

Despatch





Despatch

The Magazine of
47 Royal Marine Commando Association



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Hello all,



Welcome to the Summer edition of *Despatch*. If there is one theme running through this issue, it is Normandy. Eighty-two years on from the events of June 1944, we continue to remember the courage, sacrifice and determination

of the men of 47 Royal Marine Commando, while honouring the friendships and international bonds that have grown from their legacy.

Alongside the commemorations, the Association has enjoyed another busy few months socially. From formal events and reunions to shared meals, walks and the inevitable catch-ups over a drink, its wonderful to see such strong support for everything the Association does. The photographs throughout this edition speak for themselves and reflect a vibrant welcoming community that continues to thrive.

My thanks, as always, go to everyone who has contributed articles, photographs and memories to this edition, and to Bob and the committee for the enormous amount of work that goes into making each issue possible.

Whether you joined us in Normandy, supported events closer to home, or are simply keeping in touch through the pages of *Despatch*, I hope you enjoy this edition.

Warmest regards,

Georgi

*Front Cover: The scene at the Memorial Garden, Port-en-Bessin on 7th June.
Photo credit: Alex Voté*

From the Chairman...



Welcome to the latest edition of *Despatch*, bringing you another round up of commemorations, Association news, social gatherings and the many activities undertaken by the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association.

As always, the first six months of the year have been particularly busy. A large turnout of members gathered in London for the Mountbatten Festival of Music weekend; we hosted the Mayor of Port-en-Bessin at the *Seurat and the Sea* exhibition; and conducted a pre-visit to Port-en-Bessin in preparation for this period's most significant commemoration, the 82nd anniversary of D-Day and liberation of the Oil Port. The period was rounded off with a fantastic Black Tie Dinner at *HMS President* in London, attended by both our Life President and President. None of these major events happens by chance, and thanks are due to your hardworking committee for its tireless dedication and support in making them such a success. Sadly,

this period has also been marked by the funerals of two of our members, together with that of Peter Phillips, the architect of the modern-day Association. On behalf of the entire membership, I offer our deepest condolences to their families.

The Association is greatly indebted to Brenda Cogswell, who answered my plea for help with keeping our Facebook page up to date. Judging by the number of 'likes' each post receives, we appear to be on the right track in both the content we share and keeping members informed. Similarly, the *47 Shenanigans WhatsApp* group has become another valuable platform, particularly for real-time messaging (*for example, "Which bar are you all in...?"*) during our many events. Our YouTube channel, expertly managed by Steve Hignett, also hosts an excellent collection of video recordings from both recent and historic Association events.

It is recognised that social media is not for everyone. However, good communication is helping us attract new members. Our website continues to receive an increasing number of enquiries, there are now over 130 followers on our Facebook page, and a further ninety members are registered on our Royal Marines Association webpage. Of course, email remains an important way of keeping in touch with many of you.

You will be aware that some time ago I compiled the *Graves and Memorial Register*, a copy of which is available on the Association website. To complement that work, I am currently attempting to discover where each of our 114 fallen is commemorated locally throughout the United Kingdom, whether on a war memorial, roll of honour or in a book of remembrance. Please see the article on pages 9-10 for further information and details of how you may be able to help. Progress is also being made on recording the orders, honours and gallantry awards bestowed upon the men of 47 RM Commando. I have recently received a wealth of useful documentation from the family of C F Phillips, the wartime Commanding Officer of 47 RM Commando. When complete, both of these projects will be published on the Association website.

Finally, the retired Standard is now permanently housed within a glass-fronted, solid oak display case. The design and craftsmanship are the work of Martin Cox, son of veteran Corporal Ted Cox, who was severely wounded at La Rosière during the approach march to Port-en-Bessin. The case was displayed at the AGM and also at the Black Tie Dinner in London. It will serve as a lasting reminder that everything we do within the Association is undertaken in memory of all those who served with 47 RM Commando, especially those who never returned home.

Best wishes,
Bob

They're Still Marching - 47 RM Commando Association in Normandy

by Bob Perry



What initially started on the 53rd anniversary of the D-Day landings, when the pupils of Collège Hemingway, the senior school in Port-en-Bessin, undertook a re-enactment of 47 RM Commando's 12-mile march from the landing beach to their objective, has now developed into a popular annual commemoration event. The walk attracts serving Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel, members of the Royal Marines Association, cadets and the local community, all keen to learn about the story of 47 RM Commando while forging even closer ties through a shared history of occupation and liberation. This year's event, organised by Association members Ken Cowdery and Alex Wilson, commenced on Gold beach at Asnelles, close to where the Commando landed on D-Day. The Mayor then led a service of remembrance in the nearby memorial garden, providing an opportunity to lay a wreath

in memory of the twenty-nine men of 47 RM Commando who lost their lives during the landing and the approach march to Port-en-Bessin. During the march, the 150 participants were warmly welcomed by the mayors of Tracy-sur-Mer and Commes as they passed through their communes. The march finished at *La Criée du 47ème*, our affiliated bar in Port-en-Bessin, named in honour of 47 RM Commando.

Following the morning ceremony at Asnelles, members dispersed to attend several concurrent commemorative events. Many Association members paid their respects to our fallen, who rest in the perpetual care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at Bayeux War Cemetery. The visit was appropriately marked by a short service of remembrance, the sounding of the Last Post and the laying of wreaths.



The liberation of Port-en-Bessin is commemorated annually by the local community and the 47 RM Commando Association on 7th June. The day began with wreath-



laying at the Captain Terence Cousins Memorial on the Eastern Feature. Captain Cousins is recognised as having played the decisive role in the battle of Port-en-Bessin. His outstanding leadership, determination, initiative and courage during the attack on the enemy fortifications, close to where the memorial now stands, continue to inspire today's generation of serving Royal Marines. We were fortunate to be

joined by Essie Cousins, niece of Terence Cousins, who laid a wreath in honour of the gallant troop commander who lost his life leading his men into battle.

