

# Despatch





# Despatch

*The Magazine of  
47 Royal Marine Commando Association*



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## Chairman

Bob Perry  
[bob.perry@47rmcommando.org](mailto:bob.perry@47rmcommando.org)

## Vice Chairman

Paddy O'Connell  
[patrick.oconnell@47rmcommando.org](mailto:patrick.oconnell@47rmcommando.org)

## Secretary

Anne-Marie Nicholls  
[anne-marie.nicholls@47rmcommando.org](mailto:anne-marie.nicholls@47rmcommando.org)

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Allen Withington  
[allen.withington@47rmcommando.org](mailto:allen.withington@47rmcommando.org)

## Events Co-ordinator

Geof Haywood BEM  
[geof.haywood@47rmcommando.org](mailto:geof.haywood@47rmcommando.org)

## Membership

Lisa Roberts  
[lisa.roberts@47rmcommando.org](mailto:lisa.roberts@47rmcommando.org)

## Webmaster

Abby Eaton  
[abby.eaton@47rmcommando.org](mailto:abby.eaton@47rmcommando.org)

## Despatch Editor

Georgi Nicholls  
[georgi.nicholls@47rmcommando.org](mailto:georgi.nicholls@47rmcommando.org)

## Historical/Following in the Footsteps Walk

Ken Cowdery  
[ken.cowdery@47rmcommando.org](mailto:ken.cowdery@47rmcommando.org)  
[walk@47rmcommando.org](mailto:walk@47rmcommando.org)

## Standard Bearer

Lou Sartorel  
[lou.sartorel@47rmcommando.org](mailto:lou.sartorel@47rmcommando.org)

## From the Editor...

Hello all,

A very happy New Year to you. I hope you enjoyed the festive period and were able to welcome 2026 in good spirits, surrounded by family, friends, and familiar faces.

This Winter edition of Despatch brings together a wide range of reports, reflections, and photographs that capture the Association's activity over recent months. From acts of remembrance and commemoration, to social gatherings and shared moments along the way, the pages that follow reflect both the history we honour and the community that continues to sustain it.

As always, my thanks go to Bob and the committee for the time, care, and effort that goes into bringing each edition together. This issue is particularly full, and I hope members enjoy taking the time to read through it at their own pace.

Looking ahead, 2026 marks an important year for the Association, with significant anniversaries, events, and opportunities to come together once again. Further details can be found throughout this edition, and I hope to see many of you at forthcoming commemorations and gatherings.

If you have stories, photographs, or ideas you would like to contribute to future editions of Despatch, please do get in touch - we are always pleased to hear from members.

Warmest regards,

*Georgi*

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Front Cover: Colonel Karl Gray RM, Commanding Officer 47 Commando (Raiding Group) Royal Marines and President of the Association, with Regimental Sergeant Major Glyn 'Lukey' Luke RM at the Dishoek Memorial, Walcheren.

## From the Chairman...



A happy New Year to you all. I hope you celebrated the festive season and the start of 2026 in good spirits with family and friends. As we enter the 80th anniversary year of the disbandment of 47 RM Commando, I want to take a moment to reflect on 2025 and thank you all for your tireless contributions over the past twelve months.

2025 was another highly successful year for the Association, with significant commemorations at Kapelsche Veer, Port-en-Bessin, Fécamp and Walcheren, as well as the highly enjoyable Mountbatten Festival of Music weekend in London. The year was rounded off with a long journey north to witness the opening of the Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room at the University of St Andrews, where John qualified as a doctor in 1941 prior to joining the 10th RM Battalion and later 47 RM Commando.

In the current cost-of-living squeeze, I am only too aware of the financial costs incurred with travel and accommodation when following the Association at the many commemorations and events. Your sterling support does not go unnoticed and is very much appreciated. As a token of our thanks, your committee has decided to heavily subsidise the cost of a member ticket for the black-tie dinner in London. It is a small gesture, but one that will help reduce some of the weekend costs involved.

I am delighted that the recently appointed Commanding Officer of 47 Commando (Raiding Group) Royal Marines, Colonel Karl Gray, readily accepted the invitation to become our new President. Despite the high operational tempo of the UK's premier amphibious raiding group, he took time out from his busy schedule to join us in Walcheren. His attendance, along with that of the Adjutant and Regimental Sergeant Major, was much appreciated by all travelling families and supporters. Our thanks and best wishes also go to his predecessor, Colonel Will Norcott, who has moved on to other challenging appointments within the Ministry of Defence.

