Corps (IC). I had a more than one-hour long conversation in French with a Colonel from the IC in a room at the rear of a tobacconists in Whitehall, next to The Clarence, during which he was clearly testing my vocabulary, grammar, idioms and so on at the end of which he said “I’m having you, my boy. Return to your depot and await your transfer.” I waited some 6 to 8 weeks before being summoned before the CO to be told that I could not be transferred as the Royal Engineers (RE) were short of drivers, which I was at the time. I protested most violently but was quickly shown the door. Needless to say, I never drove an HGV from that day to this. Had I at that time been the sort of chap I developed into I would have written directly to Churchill but in the event, I reluctantly accepted the utter wastage of one of the few talents I possessed.*

*In the RE, I was a member, as a corporal, of a ridiculously over-ranked specialist unit (a Captain, 2 sergeants, 2 lance-sergeants, 8 corporals, 1 sapper and 1 driver) tasked with identifying RE stores on board the ships at Mulberry, ensuring they were sent to the RE depot in Bayeux and reporting daily tonnage unloads to 21 Army Group HQ. There had apparently been considerable confusion about stores during the Sicily and Italy landings, but I remain convinced to this day that these stores would have reached Bayeux without our intervention.*

*The early days in France were very confusing. We lived for a while in an orchard just outside Arronanches on the Bayeux road and frankly I do not think that our skipper, or indeed anyone else, knew what to do with us. After a few days we took over a house in Asnelles in what is now the Rue du Débarquement - then as now most of the houses there were holiday homes owned by wealthy Parisians. I always thought that at that time the beach area was known as*

*Le Hamel, with Asnelles being the cluster of houses around the church. Now Le Hamel is that very scruffy shanty town of shacks etc. just down the road opposite the church at St. Comes de Fresnes. But at least there is a plaque marking the spot where the Eastern arm of Mulberry came ashore - this was the transport and armoured vehicles landing point and perhaps worth a visit some time.*

*Mulberry was pretty advanced the first time we saw it and as you say it was a truly remarkable piece of engineering, whether civil or military. I did a piece for the BBC on Mulberry on the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and met the grandsons of both the designer and builder of the Port, both of whom were rightly proud of their grandfathers' achievements. There could be no rehearsal of the construction - everything had to fit first time on the spot, and it did.*

*We were there for the great storm and very selfishly much enjoyed the 3 days without work - not thinking of the troops' needs at all. But we made up for it once the harbour had been repaired. We did our share of beach combing, some finds inevitably being somewhat gruesome, but we did find a large wooden case, very heavy and completely unmarked. In our simple minds this just had to contain alcohol, gin or whisky or whatever. We covered it with a tarpaulin and once dusk had fallen, we retrieved it and took it to the billet. We opened it with much secrecy and were most disappointed to find it full of anti-mosquito cream. All was hastily buried in the garden, and I often wonder what the owner thought when he at length returned for his first holiday. So there you have it - my inglorious active service”.*

In 2008, Les was awarded the Medal of Honorary Citizen of the Commune and in 2015 the square 'Espace Les Birch – Bill Evans', in Asnelles was inaugurated in his honour.



*Les Birch at the inauguration of Espace Les Birch - Bill Evans.*

*“When I walk around Britain, sometimes children ask me where I bought my medals,” Les Birch recalled in June 2016, with British humour. “In France, it’s different, especially in Normandy. Children participate in the ceremonies so as to not forget. In our country, they do not know what the Second World War is”.*

*Thanks to Ken Cowdery, Geof Haywood and to the newspapers La Renaissance and Ouest France which both noted that Les was the last veteran known to have landed in Asnelles.*

## Finding my Dad

Nigel Dobson



After many years of searching, I eventually found my Dad, Victor 'Vic' Hamilton McGreevy, through DNA tests three months ago.

I have been searching for many years and eventually traced him, but unfortunately, he had passed away on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2008, aged 87. However, last weekend I met up with my new family of 3 brothers and 2 sisters, mostly living in Eastbourne East Sussex. It was amazing to meet them and hear stories of him, although he was quiet about what he had been through on D-Day and what followed.

I always knew he was a Royal Marine and now I have photos of him in uniform, a copy of his Order for Release from Naval Service, War Gratuity and Post-War Credit of Wages.

His service number was 105440 A/T/Cpl. and his date of release was the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1946.

I would certainly like to trace his military history if it was possible.

I am now 77 years old, so you can imagine I was over the moon to find about him and some history for me personally.