Our main ceremony followed at the 47 RM Commando Memorial Garden on the Western Feature, overlooking the harbour. The large gathering included service personnel from the modern-day 47 Commando and 30 Commando, members of the Royal Marines Association, together with many families and friends of our late veterans. The service of remembrance was led by RMA Chaplain Reverend Justin Montague, with LCpl Bugler Callum Budden sounding the Last Post, followed by Association stalwart Kelly Heathfield playing a Scottish lament on the bagpipes. A further ceremony took place at the bunker in Place Seurat, providing an opportunity to remember those French civilians who, as the battle for the port raged around



them and while the outcome remained uncertain, gave invaluable assistance to the wounded of 47 RM Commando and sheltered them in their homes despite the threat of German reprisals. During the post-ceremony reception in the Salle des Fêtes, Bob Perry presented the mayor with a framed display of Captain Cousins memorabilia, superbly crafted by Martin Cox, son of 47 veteran Ted Cox.



The following day provided an opportunity at the AGM to view the retired Standard, now handsomely encased in a glass-fronted, oak display case - a reminder that everything we do within the Association is in memory of all those who served with, or were attached to, 47 RM Commando. Again, our heartfelt thanks go to Martin Cox for his skill in designing and crafting such a lasting tribute to our veterans.

The traditional last night dinner was its usual raucous affair, with veterans' families and friends mixing easily with serving and retired Royal Marines until the early hours.

Tired but eternally humbled and grateful by the events during the visit, we were able to return home safely to our families in the UK - unlike the men of 47 RM Commando who made the ultimate sacrifice during the liberation of Europe eighty-two years ago.

At the going down of the sun
And in the morning,
We will remember them.



A Miscellany of 47 RM Commando on Jig Sector, Gold Beach by Bob Perry

In preparation for the D-Day landings 47 RM Commando embarked in two troop carrying ships:

SS Victoria - embarked her troops at Southampton Berth 37, departed Solent Anchorage No 7/10 on June 5th as part of Force J4 in Assault Convoy G9E. Embarked onboard was 508th Assault Flotilla with the following Landing Craft Assault serials: 579**, 586*, 592*, 593*, 594* and 589*. Troop capacity 210.

Princess Josephine Charlotte - embarked her troops at Southampton Berth 39, departed Solent Anchorage No 7/9 on June 5th as part of Force J4 in Assault Convoy G9E. She carried 502nd Assault Flotilla with the following Landing Craft Assault serials: 290, 320*, 349*, 412, 431*, 442*, 503* and 509*. Troop capacity 320.

* indicates LCA lost on D-Day 6th June 1944. ** indicates LCA lost 7th June with three killed.

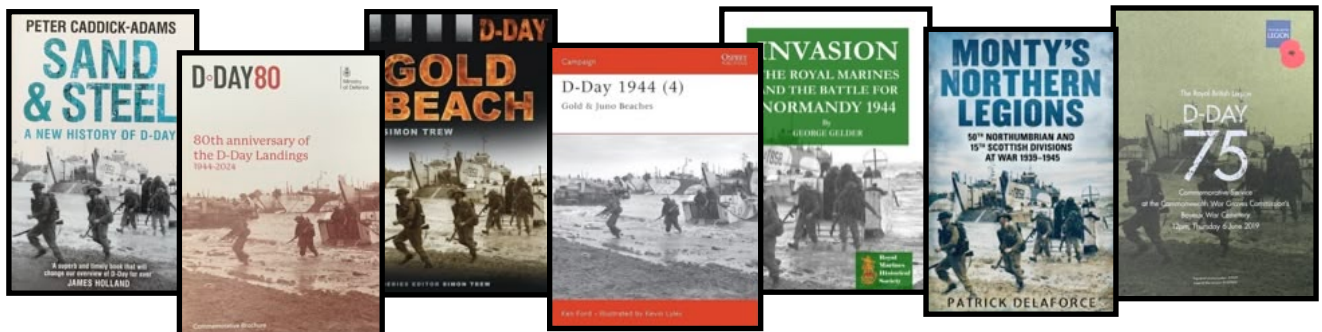
PHASE I

<i>502 Flotilla</i>		<i>508 Flotilla</i>	
<i>Boat No 1</i>	<i>X + 8 HQ</i>	<i>Boat No 1</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>X + 9 HQ</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>X + 8 HQ</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Y + HW + 4 HQ</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>Q + 9 HQ</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Y + HW + 4 HQ</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Q + 8 HQ</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Y + HW + 5 HQ</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>Q + 8 HQ</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Y + HW + 4 HQ</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>B</i>		
<i>8</i>	<i>B</i>		

(Left) Page from Lieutenant Colonel C F Phillips notebook detailing his written orders for Operation Aubery - 47's landing on Gold Beach. Shown is the troops to craft detail. (Courtesy NMRN)

Odd numbered boats referred to in the notebook were usually stowed on the starboard side davits with even numbered craft on the port side. It is not possible to determine boat number to the LCA serial number listed above.

The iconic images of 47 RM Commando landing at Jig Sector Gold Beach were taken by Sergeant Norman Midgley, a photographer with No 5 Section of the Army Film and Photographic Unit. Sgt Midgley was a staff photographer with the Daily Express newspaper in Manchester before joining the AFPU. The images have been widely used on the front cover of commercially published books and official publications of the Ministry of Defence and Royal British Legion, as it is recognised as one of the most defining images of D-Day.



The images have also been extensively used on postage stamps issued by many countries. See Allen Withington's excellent article '47 in Stamps' at <https://www.47rmcommando.org/downloads/despatch/Despatch-Issue-43.pdf>

It is often wondered why Sgt Midgley didn't capture more images of the landings on Gold beach. A perusal of the Imperial War Museum photographic archives doesn't throw any further light on the matter. It seems inconceivable that following the images of 47 RM Commando the next image in the series was on 7th June - was another camera used? The search will continue!



