

# 47 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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## **DESPATCH 46** **July 2022**

### **From the Chairman**

Dear Veterans, Families and Friends, I hope you are all in good health and welcome to this edition of Despatch.

It was lovely to see so many of you in March at the Royal Albert Hall for the Mountbatten Festival of Music and then at the 'jolly' afterwards in the Union Jack Club. Next year I'm going to pack extra headache tablets and a pair of dark glasses for the following morning!

It was a delight in June for the Association to be able to travel to Normandy again and attend the ceremonies in Port-en-Bessin. This year we met the new Mayor, Christophe Van Roye, and what a welcome he gave us. In fact, what a welcome the whole town gave us as we renewed our long-standing friendships with our 'French family'. And as you'll see inside, we got extensive coverage in the French press.

It was fantastic to see Mark Packer, and to see him looking so well, absolutely wonderful. It was also lovely to welcome Mark's family, Barbara and Roy for the first time to Normandy.

It was during our Normandy trip we learned the very sad news about Lannah. Many of us exchanged fond memories of Lannah, and of Ted, and many glasses were raised to them both. To me Lannah was like one of the tribal elders in the Association. She was also a previous editor of Despatch and a dear friend to all of us.

Later this year there are the ceremonies in Fecamp (2<sup>nd</sup> Sept), and Walcheren (31<sup>st</sup> Oct – 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov). Fecamp remembers the civilians, members of the resistance and Maj Walton of 47 Royal Marine Commando. It's also the ideal place to pick up a bottle or two of the local Benedictine, said to be the result of the local Monks home brew.

For Walcheren this year we've decided to stay in Domburg again after it proved such a great success in 2019. There is more information on this year's trip in this edition, (pages 25-26). Please note that we have to confirm the bookings by the end of August, so the sooner you can tell us you are coming the better. As always, it will be good to see as many as possible at these events.

I'd like to end by thanking everyone for their kind messages and support after my recent 'tumble'. The surgeon has indicated I can start my walking physio at the end of July, so all looking good.

Best wishes to you all and I very much hope to see you soon.

John Prentis, Grandson of Chuck Harris.

## The March of the 47 Royal Marine Commando returns

**Asnelles** – 78th D-Day. Like 78 years ago, ‘In the footsteps of the 47 Royal Marine Commando’, a walk of about 22 km will leave from Asnelles to reach Port-en-Bessin. Leaving this Monday.

Like every year, the Association of 47 Royal Marine Commando retraces the march of this British commando unit, formed in 1943 and disbanded in 1946. After having landed on the Gold beach, not far from Asnelles, the troops undertook a march twenty kilometres, behind enemy lines, to liberate Port-en-Bessin. This Association was recruited for the first time by teachers and students of Hemingway College in the 1990s, recalls Alexander Wilson, member and representative in Port-en-Bessin of the 47 Association. “The march was resumed in its current form in 2009.” The 47 Association is chaired by John Prentis, grandson of Chuck Harris, a veteran who passed away last year.

After two years of absence, this march also marks the return of a day of commemoration along the entire route with the presence of members of the Association and about twenty soldiers from the current commando. The departure takes place in Asnelles at the blockhouse at 9:45 a.m. after a commemorative ceremony. The procession will also stop at the stele at la Rosière.

A picnic will take place around 1:45 p.m. at Longues-sur-Mer Abbey. The walk will resume at 2:30 p.m. in the direction of Mont Cavalier to continue to its final destination, Port-en-Bessin. “A walk in the footsteps of the 47 Royal Marine Commando will include a commentary on the history, such as the landing behind enemy lines, the plan of attack, and the battle”, explained Alexander Wilson.

Veteran Mark Packer will unveil a new memorial at 5:45 p.m., rue du Phare. Participants will be able to return from Port-en-Bessin to Asnelles by minibus.



*The march of the 47 Royal Marine Commando will stop at the Abbey of Longue-sur-Mer for a picnic.*  
Photo Ouest-France

**Commes****Wreaths at the stele of the 47 Royal Marine Commando**

Saturday afternoon, a ceremony in tribute to the British 47 Royal Marine Commando took place at the Stele de l'Escarre, officiated by Benoit Moret, 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy, in the presence of Michel Cairon, President of Veterans Affairs.

Photo Ouest-France

**Tracy-sur-Mer**

7 June 2022

**90 hikers at the march of 47 Royal Marine Commando**

Photo Ouest-France

Tribute to 47 Royal Marine Commando with the presence of elected officials from the town of Tracy-sur-Mer. Participants in the march of 47 and marines from 47, 90 hikers including around twenty men from the unit of 47 Royal Marine Commandos. "It is important to remember that young men sacrificed their lives", said the mayor, Daniel Cattelain.

## Killed at the age of 13 during a bombardment

**Tracy-sur Mer** – 78th D-Day. At the end of the ceremony at the stèle de la Rosière, a tribute was paid to Marie-Rose Thonnard, 13-year-old Traciennne who died during the bombardments.



*A tribute was paid to Marie-Rose Thonnard, 13, who died during the bombings. Pauline, Colonel Rich Maltby, Jacqueline Thonnard, Daniel Cattelain, Henriette Thonnard, Lieutenant Andy Watson, Corporal Jack Crawford, Major Gareth Stevens, Officer Matt Hill, Leon and Brigitte Lecarpentier. (Lucie and Marie-Rose Thonnard on the photo).*

Photo Ouest-France

**History** - For the first time, the municipality of Tracy-sur-Mer paid tribute to Marie-Rose Thonnard, a 13-year-old girl killed on the eve of D-Day during a bombardment. Monday morning, Daniel Cattelain, the mayor and councilors were present at the cemetery of the town to pay tribute to this young girl.

A moving ceremony for Marie-Rose's sister, Jacqueline Lemone nee Thonnard, her granddaughter Pauline, Jacqueline's granddaughter, but also Leon Lecarpentier, husband of Lucie (Marie-Rose's other sister, who died in 2007) and Henriette and Brigitte Lecarpentier, daughters of Lucie. "For us, this anonymous little girl among thousands of other anonymous people was a person who had a future that was interrupted, we must not forget", said the mayor. "And never forget what happened, the sacrifices of all those young men and also all those civilian victims killed." The husbands recalled that Normandy is the region of France where there were the most civilian casualties, with 13,000 people killed during the Battle of Normandy, from the beginning of June to the end of August 1944, including 8,000 in Calvados.

Marie-Rose was a 13-year-old Traciennne. The day before her birthday, she was walking to the village of Manvieux with an agricultural employee when a bomb fell on the side of the road where she was. After being transported to Bayeux hospital, the young girl died there the next day. Marie-Rose was part of a family of seven children. "In 1951, the young girl was recognized as having died for France", said Daniel Cattelain.

## British veterans honored

**Port-en-Bessin-Huppain** – 78th D-Day. The 78th anniversary of the liberation of Port-en-Bessin took place on Tuesday. Veterans Mark Packer, Norman Ashford and Jim Forbes were present.



*Mark Parker of 47 Royal Marine Commando, Jim Forbes (on board an oil tanker) and Norman Ashford of the Royal Navy (landing craft).*

Photo Ouest-France

Monday, British veterans were honored on the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the commune.