Nigel, welcome to the 47 RMCA. Our resident expert, Bob Perry, says the only way to get hold of service records is through official channels, via this link. Bob's recent experience was that it took 16 months between applying and getting the (in his case) army records. <https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records>

## The British Normandy Memorial

You may have seen in the press that now it is open to the public; the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has been appointed to ensure the Memorial's upkeep in the coming years. Claire Horton CBE, Director General of the CWGC, was quoted as saying: *"We are delighted that our partnership with the Normandy Memorial Trust continues. Our century of expertise in caring for some of the world's most important memorials and commemoration sites stands us in great stead to ensure the sacrifice of all those who fell here is never forgotten. Our local teams will ensure the British Normandy Memorial remains a fitting place for families and visitors to pay their respects."*

To help us all prepare for our visit to the Memorial, there is now a 'British Normandy Memorial' app that you can download from the Apple App Store or Google Play. The app is designed to accompany you as you make your way around the Memorial site, and act as a virtual tour guide. You can use the app to plan your visit, look up the names of the fallen so you can find their location, or to just learn more about the Memorial and its story. For regular news updates, please register on their website: [Visit – British Normandy Memorial](#)



## Normandy Commemorations June 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> 2022: Booking

Our Association is planning to attend the commemorations in Normandy in strength this coming June. You can of course travel independently, but we are planning to travel as a group. The provisional itinerary is as follows:

**Sun 5<sup>th</sup> June: 08:15** sailing Brittany Ferries Mont St Michel, from Portsmouth, arriving Ouistreham 15:00 (Note that we are intending to travel as foot passengers, as a group. A coach will collect us from the ferry terminal at Ouistreham and transport us to the hotels (Ibis or Eisenhower) at Port-en-Bessin.

**Mon 6<sup>th</sup> June:** Commemorations in Asnelles and commencement of the walk 'In the Footsteps of 47'. For those not joining the walk, after the ceremonies, the coach will continue to Juno Beach, where we will lay a cross, and then travel on to Bayeux for lunch. We will hold a wreath laying ceremony at the CWGC British Cemetery in Bayeux in the afternoon, before returning to Port-en-Bessin to cheer the walkers on their arrival.

**Tues 7<sup>th</sup> June:** Commemorations in Port-en-Bessin.

**Wed 8<sup>th</sup> June:** Visit to the Sallenelles Memorial and the Ranville Cemetery in the morning. Lunch in Arromanches, visit the newly restored D-Day Museum, followed by a visit to the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer. Final Night Dinner in Port-en-Bessin.

**9<sup>th</sup> June: 16:30** sailing Brittany Ferries Normandie, from Ouistreham, arriving Portsmouth at 21:15.

If you wish to join us, or have any questions, please contact our Secretary Anne-Marie Nicholls [47rmcsec@gmail.com](mailto:47rmcsec@gmail.com) or telephone +44(0)7480213013, by the end of January please.

### From the 47 Shop

For those who wish to proudly display their membership of the Association, we are planning to produce a range of shirts with an embroidered badge. The prices are:

- Dress Shirt: £27.30
- Polo Shirt: £15.00
- T Shirt: £ 9.00

If you are interested, please email Geof Haywood [geofandjillh@btinternet.com](mailto:geofandjillh@btinternet.com), or phone +44(0)1202888194, with shirt type and size (S, M, L, XL), by the end of January please.