(Above) From left to right the IWM image number and caption:

B5243 - Beach Group troops assist with the unloading of vehicles from LCTs on Jig beach, Gold area, 6 June 1944. LCT 928, LCT 710, LCT 858 and LCM 164 are visible. A Universal Carrier with wading screens can be seen in the surf, and a Sherman DD tank with its flotation screen still raised can be seen on the left.

B5244 - Universal Carriers of 50th Division waded ashore from LCTs on Jig beach, Gold area, 6 June 1944. LCT 928, LCT 710, LCT 858 and LCM 244 are visible in the background. The markings on the carrier indicate a vehicle from 1st Dorsetshire Regiment, 231st Brigade.

B5245 - Commandos of 47 (RM) Commando coming ashore from LCAs (Landing Craft Assault) on Jig beach, Gold area, 6 June 1944. LCTs unloading priority vehicles of 231st Brigade, 50th Division, can be seen in the background.

B5246 - Commandos of 47 (RM) Commando coming ashore from LCAs (Landing Craft Assault) on Jig beach, Gold area, 6 June 1944. LCTs can be seen in the background unloading priority vehicles for 231st Brigade, 50th Division

B5247 - French civilians in St Gabriel recovering furniture and bedding which had been taken by German troops formerly billeted in the village, 7 June 1944. Relocation of the Escures Marker Post



Scene at Gold Beach King Sector on 7th June 1944; rows of beached LCAs - identifiable are 503 and 442 from Princess Josephine Charlotte (stills taken from ADM 1234B Reel 2 - copyright IWM Non Commercial Licence)