Following many late keyboard-tapping nights, constant cross-referencing, false dawns and endless tribulations, the new website was finally launched in late November. The site is modern and bright, and will promulgate the latest news while also hosting a wealth of historical information. Please take the time to acquaint yourself with the site and provide feedback on any improvements you believe would benefit the wider membership. As the old website has now been deactivated I would like to formally acknowledge the work of Marc de Bolster, who created and hosted the original site, painstakingly collating hundreds of photographs and details of the many men who served in the Commando. Thank you, Marc, for your outstanding contribution to the Association over many years. As we continue to modernise, communication remains key in any successful organisation, and the Association always has much good news to share. To that end, I am seeking to recruit an individual who would be willing to help keep the Association's Facebook, Instagram and X accounts up to date. If you are keen to assist in this area, please do get in touch.

Finally, a plea from me: if you have not already done so, please ensure that you have joined the Royal Marines Association-The Royal Marines Charity (RMA-TRMC). Full details on how to do so are available on the front page of the new website and are repeated later in this edition of *Despatch*, so there really isn't any excuse.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible during the coming year - if not at our many commemorations or social events, then perhaps at the black tie dinner at HMS President in July to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the disbandment of the Commando and the demobilisation of our veterans. It is sure to be a prestigious and popular event, so please do book early.

*Best wishes,*

*Bob*

## Colonel K D Gray Royal Marines President 47 Royal Marine Commando Association



Colonel Gray joined the Royal Marines Commandos in 1998 following graduation from the University of Liverpool and a brief spell working for a building firm and the NHS. His initial tour of duty as a Troop Commander in 40 Commando RM included amphibious deployments to the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, as well as an operational tour to Northern Ireland. On return to the UK in early 2000, he remained with 40 Commando RM as Assistant Adjutant. He subsequently deployed to the Gulf as Second-in-Command of C Company, and following the attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001, he deployed to Afghanistan. After a short period back in the UK in 2002, he deployed to the USA to conduct joint and combined training with the United States Marine Corps. He remained with 40 Commando RM as a Support Company Troop Commander, deploying to Norway and later returning to the Gulf during operations in Iraq.

In 2005, Colonel Gray was given the privilege of training Young Officers at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines. In early 2007, on promotion to Major, he attended the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land) and was subsequently appointed Officer Commanding Y Squadron in 30 Commando Information Exploitation (IX) Group. During this period, he undertook his second operational tour of Afghanistan with HQ 3 Commando Brigade, before conducting a further sub-unit command as Officer Commanding M Company, 42 Commando RM in 2009. Highlights of this period included amphibious deployments to the USA and a bilateral exercise with the French Marines in France.

After a brief period working for Commander UK Amphibious Forces, supporting the European Union Naval Force effort to combat Somali-based piracy in the Indian Ocean, he deployed to Afghanistan as a battle casualty replacement, serving as Officer Commanding Command Company, 45 Commando RM. Returning briefly to Commander UK Amphibious Forces, he was then assigned as Second-in-Command at 40 Commando RM and subsequently deployed for the fourth time on operations in Afghanistan.

His first significant staff appointment was to the Ministry of Defence Operations Directorate in 2014, where he worked on the Middle East and Near East desk. On selection for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 2015, he was appointed Staff Officer Land Logistics in Navy Command Headquarters, before being short-toured to Mogadishu as part of the multinational effort to develop the Somali National Armed Forces. He was subsequently appointed as the Navy's operational liaison officer to the Permanent Joint Headquarters, before a short-notice appointment saw him head up a Service Inquiry on behalf of the Director General of the Defence Safety Authority.

Colonel Gray assumed command of Royal Marines Reserve Bristol in July 2020 and was later appointed to the Permanent Joint Headquarters, deploying to Eastern Europe in 2023. Since January 2024, he has been employed as a staff officer in Standing Joint Force Headquarters, which saw him deploy to Lebanon and Latvia/Lithuania. Prior to assuming command of 47 Commando (Raiding Group) RM, he deployed as Commanding Officer of Operation Intercharge in Romania.

Married to Kathryn, a radiologist, Colonel Gray has four children. When time permits, he enjoys travelling, spending time with family and friends, mountaineering, water sports, winter sports, walking the family dog and rugby.