“It is essential for the inhabitants to commemorate the heroic action of the members of the 47 Royal Marine Commando which allowed the liberation of our city, on June 7, 1944, and to contribute to restoring peace in Europe”, underlines Christophe Van Role, the mayor, “The bravery of all those who contributed to the success of the Landings (soldiers, sailors, airmen) and who left the British coasts on the night of June 5, 1944, will remain in our memories, continues the ambassador. In particular, the actions of the 47, many of which forged strong links with the local community after the war”.

More than 400 men from 47 Royal Marine Commando landed on the morning of June 6, 1944 on the beach at Asnelles, more than twenty kilometers from their target. Their mission was to liberate Port-en-Bessin, a fishing port located at the junction of the Gold Beach and Omaha Beach sectors. A harsh mission that costs the life of many young soldiers. Port-en-Bessin is the first oil port to supply the Allied forces until October 1944.

Mark Packer, veteran of 47 Royal Marine Commando, turns 99 in July. “Since the town has put a bench in homage to my friend Baxter and others, I am in heaven”, said Mark Packer. “Thank you to the inhabitants and the municipality”.

At his side, Norman Ashford 98 years old, veteran of the navy. “On June 6, I was in command of a landing craft”, said the veteran. “I landed the troops on the Lamb Beach, as well as food and medical equipment. A landing takes eight round trips”.

Jim Forbes, 92, was a cadet on one of the tankers that supplies the port city. “The 47 Royal Marine Commando has a particular importance in the hearts of the inhabitants of Port-en-Bessin”, concludes the mayor. “Veterans have been adopted by the Port”. At the end of the commemorations Mark Packer, Norman Ashford and the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, received the gold medal of the city.

## Port-en-Bessin celebrated the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its liberation by the 47 Royal Marine Commando

Landed in Asnelles on June 6, 1944, the 47 Royal Marine Commando marched on Port-en-Bessin, a strategic town for supplying the allies with fuel. Fiercely defended by German grenadiers, the fishing port fell on June 8.



Several hundred people were gathered during the ceremony organized at the foot of the Vauban tower, in front of the monument dedicated to 47 RMC.



Mark Packer, veteran of 47 Royal Marine Commando.



During the ceremony at the 47 RMC monument, a bugler played the Last Post before a piper took over to play the lament 'Flowers of the Forest'.

Tuesday June 7, 2022, 78 years after the start of the fighting for the liberation of Port-en-Bessin, the town celebrated its liberators, the men of 47 Royal Marine Commando, a British unit formed in 1943.

They were barely twenty years old when they landed on Gold Beach, between Asnelles and Ver-sur-Mer, on June 6, 1944. If the landing in this British sector was less deadly than elsewhere, the mission these soldiers were charged with was not going to spare them.

On the western cliff overlooking the outer port of Port-en-Bessin, a monument is dedicated to the liberators of Port-en-Bessin. Men fell in Asnelles on June 6 and in the fighting that followed on June 7 to liberate Port-en-Bessin. The city, fiercely defended by a company of German grenadiers, had a strategic interest in fuel supply. It was taken over by June 8, 1944. The 47 Royal Marine Commando (RMC) had 400 men, of which 88 survived the war.

"The link between the population and its liberators is still as strong," said Christophe Van Roye, the Mayor. "Ties all the stronger as veterans inexorably disappear".

Veterans Norman Ashford (landing craft crewman) and Mark Packer (47 RMC) attended the ceremonies held 78 years after the start of fighting in Port-en-Bessin in the company of a large delegation of the 47 RMC Association and a detachment of the current 47 Commando Raiding Group Royal Marines.

After two years of health crisis, "Thank you for keeping the commemorations alive during these two years," said John Prentis, president of the 47 RMC Association.

The two British veterans received the gold medal from the City of Port-en-Bessin-Huppain. "They are adopted by the Port" said Christophe Van Roye. He continued, "War is knocking on our doors again. If weapons solve nothing, they are needed only to bring down tyranny." In a reference to Brexit, the mayor referred to the "dialogue in the respect of differences" and he emphasised that "more than ever, Europe is important".

Menna Rawlings, UK Ambassador to France, expressed her joy at "being able to celebrate both Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Normandy landings, recalling the links between France and the United Kingdom. "Although I was born 30 years after the Second World War, visiting the D-Day landing beaches fills me with great emotion."

Frédéric Bourgeois (La Renaissance)



**Top left:** Exchange between a young woman re-enacting a British Army Provost and the veteran Norman Ashford.

**Bottom left:** The flag bearers, faithful to the commemorations of the conflicts.

**Right:** Menna Rawlings, Ambassador of the United Kingdom in France, Norman Ashford, veteran of 47 RMC, and Christophe Van Roye, mayor of Port-en-Bessin, during the commemorative ceremony organized in front of the monument dedicated to 47 Royal Marine Commando.

## Normandy 2022 – D-Day 78

Geof Haywood

This year we were so pleased to be once again heading to France after two years absence by most of our members.

As a new venture this year we hired a coach in France and eleven of our members travelled as foot passengers on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June ferry from Portsmouth to join the coach at Ouistreham. On the same ferry was the Royal Marines Association (RMA) party which included our very own RM Bugler Cpl Dave Nevatte and a party of 25 serving Royal Marines from 47 Commando Raiding Group led by Col Richard Maltby. As in previous years, the RM set up their camp on the football ground, where they were joined by a group of RMA Bikers.

Our main accommodation this year was the Ibis hotel with the Bar de la Criée, superbly rebranded as “La Criée du 47eme RMC” - as our HQ for the visit. The owners, Nathalie and Stephane Pitel have now got most of the memorabilia from the old 47 bar and have added so much more – it’s a superb show of how they feel towards our veterans – Thank you.

An early start on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June for the first ceremony at Asnelles. Ken Cowdery and Alex Wilson had been busy organising the “In the footsteps of 47 RM Cdo” Yomp and it was well supported by 47 Cdo RGRM who again had lead parts as the Yomp moved across country. Interestingly this year, other groups scheduled after us, were at Asnelles for their ceremonies so there was a very broad audience to watch Kelly pipe the walkers off on their way.

The coach party now moved to the new British Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer. Here with the RMA party, we met up with Mark Packer MM - 47 RM Cdo, and Norman Ashford – LC on Gold Beach. The Royal British Legion BL service had just finished, and we held our wreath laying in front of the statue unveiled in 2019 by Theresa May and President Macron. Cpl Dave sounded the calls and Mark laid our wreath.



*Mark Packer, centre right, and Norman Ashford, centre left, as they prepare to lay their wreaths at the British Normandy Memorial.*

After the ceremony we took Mark to the column on which the names of two of his section, Mne Baxter and Mne Oates were engraved. Baxter was too high up on the column, but Mark could put his hand on that of Oates; a very moving moment.



*Mark feels the inscription to Mme Goude, age 20. Sadly Mme Baxter, age 21, is out of reach at the top of the column.*

We then returned to PeB and waited at the Criée to greet the walkers as they were piped back along the quay by Kelly.

On the way to the Criée we made a slight detour to the hotel Château La Chenevière, there to place a cross and a posie at the memorial to the French resistance of Port-en-Bessin. They included the Cairon family who treated Chucks burn wounds in their kitchen and, who had on hearing the coded message on the BBC, cut the telephone lines from P-e-B to Bayeux. Another very courageous family and group.