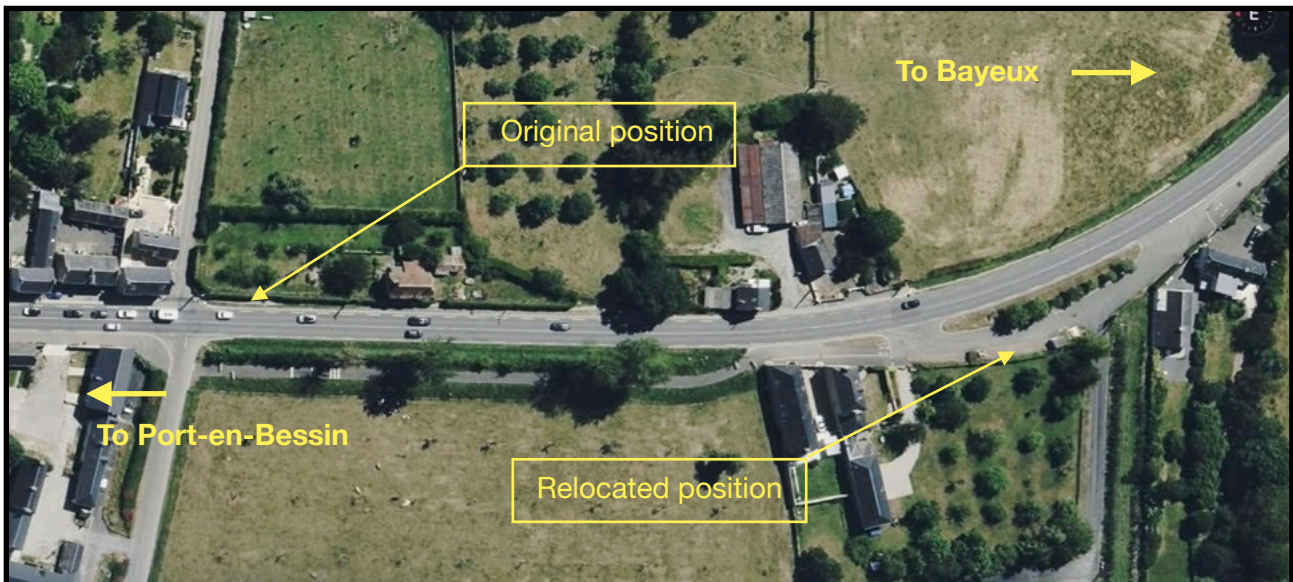


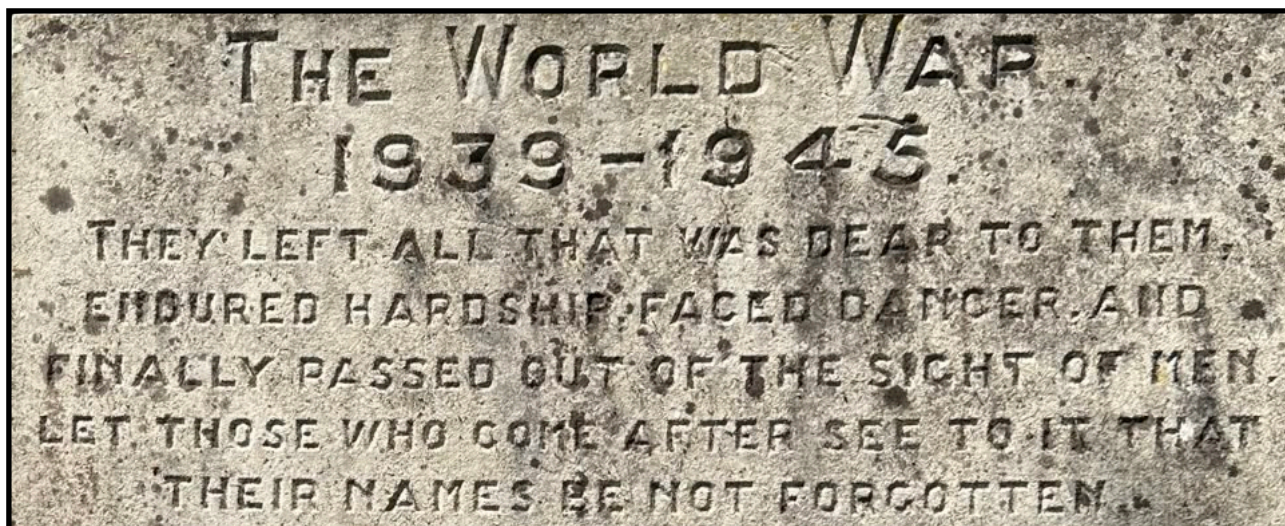
Relocation of the Escures Marker Post

Bob Perry writes... In 2004, the local councils of Asnelles, La Rosière (near Tracy), Commes and Port-en-Bessin agreed to commemorate the route taken by 47 RM Commando from its landing point near Asnelles to Port-en-Bessin. The project was particularly promoted by Sir Philippe de Bourgoing, a member of the French Senate, and chairman of the Franco-British Liaison Committee.

The route is identified by four permanent roadside markers at Asnelles, La Rosière, Escures and Port-en-Bessin harbour, all key points along the route, with each carrying a short description of the events that took place at that point.

The Escures marker post was originally situated adjacent to the D6 *Route de Port*, the busy main road between Bayeux to Port-en-Bessin. The fast moving traffic made anything other than a quick wreath laying a hazardous activity! The marker and flower bed have now been moved 300m south on the opposite side of the road to a convenient lay-by. This year the Mayor of Commes, Monsieur Benoît Moret, was able to welcome the 'Following in the Footsteps' walkers in a much safer environment. The cost of the relocation was funded entirely by the French authorities.



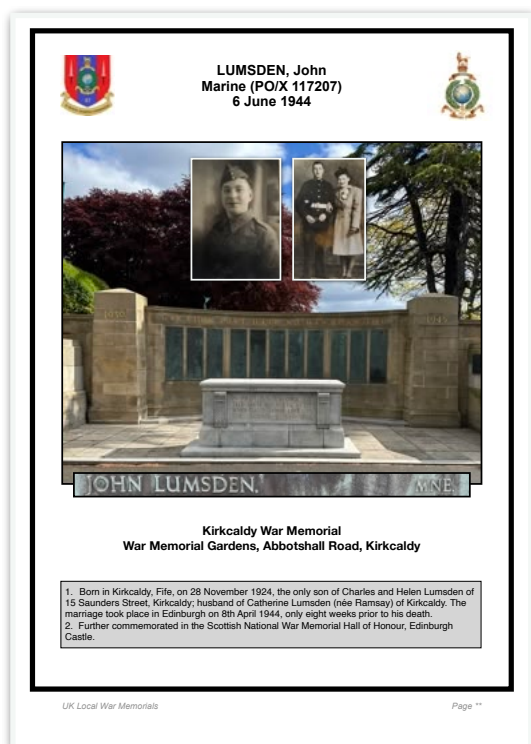


When Shall Their Glory Fade?

A Compendium of the Local War Memorials Commemorating the Fallen of 47 Royal Marine Commando

Bob Perry writes... During the Association's regular visits to the battlegrounds of north west Europe, the men who made the ultimate sacrifice, serving with or attached to 47 RM Commando, are rightly commemorated. However, they are not just names to be read aloud with reverence and sorrow in Normandy, Fecamp, Walcheren or Kapelsche Veer. Most were young, teenagers or in their early twenties. Each would have had family members, most schooled and employed in the

area they were born; some may have been married and had children. I therefore decided to research and write a few words about each of their lives and visit and photograph any United Kingdom local war memorial, roll of honour, book of remembrance or other place where they may be individually commemorated. Eventually, the work will be published on the Association's website and each of the fallen will have their own page similar to the one shown on the left, to be updated as and when any new information becomes available.

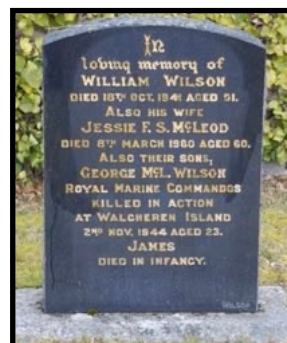


Unlike a county infantry regiment of the British Army, that is recruited from a specific geographic region, the men of 47 RM Commando hailed from all over the United Kingdom, the Crown Dependencies of the Channel Islands, the Republic of Ireland and even further afield. My travels to date have taken me from the Highlands of Scotland to Guernsey and from East Anglia to West Wales. Details of their, often short, lives have been gleaned from genealogy sites, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, newspaper archives and many local historical societies, church dioceses, schools and local authorities, who have been keen to assist.

The work has unearthed some surprising facts: three of the fallen are commemorated on war memorials within walking distance from where I live in Dorset; sadly, five of the fallen also lost a brother in the war - one set of parents lost both of their only children; the largest concentration of the fallen came from London (22) with only relatively small numbers from other major metropolitan areas; thirteen were raised in Scotland, seven in Wales and two from Northern Ireland. Several of the men are also remembered on the headstones of their parents graves, whilst some are commemorated on more than one war memorial. Perhaps the most unusual places of

commemoration found so far are on a sundial, a triangulation pillar high up in the Peak District and also on a silver dessert spoon!

So far, I have identified and visited where eighty of the fallen are commemorated - London and some other large cities (Liverpool, Bristol, Manchester, Plymouth and Edinburgh) are next on the research list. If you live in these metropolitan areas and are keen to be involved with the project then please do get in touch. Similarly, if you have an interest in genealogy or history, or just keen to help in some way then I look forward to hearing from you.



We all know that Place Seurat is the harbour area in Port-en-Bessin adjacent to the bunker where wreaths are laid each year. But do you know who Georges Seurat was?