# 47 Royal Marine Commando Association

A prestigious black tie dinner to  
commemorate the 80th Anniversary  
of the disbandment of  
**47 Royal Marine Commando**

To be held on

**Saturday 11th July 2026**

**(See the back page for more details!)**

**ROYAL NAVY**



# We're now live!!!!

## [www.47rmcommando.org](http://www.47rmcommando.org)



The new website went live in late November. It is your site so please take a look - feedback (whether good or room for improvement!) and suggestions are most welcome.

Also, when browsing, why not visit the 47 RM Commando Association page on the Royal Marines Association - The Royal Marines Charity website? You can also create your own profile, communicate with all other members and much, much more!

# In Remembrance...

*Fécamp was liberated by 47 RM Commando on 2nd September 1944. Since the end of the Second World War, the people of Fécamp have never forgotten the courage, determination and self sacrifice of their liberators. Each time veterans returned to the town, they were enthusiastically welcomed by dignitaries and townsfolk. That bond of friendship and mutual respect, now extended to veterans' families and friends, continues to the present day.*

*(Photo credits: Guerin Francis)*



Top: The scene at Fécamp Communal Cemetery on 2nd September 2025.

Above left: Paddy O'Connell with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, along with schoolchildren.

Above right: Lou Sartoral parading the 47 RM Commando Association Standard.

Below: The Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur memorial plaque to Major Dennis Walton MC RM, who was killed on 4th September 1944 when the jeep he was travelling in ran over a mine.



*The Association's main remembrance event during this period was Walcheren between 1st and 3rd November. The report below forms the basis of an article submitted to the editor of the *Globe & Laurel* magazine for anticipated publication in the Jan/Feb 26 edition.*

### **They're Still Rushing to Flushing! 47 Royal Marine Commando Association Flying the Corps Flag at Walcheren**

*'In these dunes between 1st and 3rd November 1944, the men of 47 Royal Marine Commando fought fiercely to capture the heavily defended German battery at Dishoek...'*

So read the words engraved on an isolated stone memorial sited amongst the remains of 47 RM Commando's main objective - a formidable and sprawling enemy bunker complex consisting of four large-calibre guns in concrete casements, three anti-aircraft guns, sandbagged machine gun and mortar posts, barbed wire protected trenches and nine pillboxes spread out over 600m along the dunes.



**The scene at the Polderhuis on 1st November**

The memorial also lists the names of the thirty-four men of the Commando who were killed during the landing, the approach march and the final dawn attack.

#### **Commemoration at the Polderhuis**

It was to remember the fallen, and all those involved in Operation Infatuate, that a large gathering of the 47 RM Commando Association membership mustered at the Polderhuis Museum on 1st November to participate in the international ceremony of remembrance.

This year, we were joined by the UK Defence Attaché, Captain Ian Stubbs RN, and Lieutenant Colonel Paul Timmons RM, Liaison Officer in the Netherlands. We were particularly honoured to be supported by Colonel Karl Gray RM, Lieutenant Greg Rhodes RN and Warrant Officer Glyn 'Lukey' Luke RM - the Commanding Officer, Adjutant and Regimental Sergeant Major of the modern day 47 Commando - who took time out from their busy schedules to join us.

Adding reverence to all ceremonies was Lance Corporal Bugler Callum Budden of the CTCRM Band and also Joris Paris, who played a selection of laments and tunes on the bagpipes.

#### **'Rushing to Flushing' Coastal Walk**

The following day marked one of the highlights of the visit: the 'Rushing to Flushing' coastal walk, following the route taken by 47 RM Commando from Erika landing beach at Westkapelle to the link up with No 4 Commando at Flushing (now known as Vlissingen).

At various key points along the route, local historians and Bob Perry talked about the events that took place eighty-one years ago, with Dutch participants also sharing stories of family members who endured such deprivation during the long years of enemy occupation.



Due to the dry but blustery conditions, the group paused at Zoutelande to attend a church service in memory of all those 48 RM Commando personnel killed during the attacks on their objectives. It

was then onwards to attend a poignant service of remembrance at the impressive 47 RM Commando memorial in the dunes at Dishoek.

The walk concluded on the waterfront at Uncle Beach, where wreaths were laid at the memorial honouring all landing craft crews - particularly the Support Squadron Eastern Flank - and at the adjacent No 4 Commando memorial.