During the battle on the Western Feature sadly eleven men were lost including two of Mark's section. Mark was knocked unconscious and taken down to the Rue de Nord where the Langlois family took him in, tore up their sheets and bandaged his wounds. When a neighbour knocked on the door to say "the Germans are coming" they hid Mark under fishing nets in their garden. An act of amazing courage because had he been found all of them would have been shot. Mark has met them again once before, but we all gathered in the Rue de Nord outside their old house to meet up once again.



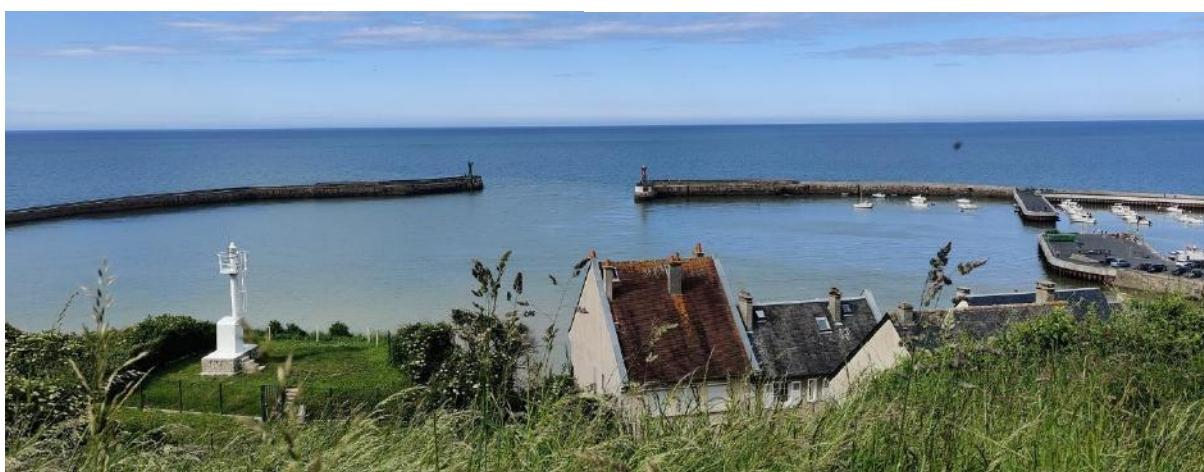
*The Langlois family gather round the bench.*

From there we all moved to the site of the bench on the Rue de Phare for Mark at last to see and sit on it. For him it was doubly emotional because as he sat on the bench he said, pointing half right "that is where Baxter was on the Bren gun" and pointing half left "and that is where my covering party with Oates was. It's in a perfect place".

When all had arrived Mark officially unveiled the bench before going up to the Western Feature gates where a plaque has been placed to remember his wish and efforts for those lost.



*Steve Hignett (right) describes the view from the Mark with Roy and Barbara Cropper who brought him to Normandy this year, their first visit here.*



*The view of the harbour from the bench. Below, the new plaques at the Memorial Garden entrance.*



On the 7th of June the usual ceremonies starting at the Civilian Memorial at Huppain with the Mayor, French veterans, Civic dignitaries and the Naval Attaché Capt Mark Southorn RN, who has supported the ceremonies on the 7th over the past two years during the Covid restrictions. Afterwards we moved to the memorial outside the Church of Saint-André-de-Port-en-Bessin to remember those lost to mines at sea, deported or sent to the concentration camps.



*Geof greets the Ambassador as she arrives at the Western Feature*

This year we were honoured to be joined at the Western Feature by the UK Ambassador to France, Dame Menna Rawlings. With our party, the RM, RMA, the RMA Bikers and local guests, once again the Western Feature slopes were a mass of people (150 copies of the Order of Service and we didn't have a single one spare). Patrick, in John's absence, spoke the words of greeting and the Mayor Christophe Van Roye also welcomed us. The RMA Padre Rev Justin Montague conducted the service here, and again later at the Capt Cousins Memorial. Wreaths were laid by Mark Packer, Norman Ashford and Jim Forbes, plus the Ambassador and 47

Cdo RGRM. Jürgen Baas, our German member of the Association, placed a pot of white roses (the white rose being a traditional flower of remembrance in Germany) and the Withington brothers, John and Allen Vernon, laid a wreath of Scottish poppies to their uncle Mne John Vernon Withington.

At the Cousins Memorial Cpl Jack from 47 Cdo RGRM did a superb job of translating, and then again at the short ceremony at Place Seurat, at the harbour. Dave Nevatte sounded the Last Post and Kelly Heathfield played Flowers of the Forest, from above on the wall.

Later she repeated the lament as Kevin scattered Harry Prescott's ashes on the beach. Rest in peace there Harry, although I guess as the tide came in, he has strayed from that spot, but it will always be "his place" for us on our future visits.

Speeches and presentations were made afterwards in the Salle des Fêtes by the Mayor and suddenly in the door comes our Chairman John in his wheelchair! A last-minute decision to attend with Kerry and Glynis as drivers. He said a few words and did some presentations before we all enjoyed the superb buffet kindly provided by the Port.

The 8<sup>th</sup> of June was a tour round day, initially to Sallenelles where we were kindly hosted by Christian and Marie-Laure Kottler at their home. A chance to revisit the cellar where Dr Forfar operated and to see the items found in their garden, all whilst enjoying a drop of calvados or wine! The local Mayor plus a gentleman who said he was a boy in '44 and several other locals joined us for the short ceremony and our wreath was laid by Les Pike.



*John unexpectedly arrives at the Salle des Fêtes, jokes in hand.*



*Sue Lord and Hilary Collins lay our wreath at the Bayeux War Cemetery.*

On then to Bayeux for a short lunch break and then to the Bayeux War Cemetery, where we were joined by the RMA party plus many other visitors. Phil Gilby took charge and the Rev Justin Montague led us in a short Service. Dave sounded Last Post and Kelly again played Flowers of the Forest. But this time, Kelly turned and walked away such that the notes faded into the distance as she went – very moving! Then Sue and Hilary laid our 47 wreath.

Our last visit was to the Longues Battery where a new visitor centre has been built. There is still work to be done around it, but it's a vast improvement to the hut and heads that were there before.

Over the five days the Criée hosted us each evening and the bar was packed with the Association, RMA, 47 Cdo and locals and visitors until the early hours. Music was provided occasionally by a very popular Kelly and the singing was led by Steve Hignett.

Nathalie and Stephane with their family did us proud looking after us throughout the visit. The 'Last Supper' was for the Association, RMA and the RMA Bikers so the bar was full to overflowing. Nathalie and one other chef produced a tasty meal to over 100 in her tiny kitchen. The drinks flowed and John did his presentations of thanks. His last presentation was of two signed 47 whiskey bottles to Phil Gilby to be auctioned for the RM Charity. Phil in full form did just that and the look on Russ's face as his partner bid for one will be for ever remembered! The sum of £750 was raised, an unexpected bonus for the RMC.

Sadly, we all parted and went our separate ways on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The Mayor's Secretary, Jocelyne retires later this year after nine years and has been the main contact plus the organiser of all in PeB. I presented her with a suitably engraved Dartington vase plus two champagne glasses to toast good luck to her successor. A huge thank you to Jocelyne; without her support and leadership over the past years our visits would not have been as easy.