Seurat and the Sea Exhibition by Bob Perry

At very short notice, the Mayor of Port-en-Bessin, Christophe Van Roye, alerted the Association that he had been invited to the 'Seurat and the Sea' exhibition at the Courtauld Gallery in London. Realising that it would be difficult to gain last minute access to the exhibition, our very own Paddy O'Connell managed to use all of his charm and no small measure of journalistic contacts, to secure entry for himself, Bob Perry, Allen Withington and Dave Shorrock to the VIP/press/media opening which took place just ahead of the February 13th public launch.



The Mayor was accompanied by Thierry Léonnec, his cultural advisor, Any Allard, a Port-en-Bessin based historian, and her granddaughter Mathilde Allard, a London trained lawyer working in the capital. What made the exhibition so special for our guests was that all of the six paintings Georges Seurat produced in Port-en-Bessin were reunited in the exhibition for the first time since they were unveiled in February 1889.

During his short career, the French artist Georges Seurat (1859-1891) developed a radical new way of painting. Rather than mixing paint on the palette, Seurat applied dashes and dots of pure colour directly on the canvas, inventing a technique known as pointillism or Neo-Impressionism. He is renowned for the highly original paintings of the sea that Seurat made during annual summer trips to the Channel coast between 1885 and 1890. Of the approximately 45 canvases Seurat painted before his untimely death aged 31, over half are seascapes.





Left: Courtesy of club member Allen Withington, a post exhibition meal (and very late night drinks) was taken at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, overlooking the Thames.

Above: The next morning prior to their departure, the mayor and his entourage experienced the 'Full English' breakfast in Soho - not a solitary baked bean was left on any of the plates...



Introduction of the new Royal Marines Globe and Laurel Badge

The Globe and Laurel has been updated to incorporate the Tudor Crown of His Majesty King Charles III, in line with the authorised transition from the St Edward Crown of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The new design, approved by the College of Arms, now replaces all versions bearing the St Edward's Crown with immediate effect. The Tudor Crown was also adopted by His Majesty King George VI and would have been part of the cap badge worn by our late veterans.



Left: The updated Royal Marines Badge with Tudor Crown.

Right: The Badge featuring the St Edward Crown.



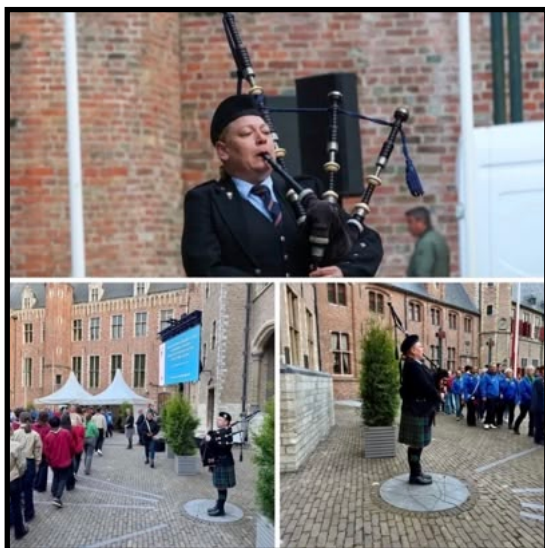
News from the Netherlands...

81st Anniversary of the Battle of Kapelsche Veer



The memorial at Kapelsche Veer and aerial photograph showing the small area between the memorial and River Maas where much of the close quarter fighting took place.

Remembrance Day in the Netherlands



Remembrance Day in the Netherlands (Dodenherdenking) is observed annually on 4th May. It honours all Dutch civilians and military personnel who have died in wars or peacekeeping missions since the outbreak of WW2. The day culminates at 8pm with two minutes of nationwide silence. Remembrance Day leads directly into Liberation Day (Bevrijdingsdag) on 5th May, when the Netherlands celebrates its freedom and the end of WW2.

Left: Kelly commemorating Remembrance Day in Middleburg (photos © @rkfotografie6010 (top) and @wijzijndestad/Edwin Mijsbergen)

A Milestone at the Polderhuis

The Association's good friend, Ivo van Beekhuizen commemorated 20 years at the helm of the Polderhuis Museum, Westkapelle.

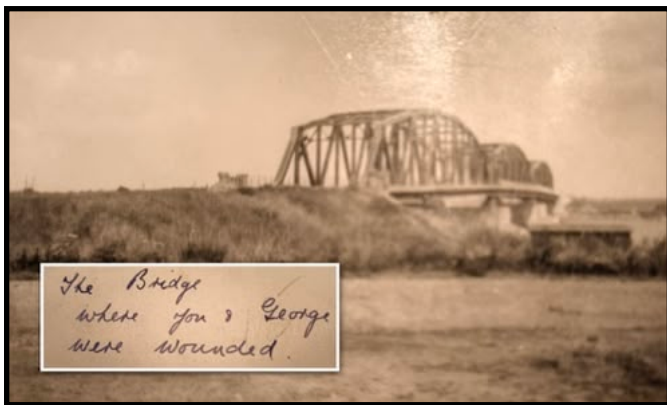


(Left: Photo © Lex de Meester)

The Mystery Bridge - Solved!

Alan King, son of 47 RM Commando veteran Arthur King, requested assistance from the Association to identify the location of a bridge from a photograph found in his late father's possessions. The only clue was a hand-written caption on the back "*The bridge where you and George were wounded*". As we all know there are quite a few bridges in the Netherlands but, with outstanding help from Marius Heideveld (The Friends of the Allied War Graves Foundation) and other Dutch forum sites, the location was eventually identified as the Keizersveere bridge, about three miles west of Kapellsche Veer. The bridge was demolished by the German Army in late 1944. See pages 280-284 in John Forfar's 'From Omaha to the Scheldt' for more information.

A super outcome and so rewarding to be able to help a veteran's family seeking information about their loved-one's service with 47 RM Commando.



*The Bridge
where you & George
were wounded.*



Above Left: The photo from Alan King. Above Right: The bridge prior to its demolition.