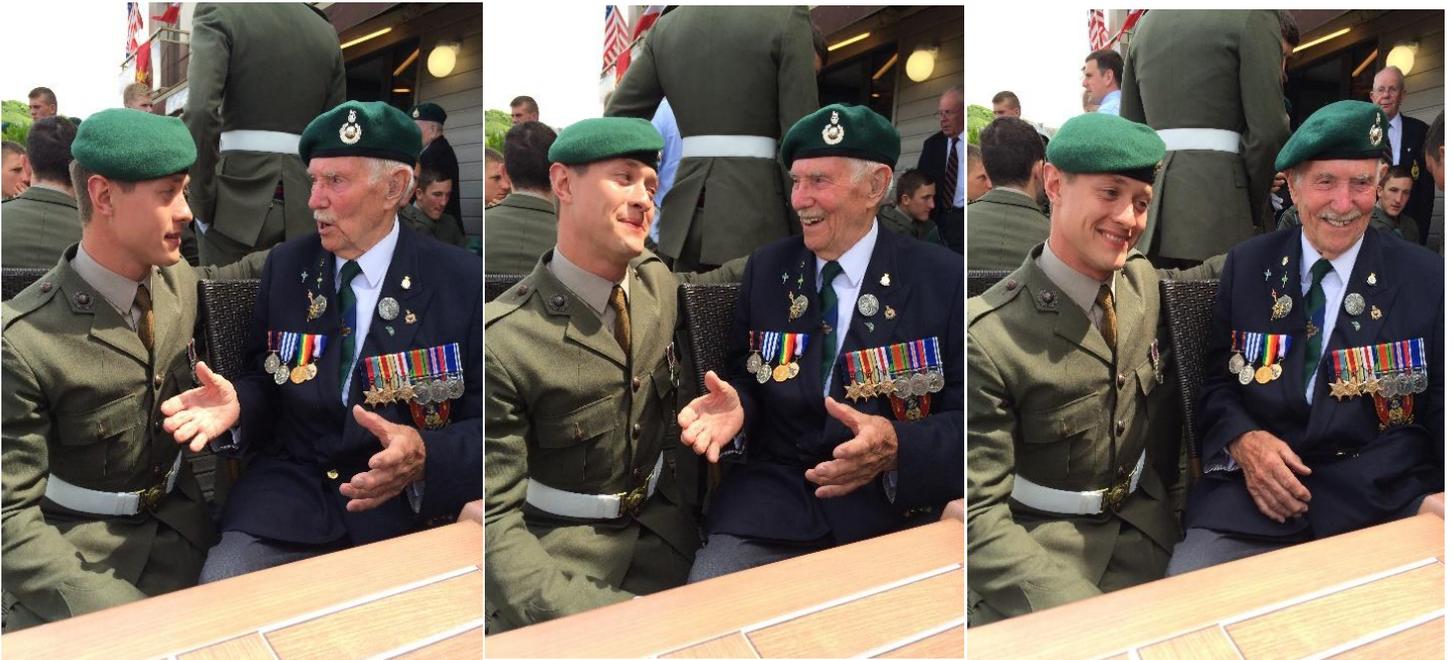


### Mountbatten Festival of Music

The Editor has just checked the Royal Albert Hall website: [Mountbatten Festival of Music | Royal Albert Hall — Royal Albert Hall](https://www.royalalberthall.com/whats-on/mountbatten-festival-of-music) and there are still some tickets available for all three performances: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March at 7:30pm and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> at 2pm and 7.30pm. Obviously the best seats have all gone, but there are small numbers of seats, some just singles, in the Arena, Stalls, Choir and the Rausing Circle (not suitable if you have a fear of heights). Tickets can be booked via the website, or by calling the Box Office on 020 7589 8212.

If you've never done it before, the guided tours of the Royal Albert Hall are well worthwhile taking. Let's be honest, when else will you get to go in the Royal Box?

## From the Editor



*The story, the punchline, and the laughter – Port-en-Bessin, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2014*

We all have fond memories of Chuck, but these three photographs from when we were in Normandy in June 2014, along with the gents from 1AGRM, the landing craft in the harbour and HMS Bulwark offshore, are my favourites. Sadly, I wasn't close enough to hear the story that Chuck told, but I always thought the rapport between Chuck and the serving marines was something to behold. Many of us share that view, as exemplified by an article sent over courtesy of our Dutch friends. The journalist, Emile Calon, writing in the local newspaper for Zeeland, the Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant, recalled seeing Chuck when he was guest of honour for the commemorations on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Emile wrote: *"During the commemoration it became clear that he had a very special status with the 47 Royal Marine Commando. Commandos on active duty, with a breast full of ribbons for operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries, treated him with utmost respect. Without exception they called him 'a real hero', for not only had he taken part in the landing at Westkapelle he had also stormed the beaches of Normandy"*.



**Next Issue:** July 2022  
Articles gratefully received as soon as we get back from Normandy 🇬🇧

Chuck and his colleagues are referred to as 'The Greatest Generation'. I learned why from my own experience when I went to technical college in Liverpool. The lecturers were all ex-services, who'd had their youth shaped by war. They came back into civilian life and trained to teach, using the skills they'd learned (in the Signals, Engineers, or as sea-going radio officers). Their knowledge and enthusiasm, and the way they treated us students as equals was an inspiration. Everything I have, and the values I hold, I owe to those men and women, who like Chuck, gave so much and then gave even more on their return from war. Will we ever see their like again? RIP a real hero.

**Editor:** Dave Shorrock, 23 Primrose Hill Road,  
London NW3 3DG E:[dave.shorrock@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dave.shorrock@blueyonder.co.uk)  
T: +44(0)207 722 2667 M: +44(0)7808 929290