Also, a big thank you for our lovely coach driver who patiently carried us safely round. She received a 47 sweetie tin, our collection gave her €80 and Anne-Marie on the return journey gave her a 47 shirt. To me it is important to support the coach, so we all travel and visit as a group.

PeB was decorated with bunting, photos of the veterans and was full of both D-Day visitors and tourists. After two years missed it was for us all I think like 'coming home again' and the welcome was as warm and genuine as always. Meeting up again as a group and with our French friends was very special.

A big thank you to all who made us so welcome and to all who supported or took part in the ceremonies especially Lou our standard bearer, Dave our bugler and Kelly our piper.



*Our 'Last Supper' and Whiskey bottles auctioned in aid of the RMA Charity.*

## In the Footsteps of 47, 6<sup>th</sup> June

Ken Cowdery

How nice it was to be back in Normandy for the annual D-Day commemorations. Thanks to Alex Wilson's endeavours over the Covid years, this year's events would include the 12th consecutive year of the commemorative walk. In both 2020 and 2021, the Covid 'occupation' years, Alex formed a local, French Covid-Resistance group that overcame the germs and successfully completed the walk mission. In doing so, they kept open supply lines from beach to bar until their Association allies could join them again. Good work, Alex and comrades!

Despite worries that numbers may be low this year, about 85 walkers set off from Asnelles on a beautiful morning and completed the 13-mile walk to Port-en-Bessin by late afternoon. Among us were many local French community members, a party from RMA - the Royal Marines Charity, including its CEO Jonathan Ball, and many Association members and friends. A special 'shout out' to a contingent from the Rutherford family, ages ranging from a baby to an 82-year-old, who turned out in memory of Corporal Albert Rutherford of 'B-Troop'.

The big highlight for us was to be accompanied by 25 men from 47 Commando (Raiding Group) Royal Marines, including CO Colonel Rich Maltby. This would be the first time an active Royal Marine Commando unit bearing the '47' badge would re-trace the route of their predecessors since the mission in 1944. They made a wonderful contribution to the event in many ways. I have no doubt that every walker came away knowing that they had just spent a day in the company of the best of the best of our armed services. It made us very proud.

Although each year we follow the same route and tell the same story, there are always a few special contributions and special moments that make each walk a little special.

Firstly, as always, we received a wonderful welcome from Deputy Mayor Gerard Pouchain and the community of Asnelles at the start point of the walk. Monsieur Pouchain presided over the commemorative ceremony and read a speech on behalf of Mayor Alain Scribe. Sadly, Alain had had to pull out at the last minute due to a back injury. We look forward to seeing him again next year.

At the ceremony, we were honoured to have the presence of Landing Craft veteran Norman Ashford who was still looking amazingly fit and well. During the ceremony, RSM Matt Hill MBE gave an impassioned reading of the names of the fallen and exhortation. His pride in the Corps and honour of the fallen could not have come across more strongly. Our much-loved bagpiper Kelly Heathfield then proudly led the walkers off, despite suffering from a severe 'ailment' picked up in the bar just the night before!



*The Commemoration at Asnelles, led by Deputy Mayor Gerard Pouchain, assisted by Alex Wilson.*

*RSM Matt Hill MBE reading the names of the fallen and the exhortation.*



*Kelly pipes the 47 Cdo RGRM off the beach to join the commemorations at the memorial (to a round of applause from all watching).*

On our way to La Rosière, Colonel Rich Maltby delivered a fabulous real-time 'SitRep' at Point 54 with a 1940's BBC English accent. It brought a smile to everyone's faces. I heard someone say that 47 Commando ('Am. Dram.') RM is clearly in good hands!

Throughout the whole event, the translations by bi-lingual Corporal Jack Crawford went down very well and he was clearly a 'star of the show' among the French. It helped make the experience that much better for them, whilst taking some of the pressure off Alex too.

On arriving at Hotel La Rosiere, we were warmly greeted by Mayor Daniel Cattelain and the community of Tracy-Sur-Mer. The hotel proprietors, Marie and Stephane, put on refreshments for the walkers with a kind contribution to the costs from the Mayor and local community. Among the walkers this year we were delighted to have Tracy-Sur-Mer resident Louis de Bourgoing, whose family have been long-standing friends of our veterans and the Association.

Following a brief ceremony, the CO and a detachment from 47 Cdo joined the Mayor and family descendants of Marie-Rose Thonnard at a graveside ceremony at a nearby church. The 13-year-old Marie Rose was tragically killed by allied bombing on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 in the prelude to D-Day. She is not forgotten, alongside the many French local community members who lost their lives or suffered other losses and sacrifices during their occupation and liberation. (Also see page 4, the article from *Ouest France*).

Our next stop was for our picnic lunch in the grounds of the beautiful Abbaye Sainte-Marie at Longues-sur-Mer. To get there, we had kindly been given permission by Monsieur Hue to cross his farm again. We were pleased to be able to say hello and thank him (and his donkeys) as we passed.

At the Abbey, we were again given a very warm welcome by owners Isabelle and Jerome d'Anglejan, whose family are also long-standing supporters of the veterans and our Association. After our picnic, we were treated to a brief account of the history of 13th century former abbey as well as the opportunity to tour the award-winning restoration of the chapel.



*The 13th century Abbaye Sainte-Marie. What a perfect place to rest and learn the history.*

The next stop was Point 72 at Mont Cavalier, where the story of 47's mission reached its conclusion. It's a great spot to tell the story with lovely views over Port-en-Bessin. We then headed through Escures and, due to the construction of a new cycle path, were able for the first time to safely enter the Port via the busy Rue de Bayeux. This was the actual route the men of 47 Commando took on 7 June 1944 as they moved to their starting positions for the assault.

On reaching the Church, we were delighted to be greeted again by Kelly Heathfield. 47 Cdo formed up in rank, following our favourite bagpiper, led the walkers into the Port. Upon arriving at Bar de La Criée, our friends and owners Stephane, Nathalie and Hugo Pitel generously poured much-needed, cold lager for the walkers – an 'Ice Cold in Alex' moment worth waiting for! Aurore Lecollier from the local Cultural Centre then told the story of Port-en-Bessin's occupation, liberation and significance as a fishing port as well as a temporary petrol port for the remainder of the war.



*Kelly pipes the walkers back into the port.*

Those with the legs for it (and the willpower to leave the bar!), then headed up Rue Du Phare to attend the unveiling of the new commemorative bench, attended by veteran Mark Packer MM. It was a very fitting way to conclude this year's walk and to remember that, amongst the pleasures of the walk itself, we were there to commemorate the epic achievement and tragic sacrifices made in 47's mission to liberate the Port.

There are many others that I have not had the opportunity to credit or thank here but would like to express my appreciation to them all. I would like to one last mention for Major Gareth Stevens MBE of 47 Cdo (Raiding Group) RM. Alex and I are very grateful for the support he gave us in the run up to the walk and on the day. Gareth was always understanding of what we were trying to achieve and supportive in making that happen. On the day, he was always on hand and ready to help and do whatever was needed. All this helped make the day a better experience for everyone and less stressful for Alex and I. Thank you, Gareth.