Below Left: Kapelsche Veer island with the memorial circled; the bridge is to the west

Below Right: An aerial photograph from September 1944.



The following article is the first in a series regarding the origins of the memorials in the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands which commemorate the fallen of 47 RM Commando.

The 47 Royal Marine Commando Memorial

The following words are extracted from the 47 RM Commando Newsletter dated October 1998:

'The day of unveiling [Wednesday 12th August 1998] of our commemorative stone in the Garden of Remembrance, Eastney Barracks, dawned bright and clear. Fifty members, wives and family gathered in the car park of the Royal Marines Museum from 1000am onwards. Just after 1000 the now familiar sight of Silver Coach Lines was observed pulling into the car park ahead of schedule.



Greetings were exchanged between old and new friends. Just before 1100 we began to move in the direction of a Union Jack which could just be seen on the other side of the old parade ground. The veterans formed up facing the Museum and were brought smartly to attention by Roy Mansfield. With the help of our own Royal Marines Bugler, Nick Johnson, the veterans marched smartly and proudly along the side of the Garden of Remembrance to the site of the 47 Stone which is situated directly behind a small ornamental garden.

The Service of Dedication of the Stone was conducted by the Reverend Jeremy Ames who was a last minute stand in for our own padre Reverend Thornley who unfortunately had been taken ill with flu. After the prayer of dedication the stone was unveiled by Professor John Forfar. A wreath was laid by Ted Hartwell on behalf of the veterans of 47 RM Commando. Wreaths were also laid by Betty Field and Rose Wood on behalf of the widows of former members and by Lynne Goldsmith and Sandra Tebbutt on

behalf of the children of former members. The Roll of Honour was ably read out by our Chairman Peter Winter and each name was answered 'Here Sir'. A poignant reminder of the men that never returned.

After the service there was time for photographs and a wander around the other memorials before the drinks reception in the Mountbatten Room. The Mountbatten Room provided an excellent venue for the reception and lunch with many interesting things to look at and talk about. A superb meal of roast chicken and summer pudding followed - we were all ready for it. During coffee, toasts were proposed to 'The Queen' by Peter Phillips and 'To Absent Friends' by Mickie O'Brien. Peter Winter thanked the staff of the Royal Marines Museum for all their help and in particular Cdr Bill Samways. He also thanked the writer [Lynne Goldsmith] for all her hard work in selecting the stone, the site, organising the stone mason to engrave the names and have it erected and also for organising the Order of Service and the lunch afterwards.

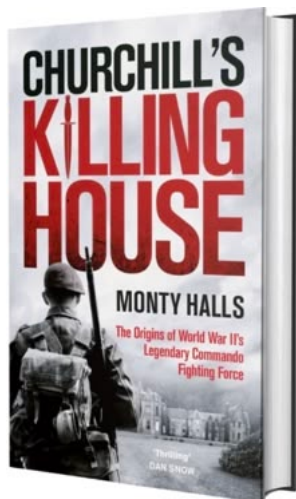
After lunch we all headed back to the Queens Hotel, Southsea, where those that had travelled down that day would be staying the night before embarking for Normandy the following day.'

By Bob Perry: The total cost of the memorial stone was £3,000. General donations from the 47 RM Commando Association membership raised a total of £487, a generous grant of £1,700 was received from The Fishmonger's Company, thanks to John Bennett, £50 was sent from the Shropshire branch of the RMA and £25 from the Normandy Veterans Association. A further donation of £700 was made by Lynne Goldsmith in memory of her father, 47 veteran Ray Gasson.



Books of Interest...

Churchill's Killing House - The Origins of World War II's Legendary Commando Fighting Force by Monty Halls. Published by W H Allen on 7 May 2026. 352 pages, RRP £25. In the summer of 1940, Britain was under siege. Poland, Belgium, Holland, Norway and France had already fallen, and the British army had been routed on the continent, leading to the chaotic

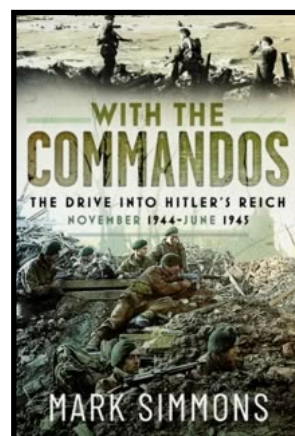


evacuation at Dunkirk. In the rubble of the Allies' crumbled defence, Inverailort House was established as a new symbol of defiance. Signed off by Churchill himself, this austere building became an academy for the brightest and best of all Allied volunteers, where they were transformed from ordinary foot soldiers into a new breed of warrior – the commando. The list of instructors, advisors, and trainees that passed through Inverailort included some of the greatest fighting men of World War II: Lord Lovat, “Mad Mike” Calvert, Freddy Spencer Chapman, Tommy Macpherson, Fairbairn and Sykes, and both David and Bill Stirling, who would go on to form the SAS. *Churchill's Killing House* tells, for the first time, the remarkable human story of those who created a new type of soldier, forged new techniques in battle, and ultimately led the way to Allied victory over fascism.

About the author: Monty Halls is a former Royal Marines Officer who served for over a decade. His subsequent career as an expedition leader, writer, and broadcaster saw his travels continue around the world. He is based in South Devon, where he runs Seadog, an adventure and wildlife production company. His ties to the Royal Marines

remain as strong as ever. He is an ambassador to the RM Charity, supporting their efforts to raise funds for the veteran community.