*'Rushing to Flushing' walkers examining some of the formidable enemy bunkers along the route*

### **Remembrance and Reflection**

Returning to our comfortable hotel and patrol base in Domburg there was no better way to forget about aching limbs than attendance at our traditional last night dinner. As always, it was a raucous and lively affair attended by the Commanding Officer and Regimental Sergeant Major of 47 Commando and many other invited guests who had contributed much to make the visit so successful. The next morning prior to returning home we visited Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery where many of those who made the ultimate sacrifice at Walcheren and during the later fighting at Kapelsche Veer rest in perpetuity.

The 47 Royal Marine Commando Association remains proud to continue to commemorate this important Corps Memorable Date, and to remember all the units that served alongside, or in support of, Four-Seven.

As well as attending the church service at Zoutelande and laying wreaths at the memorials at Flushing, during the visit respects were also made at the 41 RM Commando memorial at Domburg and at the Serooskerke memorial, in further honour of 48 RM Commando who liberated the town on 8 November 1944 and to the 18 marines and crew of a Buffalo LVT who were killed when their amphibious vehicle struck a mine.



Reuters special war correspondent Arthur Oakeshott:

***“By this time several landing craft were afire and burning fiercely. Then I saw an unforgettable sight - dozens of landing craft bearing hundreds of men wearing green berets - the men of the famous Royal Marines. They were all singing, yes, singing as they went into that hell of fire and shell and flying metal.”***

Commander Kenneth Sellar DSO DSC RN, naval commander Support Squadron Eastern Flank, in his report on the action:

***“There can have been few more gallant actions in Naval history than the way the Support Squadron drew the fire of the formidable German batteries on to itself and provided the assault forces with a comparative safe conduct to the shore...In fact, I decided that if there was signs of batteries selecting incoming landing craft loaded with troops as their primary target, even closer action would be ordered so as to force the Germans to fire on the Support Squadron.”***

Sir Winston Churchill writing about Walcheren in his account of the Second World War:

***“Many other notable feats were performed by Commandos during the war, and though other troops and other Services played their full part in this remarkable operation the extreme gallantry of the Royal Marines stands forth.”***

The following view was expressed by Lieutenant General Guy Simonds, Commander 1st Canadian Army during the 45th anniversary dinner of the opening of the Scheldt at Merchant Taylors' Hall, London, on 28 November 1969:

***“If the assault on Walcheren had failed, it would have been as famous today as the gallant airborne landing at Arnhem.”***

The final words from war correspondent Arthur Oakeshott:

***“As we steamed away from Walcheren, I could see fires here and there on the island and, dotted about the sea, several blazing craft - one burned all night. A wounded Marine Commando officer said to me: ‘Don’t tell them at home that it was easy - it was damned difficult, but we did it - please tell them that.’ ”***

## Remembrance Sunday at the Royal Marines Memorial Gardens

On Remembrance Sunday Bob and Shirley Perry joined Pauline and Malc Harris, Nigel Dobson and Jayne Smith at the 47 Royal Marine Commando memorial in the Royal Marines Memorial Gardens, Eastney, Southsea.



*The following media release from the University of St Andrews describes the opening of the Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room. Bob & Shirley Perry, Paddy O'Connell along with Richard & May Scambler represented 47 RM Commando Association.*

## University honours paediatric pioneer and war hero

On Wednesday 12 November, the Principal joined guests for a moment of history in the School of Medicine: the official opening of the newly named Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room.



*David Forfar (son of Dr John Forfar), Alison Forfar (daughter-in-law), and Dr Colin Forfar (son) with Principal Dame Sally Mapstone and Professor Deborah Williamson, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine*

The dedication honours Dr John Oldroyd Forfar (1916-2013), a pioneering paediatrician, decorated war hero, and alumnus whose life embodied courage, compassion, and service. A graduate of the MBChB degree at St Andrews in 1941, John returned as Senior Lecturer in Child Health from 1948 to 1950, and later earned his MD with commendation in 1958 for groundbreaking research in paediatrics and child health.

But John's story began in extraordinary circumstances. At just 27, he joined the newly formed 47 Royal Marine Commando as a medical officer, landing on Gold Beach during the Normandy invasion. His landing craft struck a mine, forcing him to swim ashore without equipment. Amid devastating losses, he improvised first aid posts and treated dozens of marines, civilians, and even enemy soldiers. His bravery was immortalised in a painting by war artist Leslie Cole, now displayed at the Imperial War Museum, a copy of which will now hang outside the Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room.