Finally, I must congratulate all the walkers who took part this year, all of whom played their part in making it a special day. As mentioned earlier, the eldest was 82 years old and the youngest, apart from the baby, was 13 years old. What a wonderful achievement by everyone but by those two in particular. Hopefully, everyone who took part and others will be able to join us again in future years – same time, same day, same place, every year!

## In the Footsteps of my Uncle

*John Withington*

My Uncle, John Vernon Withington, was a Royal Marine Commando who served with the 47 Commando Royal Marines and was killed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 on the Western Feature at Port-en-Bessin. I share his name, and his photograph, handed down to me by my grandparents, and it's always had pride of place on our sideboard. This year marked our first visit to Port-en Bessin and proved to be as moving and memorable as we had anticipated.

When I was told we were to take part in a twelve mile walk from the landing beach at Asnelles to Port-en -Bessin, my first thought was "when was the last time I walked that far? Was it when

I spent the day with my wife Joy in IKEA"? That certainly felt like 12 miles! This as it turned out was both an enjoyable and emotional experience.

We were to follow as near as possible the path taken by 47 Cdo as they advanced west along the coast to liberate Port-en-Bessin. Before we left there was a remembrance service on the beach when the names of those who lost their lives there were read out, a sobering reminder of why we were there. Then we were off, accompanied by a cohort of serving Royal Marines and to the sound of the piper.

It was a pleasure to walk through the beautiful and varied scenery of the Normandy countryside. Our escort of Commandos kept us safe with their well-rehearsed traffic control method, shouting commands up and down the line. They were a friendly bunch happy to chat along the way. Joy proved to be very popular with those who had discovered Calvados the night before - she had Paracetamol!

Along the route we had regular stops at which we were given informative and entertaining talks about what had happened on that section of the advance. There were also welcome refreshment breaks. At Hotel La Rosier the owners kindly provided coffee and cake and at the beautiful L'Abbaye Sainte-Marie de Longues-sur-Mer we had our picnic lunch in the lovely gardens.

As we neared Port-en Bessin I was particularly moved by being told we were at the spot that the 47 Commando had rested for the night before taking the port. How strange to be where my Uncle John had spent his last night on this earth.



*Point 72 at Mont Cavalier, with Port-en-Bessin in the distance. "How strange to be where my Uncle John had spent his last night on this earth.*

The walk ended dramatically. The 47 Commando RG RM lined up ahead of us with the piper in the lead and we marched or walked smartly into Port-en-Bessin. Suddenly overhead the Patrouille de France flew past. How they arranged that I'll never know!

Sore of foot but glad of heart and with a great sense of achievement we went to the bar for a well-earned drink.

## Speeches on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June



### Paddy O'Connell at the Western Feature Memorial

Monsieur Van Roye the Mayor, Mark Packer, veteran 47 Royal Marine Commando, Captain Southorn, Naval Attaché, Colonel Maltby and Royal Marines of 47 Commando Raiding Group, British and French veterans friends and families. Good Morning.

Seventy-eight years ago today Port-en-Bessin was under occupation. But after nearly five years of rule by a fascist and racist regime, green berets could be seen. The men of 47 Royal Marine Commando had marched twelve miles behind enemy lines to liberate this fishing port.

Of the 420 men who set sail from England back then, we have one here today. Mark Packer was injured at the foot of this hill on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1944 and is back on parade.

Mark asked me to speak on his behalf today, and we've together agreed what to say. It's my privilege to do so, so I'm going to mention four groups of people.

First. Mark is here alongside Jim Forbes a Merchant Navy veteran whose ship was the first to bring petrol to Port-en-Bessin on D-Day plus 1. Norman Ashford is a Landing Craft Veteran who brought men ashore on Gold Beach. We are all very proud to see you.

Today's news proves people must fight and die for the freedoms we enjoy. You did that here and your comrades died, and we are here to honour them and what you did together.

All his life Mark has wanted a memorial to the men who died next to him at the foot of this hill and to his comrade Marine Baxter. By then amazing work of French friends and the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association whose walkers raised the funds, he's lived to see that this year. In July he'll be 99. What a wait.



L-R:: Mark Packer, Jim Forbes & Norman Ashford

*The Mayor and friends living here, British and French, unveiled the bench during a pandemic last year when we couldn't get here. Mr Mayor, my second group Mark wants me to honour is you and your citizens of Port-en-Bessin.*

*D-day marked the start of a battle in which more than twenty thousand French civilians died in three months. We know that your families lost people, houses, property. Over the years the French friends who host us never mention this. But our veterans want to.*

*You honour their British comrades and their sacrifice, and by doing so you have earned their respect and admiration. You are the Normans who gave us William the Conqueror and through your acts of kindness and memorial you have conquered their hearts.*

*We pay respect to the French standard bearers and veterans. To you school children who will live into the next century, please tell the children you have that our veterans who fought to liberate France say thank you today to your families for the way you honour the sacrifice of their comrades.*

*The third group I'd like to speak about is the Veterans of the Royal Marines Association and the men of the 47 Royal Marine Commando Raiding Group. We are very proud of you all and the men of 47 Commando said in their long lives the proudest thing they did was win and wear the Green Beret. When they meet you, they see the same in you as they found in themselves. Including you're quite cheeky.*

*And the fourth and final group Mark wants me to speak about are the friends and families of the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association. From all countries including Germany. After the war Mark Packer only bought Volkswagens - German cars, because of the fathers of the workers who made them who'd been killed or injured. He had fifteen of them in all.*

*All of you from France, Belgium the Netherlands and the UK you've done all you can to honour what happened here. You Mr Mayor you've done all you can.*

*Mark and Veterans here please know that We will all Keep on doing it.*

#### **Mayor Christophe van Roye at the Western Feature Memorial**

*In these troubled times, when war is once again coming to Europe's doorstep, it is essential for the inhabitants of Port-en-Bessin-Huppain to commemorate today the heroic action of the members of 47 Royal Marine Commando which allowed the liberation of our city, on June 7, 1944, and contributed to restoring peace in Europe.*

*We want to remember that on June 6, 1944, young men crossed the Channel, landed in Asnelles and fought courageously to liberate Port en Bessin. Here, in the assault against the forward positions of the western cliff, the fight was fierce, and 11 commandos lost their lives. These young men fulfilled the mission entrusted to them: to establish the link between Gold and Omaha and thus allow the first oil terminal to be deployed. Thanks to them, the fuel supply of the combat units, essential to the advance of the troops, would be assured!*

*Today, on the occasion of this ceremony, we pay tribute to all those who have fought or are fighting today, sometimes at the cost of their lives, so that freedom triumphs over oppression and of terror.*

#### **At the Capt Cousins Memorial, the Mayor describes the liberation of Port-en-Bessin**

*The 47 Royal Marine Commando, after a very difficult landing at Asnelles and a long march strewn with many obstacles, found itself, on June 7, 1944, hard at work to accomplish its mission, to liberate Port-en-Bessin and thus ensure the junction between Gold and Omaha. The city had been extensively fortified by occupying German troops and the battle for its liberation was deadly.*

*On the morning of June 7, part of the troops moved towards Port-en-Bessin escorted by the local gendarme Henri Gouget, the other part remained, as for it, in support of Escures. Despite communication problems with the artillery and a difficult delivery of ammunition, the men of 47*



*Royal Marine Commando were preparing to face the German troops who were protecting the port.*