With the Commandos - The Drive into Hitler's Reich by Mark Simmons. Published by Frontline Books on 28 April 2026. 257 pages, RRP £25. On 4 September 1944, Allied forces and local resistance fighters captured the Belgian port of Antwerp, the largest harbour in Europe. Once opened to Allied shipping, the port would revolutionise the Allies' delivery of supplies into mainland Europe, stores which were still having to make the long overland journey from Normandy and places such as Cherbourg. But to enable this to happen, the Scheldt Estuary and, more importantly, the island of Walcheren also needed to be cleared of Hitler's forces. The task of storming and liberating the heavily defended island of Walcheren was handed to the men of the Commandos. Under Operation Infatuate, the plan was to land Commandos at Westkapelle and Flushing, and have the Canadians push across the Walcheren Causeway. Launched on 1 November 1944, Operation Infatuate was the last and one of costliest Combined Operations attacks of the Second World War in Europe. Such was the bitter nature of the fighting, in one sector alone, out of twenty-eight landing craft deployed, only five survived touchdown.



Despite the Allies' victory, the fighting was far from over for the Commandos. Indeed, a number of them were rushed to help fill the lines during Hitler's Ardennes offensive – the Battle of the Bulge. Despite the urgency of such a move, many of the Commandos felt they were wasted undertaking what they considered to be an infantry task, and should have reverted back to their original raiding role. In fact, the 4th Commando Brigade did find itself on the River Maas line until the end of the war in Europe, while the 1st Commando Brigade was called upon to lead the advance across a number of major rivers into the very heart of Germany. Starting with the mighty Rhine, the Brigade used its specialist amphibious skills as assault troops before advancing on across the Weser, Aller, and Elbe rivers, all of which was only achieved after much hard fighting. *With the Commandos* tells a story which has been largely forgotten, namely that of

the Commandos' role in the last few months of the war in Europe. It was a period when, following D-Day and the Normandy landings and subsequent breakout, these men battled their way into the heart of Third Reich fighting against a fanatical foe.

About the author: Mark Simmons followed his family's tradition of service in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines dating back to the times of Nelson. He served in the 1970's with the Royal Marines in 40 Commando, 3 Commando Brigade HQ and the Commando Logistics Regiment. He has written some 200 feature articles, mainly on naval and military, motoring and travel subjects. He is also the author of thirteen fiction and non-fiction books including a fiction series about a reluctant M15 agent, Rob Nicolson, and two works on Ian Fleming. His interests include quizzes, playing skittles and classic cars; he is a keen member of the Alfa Romeo Owners Club.



Can you help?

Do you know the origin of these two memorial markers?



Left: This metal memorial marker is located at the National Arboretum. Unfortunately the Arboretum has no record when the marker was placed or by whom. It is known that the 47RMCA held its AGM at the NA on 5th March 2005; there is a reference that a wreath was laid but no mention of the marker.

Right: This marker is in the garden adjacent to the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge.

If you have any information then please get in touch with Bob Perry.



The Social Scene...

Londoners didn't quite realise what was happening when Association members hit the capital city for a tremendous weekend at the Mountbatten Festival of Music in the Royal Albert Hall



Minimal sleep was the order of the day during the raucous social activities in the bar 'La Criée du 47ème' following each of our daytime commemorations in Port-en-Bessin



A memorable Black Tie Dinner was held at HMS President, St Katherine Docks, London, on Saturday 11th July 2026. The event location, adjacent to the river Thames and Tower Bridge, was attended by our Life President and President.



Where Did You See Yours?

A selection of Four-Seven images from our readers - keep sending them in!



A roundup of other news...



Dunkirk Anniversary

No mistaking Steve Hignett's allegiances!

'Scheldt' looking good in Ramsgate harbour on the 86th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation



Out and About...

Left: Paddy calling on Ingrid and Fred Fearne in London

Right: Bob and Shirley visiting Sarah Phillips in Essex

Bottom: The Mayor of Port-en-Bessin, Christophe Van Roye, chairing the meeting in March to finalise the program for the Normandy 82nd Anniversary visit



Riding With Giants (Again!)



It seems like escorting the 'Standing with Giants' 1,475 silhouettes is becoming something of an annual pilgrimage for Terry Featherstone. Over 200 motor cyclists escorted four articulated lorries from the UK to the British Normandy Memorial in time for them to be in position for the 82nd anniversary of



D-Day. The 'Standing with Giants' silhouettes will be on display until 19th September 2026. In this third consecutive year, new figures have been created including Beach Masters, Dog Handlers, Royal Navy Officers, Tank Crew, Merchant Navy and Royal Engineers. Terry's full report from last year's escort duties was published in the Summer 2025 edition of *Despatch*.

Are you correctly dressed on parade...?

The Association is pleased to announce the arrival of new shop stock; the ever popular '47' pin badge and a slightly redesigned silk tie. The tie replaces the old polyester version and the wording amended to reflect the correct title of the Commando between 1943 and late 1945. For further information and prices please contact geof.haywood@47rmcommando.org

The quest for a ladies '47' sweetheart type brooch continues with John Prentis leading the design and procurement team!



Blessing of 'PLUTO'

The blessing of the Port-en-Bessin rigid inflatable boat 'PLUTO' took place on 13th June. Geof and Jill Haywood along with Allen Withington and Dave Shorrock ensured the Association was well represented. A strong bond of friendship has been forged between the Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer (SNSM) and 47RMCA following our funding last year of a full set of all weather clothing for a lifeboat crew member.



Above Right: Geof with lifeboat crew member Nicholas Delaune, the great great grandson of Maria and Antoine Langlois, who sheltered and cared for 47 veteran Mark Packer MM when he was wounded during the battle of Port-en-Bessin.

During his speech Stéven Gerard, President of Port-en-Bessin SNSM, said the following:

"...The name is a direct reference to the covert and daring operation of World War II, an absolute technical challenge that involved laying pipelines under the sea to refuel Allied forces from England after the D-Day landings. Cherbourg and Port-en-Bessin were chosen to become oil ports.

By christening our boat PLUTO, we pay tribute to this formidable logistical and maritime epic, but we also adopt its symbol: that of the unbreakable bond, the connection and the passage through the elements to accomplish a vital mission.