Later, during the assault on Walcheren in 1944, John's courage reached its zenith. Under relentless mortar and machine gun fire, he tended to the wounded in the dunes, rescuing his troop commander with a gunshot wound to the head. For this extraordinary act of gallantry, he was awarded the Military Cross.



*Left: John Forfar*

*Right: John Forfar (centre-back) providing first aid. Painting by Leslie Cole (credit IWM)*

After the war, John channeled the same resilience into medicine. He rose to become Professor of Child Life and Health at the University of Edinburgh and consultant physician at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children. His leadership helped shape paediatrics in Britain: as President of the British Paediatric Association and a founding architect of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, he left an indelible mark on the profession.

The naming ceremony was attended by members of the Forfar family, representatives from the Military including the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association, colleagues from the School of Medicine and NHS Fife. Speaking to attendees, Professor Dame Sally Mapstone said: "As we open the doors to the Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room, we do more than dedicate a space. We affirm the values that Dr Forfar embodied: courage in adversity, compassion in practice, and commitment to the betterment of others. May this room be a place where those values are nurtured in every student who studies within it."



*MEDAL DESIGN  
PROPOSAL FRONT*



*MEDAL DESIGN  
REVERSE*

From 2027 onwards, the John Forfar Medal will further extend his legacy, awarded annually to the St Andrews MBChB student who demonstrates outstanding leadership and community engagement. Just as John dedicated his career to improving child health, future recipients will be recognised for advancing health outcomes beyond the classroom.

## Royal Marines Association at Spean Bridge

Pat Roberts and Glynis Prentis, daughters of 47 RM Commando veteran Chuck Harris, joined other RMA members at Spean Bridge in late October for a weekend of remembrance, camaraderie and celebration. The weekend comprised a tour of Achnacarry, Corps Birthday Victory Ball and RMA Parade and Service at the Commando Memorial.

Chuck, who served with 47 RM Commando 1943-1946, was much loved by all in the Association and was its Chairman 2004-2011.

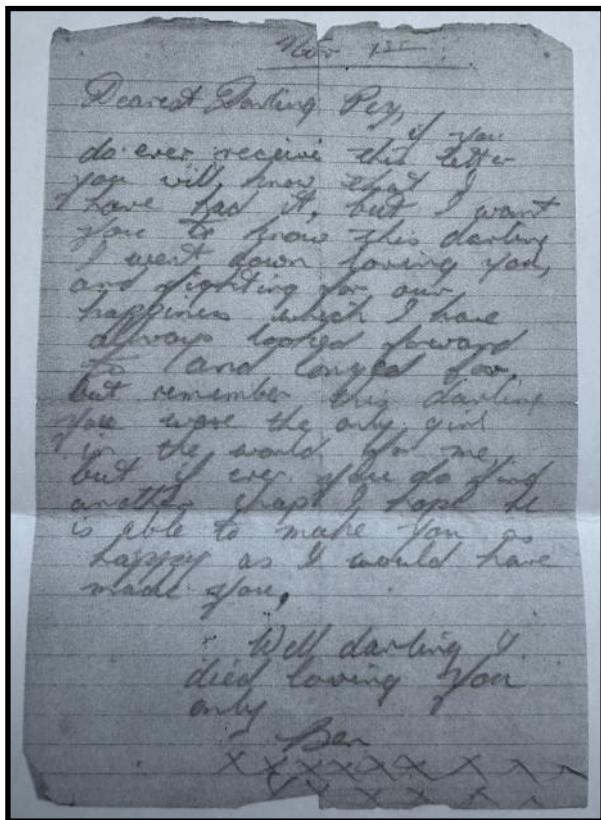


On the eve of the Battle of Walcheren, Marine Benjamin Pry penned a farewell letter to his sweetheart - an exceptionally poignant message containing his final words, expressions of love, and advice to live a full and meaningful life. Although Benny survived Walcheren, he was later mortally wounded at Kapelsche Veer and succumbed to his injuries on 15th January 1945. Following his death, the letter was found among his personal effects and is shared here for the very first time.

## A Farewell Letter to a Sweetheart

by Linda Barry

My mother, Peggy was born in Islington in 1922. During the war, she lived with her sister and worked in a munitions factory, Aircraft Patents Ltd, alongside Benny's sisters - which I believe is how she first met Benny. They became sweethearts and would have married had he survived the war. Sometime after the battle of the Scheldt, my mother was called into the factory office and told to go to Benny's home. She walked there, only to be met with the devastating news that he had died of his wounds. I do not know how much later she received the beautiful letter he had written to her:



If you do ever receive this letter you will know that I have had it, but I want you to know this darling. I went down loving you, and fighting for our happiness which I have always looked forward to and longed for. But remember this darling you were the only girl in the world for me but if ever you do find another chap I hope he is able to make you as happy as I would have made you.