*The men in charge of the assault on the western cliff, blocked by rolls of barbed wire deployed in the street of the lighthouse, were caught between the crossfire of the enemy soldiers installed on the cliff and the shots of the two German ships moored in the port. Faced with the magnitude of heavy fire, Captain Cousins was forced to withdraw his troops and headed for the eastern cliff. Eleven men had perished, one had been taken prisoner and others, wounded, had taken refuge with the locals.*

*After six hours of fighting, nothing had gone as planned. The German defences seemed impenetrable. However, Captain Cousins, taking the path of the gunners, organized the assault on the East Cliff. Attacked by machine gun fire about twenty meters from the summit, Captain Cousins and four of his men launched a final and desperate assault which led the German troops to surrender. This assault group of 47 Royal Marine Commando had only four officers and 24 marines. They had faced an armed force four times larger in number.*

*On the night of June 7 or 8, 1944, Port-en-Bessin was liberated. The link between Gold and Omaha was established at the end of the day on June 8th. A few days later, the oil port was deployed and welcomed the first British and American tankers which would supply the combat units with fuel.*

*Since landing at Asnelles, the British commando had lost 46 men, killed, and drowned, 64 had been wounded, 6 captured and 28 missing.*

## Absent Friends

### Enoch (Chad) Chadwick, CH/108320, A&Q Troop ,29 Dec 2021, age 96



L/Cpl Chad Chadwick served from October 1944 to February 1946 in 47 RM Commando, 46 RM Commando, and 41 RM Commando. He stayed on the Dutch islands of Walcheren and Noord-Beveland until his Troop moved to new billets in the town of Aalten near the German border in May 1945.

His wife Wendy said he was always very quiet about life after Service and just enjoyed his family life but was always proud to share his 47 experiences. Until he passed, Chad was the oldest Branch Member of the Stoke on Trent and Newcastle RMA.

### Peter Drummond, PO/X121697, S-Troop 21 Jan 2022, age 96



Dad was a messenger 'boy' at the beginning of the war in Greenock, running or cycling between war offices, before signing up for the Commando training at Achnacarry. He spoke little of this but did say that it was a dangerous thing that he was doing.

Cpl. Peter Drummond landed on Walcheren on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1944 manning a Vickers Machine Gun, together with his best friend Mne. Derek 'Slim' Shead who was part of a Mortar Team. After the landings they returned back to England and were then posted to Singapore followed by Hong Kong.



*The pictures above show Peter, on the right-hand side, with the machine gun, and in the Jeep, in Hong Kong.*

## Lannah Battley, 6 June 2022, Age 83



*Ted and Lannah married on 6th June 1964*

Lannah had a long, varied and interesting life. She was born Eileen Alicia Fearne on 29th June 1938, in London. She grew up in a terraced house in Hammersmith along with her younger brother Fred and, with her Auntie Alice, Uncle John, and cousin Irene living next door, there was always loving family around to spoil her.

The lovely thing about having a writer in the family is that they sometimes record their own stories and history. Lannah had memories of living through the Blitz. During the pandemic lockdown, she reminisced about it: "We shared an air raid shelter under the railway bridge with the neighbours on our side of the street. We came to no harm, but at least once...our doors and windows were blasted inward from near misses... Mum must have suffered great anxiety, but for me, a small child, I was cherished by all around me and had no notion of any other way of life. By the time of VE Day...I was almost seven and did know the situation. I'd never seen 'the seaside' or 'the country'. They were a kind of paradise, only seen in picture books along with ice cream and bananas."

Always interested in books and reading, Lannah reminisced about important moments: "When I was about eleven, I felt rather proud when the children's librarian at the Public Library realised that I'd run out of fiction to read. She took me through to the adult library, arranged tickets and pointed out a few authors such as John Buchan and Agatha Christie on a long wall full of fiction."

Lannah also had a keen interest in sport – a love of tennis which she developed at school, watching cricket and going with her dad to watch football. Lannah writes: "My father wouldn't take me to home games at Fulham Football Club so on alternate Saturday afternoons we went to Craven Cottage for the reserve games. At half time I could swing on the crush barriers because the ground was less than half full."

It sounds like an idyllic childhood, and with a lifetime love of learning, Lannah's schooldays were happy. She passed a scholarship to attend a prestigious girls' secondary school – Godolphin and Latymer – where she met her lifelong friend Maureen, always known as Maur. Right up until a few years ago they attended occasional school reunions, and together they've enjoyed 73 years of friendship.

When Lannah left school, she had a variety of jobs. She worked for General Electric as a lab technician in the calorimetry department. She experimented with prisms creating rainbow colours and was involved in experiments testing neon signs to see how long they would last. Over the years Lannah worked as a librarian, in a recruitment agency, as a playground

supervisor and latterly as a medical records officer. However, one of her formative jobs was as a stage manager and sometimes actress with a touring theatre company. It was here that she met Ted, 15 years older than her, and from a big East End family. In addition to working behind the scenes, Lannah also wrote, and one of her scripts 'Truffles', which required both Ted and Fred as actors, was part of a competition and won an award. Ted and Lannah married on 6th June 1964 – the anniversary of D-day, chosen so Ted wouldn't forget the date. They moved from London to Northamptonshire, and in 1971, their daughter Nicola was born.

For Lannah life was always full of learning – whether that was teaching herself German (and passing an O level), or completing an Open University degree in her 50's. Having missed out on the opportunity to go to university Lannah loved the OU summer school experience, being on campus, feeling like a proper student. She was an early adopter of technology, using a word processor for her writing in the early 1980s and going on to become one of the first in her community to embrace online grocery shopping. Lannah also completed several creative writing courses with the Arvon foundation, meeting famous authors in the process, including M. John Harrison and Iain Banks.

Ted and Lannah spent 21 years in Northamptonshire and then in the early 90's, along with Lannah's mother, Dorothy, they moved to Newcastle Emlyn in rural west Wales where Lannah lived for the next 25 years. It was here that she and Ted formed the Newcastle Emlyn Art Society which held meetings in his studio. There were so many happy memories from that time – Lannah walking with her neighbour Gwen and learning some words and phrases in Welsh. It was also a challenging time, with Lannah caring for and supporting her Mum, being incredibly positive and assertive in finding out about all the help that Dorothy was entitled to.

Ted had been a Royal Marine Commando and when he saw an advert for a veteran's trip to Normandy, he and Lannah joined in and became part of the 47 Royal Marines Commando Association, with Lannah, using her writing skills and taking over editorship of their newsletter. Following Ted's death in 2014, Lannah started making plans to move to Musselburgh to be closer to her daughter Nicola, son-in-law Alan and grandson Scott, and in 2016, she moved into her lovely flat in Market Street.

Over the last 5 or 6 years, Lannah has enjoyed being part of the community in Musselburgh. She had great neighbours and she was part of the Citizen Project, an innovative writing group. If you've got 4 minutes and 56 seconds to spare, you can log onto the project and listen to Lannah reading her work: Roman Bridge. It demonstrates her skill in writing and storytelling, and also her interest in research and history.

In the last years Lannah's lumbar spine problems caused mobility issues but living in Musselburgh was perfect for her. During the restrictions of lockdown, when so many people were anxious, Lannah relaxed into a quiet life where she could feed the birds, write in her journal, appreciate nature and – at a distance – share time with her family.