Evoking this common memory from this rostrum gives me the particularly moving opportunity to warmly greet the representatives of the 47th Royal Marine Commando Association among us today. It was this heroic commando who, at the cost of immense sacrifices, freed Port-en-Bessin from the Nazi yoke on June 7, 1944. Your presence here today is a reminder that our freedom, like safety at sea, rests on the courage of men and women who are willing to give their lives to save the lives of others. I would like to thank you deeply."

"Some of my Marines - representatives of one of the finest Corps in the world."

(Mr Winston Churchill to Marshal Stalin, referring to the Royal Marine guard paraded for President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin on their arrival for a dinner during the Yalta Conference - 10 February 1945)

Garden Party and Deal Memorial Bandstand Concert

47 RM Commando Association members joined family, neighbours and friends of host John Prentis at a garden party at his home in Kent. The fantastic event of live music, party games, an inflatable pub, good food and beer drinking lasted well into the early hours of the morning. The generosity of all those attending raised a staggering £740 for the RMA - The Royal Marines Charity. BZ John!



The following day the 47 gazebo (marquee when the sides are fitted!) was relocated to a prime position in front of the Deal Memorial Bandstand to experience the Band of HM Royal Marines Memorial Concert and Rededication Service. The bandstand and free-to-attend concert is a living tribute to the eleven Royal Marines Bandsmen who were killed by a terrorist explosion at the barracks in Deal on 22nd September 1989



— Old Comrades —

Peter Phillips (29th March 1942 - 20th December 2025)



Peter Phillips was born during the dark days of the war as his father Colonel CF Phillips was soon to take command of 47 Royal Marine Commando. Peter lost his father at the age of 18 and later in his own life would become the architect of the modern 47 Association. A world traveller and fluent in French, Peter joined the veterans to chair the first meeting in the Netherlands in November 1994. He built many of the relationships with the towns in France and on the island of Walcheren. He was widely-known in France for leading the commemorations impeccably-dressed in a smart suit and sporting a bowler hat. His son Christopher described him as a fabulous dancer and sportsman who set up a bicycle polo club and bowled a mean leg spin in cricket. We owe Peter a great deal, and send our respects to his widow Sarah and their children Christopher and Clare.

Clive Richard Porter (10th August 1952 - 29th December 2025)

Our friend Clive would travel with his father Ken Porter - a RN coxswain who brought men ashore on Juno beach - and they adopted the 47 Association. All of us looked forward to the moment they stepped onto the bus - the banter began at once. Clive was a family man, he loved spending time with his parents, niece and nephew and their families. His niece Zoe tells us, "He always put others first. The most kind and helpful gentleman I've ever known." Clive drove lorries for a living and loved his job. He then took early retirement and became Ken's carer. Together they shared their passion for steam trains with anyone willing to listen. Clive loved spending time at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway watching the engines go by - if not, riding on one. Zoe continues: "He loved to stick his head out the window whilst it was moving. He loved the noise, the smell and the steam. It was like he was reliving his childhood." Clive was a dedicated friend to the veterans and the family members. Rest in Peace.



Richard John Hearn (9th April 1944 - 10th March 2026)



Our friend and loyal Association member Richard Hearn has died at the age of 81. Richard attended for many years in proud support of his wife Jacqui and his father in law the late 47 Veteran and President, Chuck Harris. Chuck always treated Richard as his own son. Richard did the driving from Essex to France and the Netherlands and he also did the jokes with his warm smile greeting all his friends in the Association. He had been a highly-skilled Stone Mason in his career with highlights including work on Buckingham Palace and St Paul's Cathedral. Richard and Jacqui met in their teens and had a long loving marriage of 59 years. They had three children, Stevie, Richard and Richelle and five grandchildren. Richard was a kind, funny and generous man who never put himself out front and we all in the Association send our love and respect to his family.

The Back Page...

Events/Dates/ideas for your diary:

Fécamp - The liberation of Fécamp will be commemorated on Wednesday 2nd September 2026. Members attending normally arrive on the 1st September and depart for the UK on 3rd September. A programme will be issued in due course and circulated to members. To register your interest contact our secretary, Anne-Marie Nicholls at 47rmcsec@gmail.com

Walcheren - As in previous years the Association will block book rooms in the Hotel De Burg in Domburg from Saturday 31st October until Tuesday 3rd November 2026. Outline programme: 1st November - main ceremony at the Polderhuis Museum, Westkapelle; 2nd November - 'Rushing to Flushing' walk and ceremony at the 47 RM Commando memorial, Dishoek; 3rd November - visit Bergen-op-Zoom CWGC Cemetery and depart for the UK. For further information or to book your place please contact Geof Haywood BEM, Events Co-ordinator, at geof.haywood@47rmcommando.org - 07816 284073 or 01202 888194.

Mountbatten Festival of Music 2027 - For this ever popular concert the Association will block booked tickets for the evening performance on Saturday 13th March 2027. Our Treasurer, Allen Withington, has volunteered to organise the block booking of tickets for next years events - if you would like to attend or have any queries then contact him direct at allen.withington@47rmcommando.org

Port-en-Bessin (Normandy) 4th-9th June 2027 - Arrangements have been made with the iBis Hotel, Port-en-Bessin to block book rooms as in previous years. To register your interest contact our secretary, Anne-Marie Nicholls at 47rmcsec@gmail.com

Opening of the new Royal Marines Museum - It is anticipated that the new Royal Marines Museum will become a reality sometime in Summer 2027. To be located in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard it is hoped that the Association will be invited to the official opening. More details will be published when known.

For any other general queries regarding future events please contact Geof Haywood BEM (details above).

Despatch is published bi-annually by the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association. The next edition (Winter 2026/2027) will be published in January.

The editorial team is always pleased to receive articles and/or photographs at anytime. If you have never written for publication before, we can help with advice on how to get started.

Contact: Georgi Nicholls or Bob Perry