Well darling I died loving you only.

Ben  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXX

My mother's sister's fiancé returned home from the war and they were married. With Benny gone, my mother could not continue living with the newly married couple and moved to Streatham, south London to live with a maiden aunt. She later met my father in 1949 and they married in 1951 - and that is how I became to be born in 1955.

Throughout her life, my mother spoke fondly of Benny's mother and sisters, and of how they made her feel part of their family. She kept the following precious items in her bedside Bible for the remainder of her life: Benny's letter, along with two photographs dated 3rd September 1944, which were kept at the Psalms page inscribed on Benny's headstone at Bergen-op-Zoom.



*The two photographs that my Mum kept in her bedside bible (they were dated 3rd September 1944 so he must have been home on leave). All of these were kept at the Psalms page that is inscribed on Benny's headstone at Bergen-op-Zoom.*



When I realised it was 80 years to the day since Benny was wounded and later died, I felt a strong desire to learn more about the battle and to pay my respects. Standing at Kapelsche Veer and imagining the attack during that dreadful night was an extraordinary and deeply moving experience.

My mother lived into her nineties and was a much-loved mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Remembrance Day was always strictly observed, and she continued to honour her 'sweetheart' who died at the very end of the war.

I am thrilled to have joined the 47 RM Commando Association and thank you for making me feel so welcome. I will continue to remember Benny, as will my daughters and grandchildren who have followed my journey to Kapelsche Veer and to his grave at Bergen-op-Zoom.

*By Bob Perry: I am most grateful to Linda for sharing this deeply personal and poignant letter, along with the accompanying photographs. Linda was able to join us during the recent visit to*

*Walcheren and revisited Benny's grave at Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery. On Remembrance Sunday, the letter was featured during the BBC Radio 4 live coverage of the Cenotaph ceremony, hosted by our very own Paddy O'Connell.*

*The following article missed the deadline to be included in the Summer 2025 edition of Despatch (extra parade that man!). It is another fascinating tale of what our more adventurous members get up to outside the main 47 RM Commando Association events. Please continue to share your 'off-piste' activities and stories!... Ed.*

The 85th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation, also known as Operation Dynamo, was commemorated last year with a special crossing by the 'Association of Dunkirk Little Ships'. A large fleet of boats of all shapes and sizes, including some of the actual vessels involved in the 1940 rescue, sailed from Ramsgate to Dunkirk on 21st May 2025 to honour the 338,000 soldiers evacuated. Association member Mac McGlynn was onboard one of the vessels involved and describes his experiences.

## **The Voyage of the Salutation: A Modern Pilgrimage to Dunkirk**

**by Mac McGlynn**



They say the sea doesn't care about your plans. Over two weeks in May, aboard the newly renovated *Salutation*, our crew learned the profound truth in that old adage. This wasn't just a coastal cruise; it was a pilgrimage to Dunkirk - a voyage to honour the little ships and the men they saved 85 years ago. It tested our boat, our skills, and our stomachs, but it's a journey none of us will ever forget.

### **Leg 1: Hull to Grimsby - A Baptism of Fire (and a Man overboard!) Thursday 15th - Friday 16th May**

After months of hard graft by Kev and Mike, *Salutation* was finally ready for sea, though her crew was still getting acquainted. A couple of days of river trials hardly counted as shakedown, so we left Hull Marina with a mix of excitement and trepidation.

The first day was a gift. With a fair tide pushing us along at times, spirits were high as we made for our first stop at Spurn Point. The anchorage there, however, proved anything but peaceful, rolling us uncomfortably. After a quick crew conference, we opted for the safer haven of Grimsby.

Berthing this big girl was our first real challenge. After several attempts, we edged close enough for Mike to attempt a leap for the wharf - only for the boat to drift away at the crucial moment, leaving him briefly dangling over a cold drink. A quick grab saved him a dunking, and we hauled him back aboard, dry but wiser. Man overboard, panic over.

We celebrated our first day with a hot chilli, a few beers, and a firm lesson in humility.