Nicola was asked about what Lannah's 'perfect day' might look like. Of course, when Lannah was younger that might have involved travelling to somewhere new, visiting some interesting sights, and winding up with a drink in the pub with Ted and other friends and family. In later years it might have been a quiet day at home with some family around who would leave her in peace to read and do her own thing.

Lannah spent her last day at home. Although she was unwell, she sat in her chair, looking out into the garden, and enjoyed watching birds coming down to the birdfeeder. She completed a sudoku and watched some cricket on TV. It was a beautiful sunny day, and she did love the sunshine.

Lannah deteriorated and was hospitalised and as 6<sup>th</sup> June arrived (Lannah and Ted's wedding anniversary) 10 minutes into the new day, Lannah went to be with Ted.

We will all miss her and will be glad that she was in our lives.

**Editor's note:** Lannah took over as Editor of Despatch back in December 2004 (issue number 10). She handed over to me and guided me through my first issue in July 2018 (number 38). Thank you, Lannah, it's a privilege to hold your pen.

## The French Flag Bearer?

On our trip to Normandy in June, a couple of our members asked, "who is the French lady who carries a standard at all of our commemorations". For those who haven't spoken to Laurence before, or who don't follow her on Facebook, I asked her to introduce herself to us all, and she very kindly agreed (Ed.)

My name is Laurence Scoupe and I live in a small village, Boué, in the north of France close to the border with Belgium. I work as a dental assistant. My father was a French fighter during the Algerian war, and he passed on to me respect for values and traditions. As a child, I accompanied him to ceremonies at the town's war memorial so as not to forget those who gave their lives for our freedom. I'd always wanted to be a soldier, but my parents refused to allow me to join the military, so I chose to serve the memory of France and to help those that fought yesterday and those that serve today. I became an official flag bearer in 2001 for the local association of veterans (what we call combatants in French).

During a trip to Normandy, in I believe it was in 2004, I met Patrick Hagan in Port-en-Bessin by chance and a bond was created between us, without knowing it. That same year, at the restaurant of Stéphane and Nathalie Patel, I offered to help them as they were very busy. It was that same evening that I met a Royal Marine who offered me his insignia of 'Major'. Unfortunately, I cannot remember his name (see the photo), but maybe someone in today's Association will remember him? So it was on June 6 that I made the decision to come back every year to honour the 47 Royal Marine Commando of WW2. I became a member of your Association in 2009 and I come to Normandy and to the Netherlands to express my gratitude to them.

For many years in France, I have given conferences and organised exhibitions on the themes of D-Day and on the French resistance. Of the many exhibitions, two had the theme of the 47 RMC, one in 2012 in my town and one in June 2014 at the restaurant of Nathalie and Stephane Pitel.

In France I take care of the veterans at the local, departmental and, in September 2021 in Paris, I was elected at national level to the Union nationale des combattants (UNC). Since 2014 I have been attached to the departmental military delegation of Aisne at the rank of Commander. I wrote a book on the battles of a French regiment in 1940 (the 5th Dragoon Regiment) and the profits from the sale are donated to the wounded of the French Army. Soon I am organizing a solidarity march to raise funds for the wounded.

Since my first meeting with the veterans and the members of the 47 RMCA I really have very good memories with a lot of joys, but also tears when one of them disappears. I will always remember this noble text recited by my beloved Chuck (I can still hear his voice).



Does anyone recognise the major (with a drink in his hand)?



Laurence signing a copy of her book at the Military Book Fair in Metz, 25<sup>th</sup> of June this year.

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.*



*In 2020 Laurence lowered the RM colours as Alex Wilson and the Defence Attaché lay wreaths at the memorial on the harbour at Place Seurat.*



*In 2022 Laurence was with us at our commemorations at Port-en-Bessin and in Bayeux.*

In 2020 Covid prevented you from coming to honour your heroes of 1944, so it was an honour for me to have paraded your colours at the garden of remembrance, at the Captain Cousins memorial and on the harbour.

## Reconnecting

(Ed.) By chance, on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> of June I came across two gents staying in the Ibis, but leaving that day. They were the son and grandson of Cpl Albert Potterton, of Y-Troop 47 Cdo. Despite us all being in the same hotel, they didn't know 47RMCA were there. In Martin's own words: Andrew Potterton (my brother Ian's son) who was with me on the trip, is Albert's grandson and Andrew and his family now live in my parents' family home.

My brother Ian and my wife Alison and I all came to Port-en-Bessin for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and found Dad's poster for the first time on a lamppost in Arromanches. A very proud moment for us. I took Andrew back to the same spot this year.

We were very fortunate at Dad's funeral to be leant a regimental cushion for his medals and a Union Jack flag to cover the coffin, we also had a Bugler from the Royal Marines play the Last Post.



*Andrew (left) and Martin.(right).      Albert's banner Arromanches*



Albert passed away on the 7th of August 2013 aged 90 and a short obituary appeared in Despatch 29 in January 2014. Albert joined the RM in 1942 and became a member of 47 Cdo in 1943. As a corporal in Y-Troop he landed in Normandy and Walcheren and remained with 47 until they disbanded.

## Walcheren 78: 31<sup>st</sup> Oct – 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2022

It's that time in the 47 Calendar for us to start making plans for our visit to Walcheren to commemorate the Liberation and to honour those, both civilian and military, that lost their lives.

The programme for our trip this year is:

31<sup>st</sup> Oct: Meet at Dover Ferry Terminal - there is long term parking available with a shuttle Bus to get there if you travel there by car.  
Ferry to Calais where we are met by our Dutch coach and then travel to Domburg.  
Evening free to explore the bars and restaurants of Domburg.

1<sup>st</sup> Nov: Ceremonies at the Polderhuis museum, Westkapelle, and wreath laying at the Liberty Bridge, the memorial to all Allied Forces. Then move to the lighthouse, the monument to the civilian casualties. After lunch, visit the Erika beach memorial, where the 4<sup>th</sup> Special Service Brigade landed.  
Evening free to continue exploring the bars and restaurants of Domburg.

2<sup>nd</sup> Nov: Yomp from Polderhuis to Dishoek or Flushing depending on how fit you feel.  
Ceremonies in Dishoek at the old 47 Plaque, then to our main Memorial on the top of the dyke. After lunch, visit the Flushing Cdo Memorial. Also, an opportunity to visit the Whiskey 11 bunker see the hard work that has been done to improve it.  
Last night dinner for Association members in the restaurant Steaker in Domburg (those who were with us in 2019 will no doubt have fond memories).

3<sup>rd</sup> Nov: Ceremony at Bergan op Zoom, then on to the Schoonselhof Cemetery, Antwerp; a cemetery most will never have visited but a very impressive resting place for 47 RM Cdo Mne Guymer. Afterwards we head to Calais to catch the ferry home.

The final cost of the trip will depend on how many of us travel, so below is an initial estimate, which will be confirmed once we know the numbers who wish to attend.

We have been quoted some extremely good prices for the hotels and are looking to block book two hotels in the centre of Domburg; a locality that proved very popular with those of you who travelled on the last trip in 2019.

The first hotel is Hotel de Burgh and we have been quoted a rate of €159 euros per person including breakfast for 3 nights. This rate includes local taxes. (For a couple, the 3 night stay is €319).

The second hotel is Hotel den Brouwerij which some of us used in 2019. Their room rate is €285 for the 3 nights in double room including breakfast.

Both hotels have lift access to all rooms. The rates are competitive and dependent upon the take-up of the rooms. If we don't book all the rooms requested, then the rate will increase. I will obviously keep you informed of any price change once I know the numbers interested.

We are intending to book a coach in the same way that we did for Normandy in that the coach will collect foot passengers in Calais to transport to Domburg. The estimated cost of the coach is €150 per person and this cost will include collection and return to Calais and use of the coach during the trip. Those who are travelling independently and wish to use the coach may do so at a cost of £10 per person per day and we will need to collect the money in advance of the trip.



*The Dishoek memorial to 47 Cdo overlooks the Scheldt, the route to the port of Antwerp.*

At this moment I can only source ferry crossings via P&O ferries from Dover to Calais. (The other ferry company DFDS is not currently accepting foot passengers, but this situation may change). P&O Ferries are currently asking for £60 per person return Dover-Calais and the sailings we are looking at are for 11:15am Dover-Calais 31<sup>st</sup> October, return 17:20 Calais-Dover 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

The Association is not making any block bookings for the ferry so these will need to be made by the individual. The timings quoted are important in order to connect with the coach in Calais. Please don't make your ferry bookings yet if you are intending to go as everything needs to be firmed up once we know who will be making the trip.

Finally, the last evening meal will be at the same restaurant as the one we used in 2019 at a cost of around €30 per person payable in advance of the trip if you would like to attend.

If you have any queries or concerns about any of the above, please contact me, Anne-Marie Nichols, 47RMCA Secretary, at [47rmcsec@gmail.com](mailto:47rmcsec@gmail.com) or telephone +44(0)7480213013

As deposits will be payable to the coach company and hotels, please could I ask that you kindly inform me of your interest by end-August. We may end up using only one of the hotels if interest is low, so please could you indicate which hotel you would be interested in. Links to the hotels are: Hotel de Burg: <https://www.hoteldeburg.nl/> and Hotel den Brouwerij: <https://www.vreekehoteels.nl/nl/accommodaties-vreeke-hotels-zeeland/hotel-in-den-brouwerij>

### **Suggested Reading**

For those of who haven't been to Walcheren before and might be unfamiliar with what 47 Cdo did there, I'd like to suggest the following reading:

'From Omaha to the Scheldt, The story of 47 Royal Marine Commando during WWII', by John Forfar. Chapters 8 to 15, some 170 pages, tell the story of the Walcheren campaign. Copies of Forfar's book are available from Geof Haywood (contact details under MFM) for £20, including postage and packing.

'Despatch 41 – January 2020' contains the two articles written for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Assault on Walcheren, by Lt Col G.A. Gelder RM (Retd), Corp Historian. The articles were previously published in the Globe and Laurel. Also in Despatch 41 is the article 'It's all about Antwerp', by Ben Schoenmaker, Director of the Netherlands Institute of Military History. If you don't have Despatch 41 to hand, or you're a new member of the Association, feel free to email me, [dave.shorrock@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dave.shorrock@blueyonder.co.uk), and I'll email you back with a PDF copy.

And finally, it's not reading, it's a film that you might want to see. 'The Forgotten Battle', or in Dutch, 'De slag om de Schelde' was released in 2020. Sadly, it doesn't mention 47 Cdo, but it tells a very powerful story seen through Dutch eyes.

The synopsis: November 1944. On the flooded island of Walcheren in Zeeland, thousands of



allies fight the German army. Touching three young lives inextricably connected. A Dutch boy fighting for the Germans, an English glider pilot and a Zeeland girl who reluctantly joined the resistance become involved and are faced with crucial choices that are not only about their own freedom, but also about the freedom of others.

'The Forgotten Battle' is available to stream on Netflix or Amazon Prime, or you can buy the DVD. It has excellent reviews: IMDb rate it at 7.1 out of 10 and Rotten Tomatoes give it 100%.

## Mountbatten Festival of Music 2023 – Advance Booking



The dates for the Mountbatten Festival of Music 2023 at the Royal Albert Hall are Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> of March at 7:30pm and Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> at 2pm and the final show at 7:30pm. Courtesy of the RM Band Service, we have advance booking before tickets go on sale to the general public. This year we have been promised that we will be able to book Loggia boxes, as in previous years. Seats in a box or the stalls will cost £57 each, plus a booking fee per seat.

To take advantage of this advance booking, and in order to get our bid in before others, if you wish to attend, please can you let Geof know **by the 7<sup>th</sup> of August please**, stating your preference for stall or box seats and the number of seats you require.

Geof Haywood [geofandjillh@btinternet.com](mailto:geofandjillh@btinternet.com), or phone +44(0)1202888194.

If you haven't been to MFM before, you can see what you're missing from the recording of this year's concert. And for those who attended this year's event, here's a reminder:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9VooyxTP8A>

## Normandy 2022 – D-Day 78: The Video

Once again ace cameraman Steve Hignett has worked his magic to condense this year's trip to 21 minutes. You can find the video via this link: [https://youtu.be/4\\_9CyrUbaFY](https://youtu.be/4_9CyrUbaFY) or search on Google or YouTube for: '47 RMC D-Day Anniversary 2022'.



And don't forget to mark the 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 on your calendar.

## From the Editor



Just before Christmas I was in a hotel in France, flipping through the TV channels and I caught the end of a clip with a French rapper in front of the British Normandy Memorial. What was he doing, and why was he there? I'm not normally a fan of rap music but there was something about the image, and the gentle timbre of his voice that sparked my interest. Searching online, I eventually found the video of 'Jour Meilleur' (Better Day) by OrelSan [OrelSan - Jour meilleur \[CLIP OFFICIEL\] - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrelSan - Jour meilleur [CLIP OFFICIEL] - YouTube). When I watched it, I was taken aback - correction, taken back - to Normandy - and the towns and sights we've got to know on our trips there to honour the men of 47 Cdo. The words of the song were beyond my schoolboy French, so I carried on searching for the lyrics and what was behind them.

*"Let me say two, three stupid things, before you do something stupid  
The problem with life is that there's only one  
We will never treat depression like we treat a cold  
But say that you'll be able count on me while it lasts  
Allergic to life, mornings are dark  
When everything has an aftertaste of déjà vu  
The nights are dead, everyone left you, even the moon  
But the end of the desert may be hidden behind each dune  
Everything is going to get better, that's false, I know you know  
Sometimes I won't really know what to say anymore, but I'll still be able to listen  
Nothing is going to change, at least, unless you do it  
When you have a desert to cross, there's nothing to do, except move forward  
We'll laugh about it when we see it on a better day  
Better day, better day".*

OrelSan wrote the song for a friend who was suffering from depression and the video has had over 30 million views, with many saying they wished friends had seen this before they'd done something stupid. When I read the line "When you have a desert to cross, there's nothing to do, except move forward" it made me think of 'The Commando Spirit'. Stay safe and have a better day. Dave.

**Next Issue:** January 2023

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**WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP?**

**VETERAN**

**Royal Marines Charity**  
RMA-TRMC.ORG  
0800 468 1664

**SAMARITANS**  
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P.S. The trawler in the video is 'La Perseverance' (appropriate 😊) and its home port is Port-en-Bessin.