Friday's early start from Grimsby was fuelled by ambition - our goal was Lowestoft. The weather gods had other ideas. Once clear of the Humber's lee, we were met with a full-day battering. *Salutation* became the 'vomit comet', with most of the crew incapacitated.

As light faded and the sea built, Lowestoft became impossible. We turned instead for Wells-next-the-Sea, but the tide was against us. Marina's advice was sobering: "Stay out." So we did, riding out a noisy, stressful night at anchor off Blakeney, serenaded by clattering rigging and the whistle of the wind.

### **Leg 2: Breakdowns and Breakthroughs to Ramsgate Saturday 17th - Monday 19th May**

Saturday brought a better sea and renewed resolve to press on for Lowestoft. Just as we found our rhythm, a loud **BANG** echoed through the boat - the main halyard had parted, dropping the sail neatly onto the boom. Under genoa sail and engine, we limped into Lowestoft, where I had the dubious pleasure of a mast climb to retrieve the wayward shackle.



Sunday taught us lessons in bridge timings and the perils of new sails. An early start was wasted waiting for two stubbornly out-of-sync bridges to open. Later, in light winds, we attempted to fly a gennaker for the first time. After much trial and error, we conceded it was more trouble than it was worth. To compound matters, the genoa's stitching began to fray.

Under engine again, we pressed on into the night, finally picking out the harbour lights of Ramsgate against the shore glow after 2230 hours. Another twelve-hour day left us shattered.



Monday saw us playing a high-stakes game of chicken with Channel freighters and ferries during our crossing to Dunkirk. Conditions worsened as we approached the French coast, the sea churning unpleasantly until we could finally turn into the calm of the marina. A hot Flemish stew and a secure berth never felt so good.

### ***The Heart of the Voyage: Dunkirk Remembered***

**Tuesday 20th - Thursday 22nd May**

This was why we came.

Throughout Tuesday, the flotilla of little ships arrived - a humbling and powerful sight, knowing that many of these vessels had answered the call 85 years earlier to rescue an army from the beaches.

We spent the following days soaking up the atmosphere, exploring the marina, and paying our respects. On Wednesday, we explored Dunkirk itself and watched the arrival of Prince Michael of Kent. The museum is a must-visit for anyone wishing to understand the scale of the 'miracle.'

Thursday marked the main ceremony at the war graves. Standing there, surrounded by local children and dignitaries, the weight of history was palpable. We were no longer just sailors on a voyage - we were part of a living tradition of remembrance.



### ***The Home Run: A Battle All the Way***

**Friday 23rd - Thursday 29th May**

The forecast for the return crossing was grim, and smaller boats that ventured out soon turned back. We set off cautiously, finding conditions better than feared and made a good passage to Ramsgate.

But Salutation wasn't done testing us. En route to Lowestoft, both the Genoa and mainsail tore within an hour of each other. Defeated, we returned to Ramsgate, where a miracle-working sailmaker repaired both overnight.

Monday's second attempt was a tale of two passages: a glorious sail for most of the day, followed

by a brutal, slow-motion struggle over the final ten miles as weather and tide turned against us. We crawled into Lowestoft after 2115 hours, exhausted.

A weather delay revealed a tired but friendly town with welcome respite provided by the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club. When we finally departed, the North Sea had one last challenge in store - lobster pots off Cromer demanding constant vigilance, followed by a gusty passage that cost us another halyard.

After a rough sail up the Humber and no space at Grimsby, we pressed on. At 2030 hours, opened clock gate for us. In a final, fitting grace note, we executed our best berthing manoeuvre of the entire voyage. Waiting on the pontoon were our families.

The Voyage of the Salutation was over.

From the 15th to the 29th of May, we faced adversity, repaired breakdowns and sailed in the wake of giants. It was a great adventure, a series of challenges overcome, and a fitting tribute to the heroes of Operation Dynamo.

**Eighty-Five years on, we remember them.**

*By Editor: Mac originally joined the British Army's 131 Commando Squadron Royal Engineers in 1983 and was awarded his Green beret after successfully completing the All Arms Commando Course. He subsequently decided to transfer to the Royal Marines the following year. He served in a variety of commando and other operational units prior to retirement in 1991.*

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### **Did you know?**

**The Royal Marines have a dedicated chapel located within the Church of St Lawrence Jewry (next to the Guildhall), a historic Guild Church serving the City of London.**



**Originally established in 1941 as 'The Tower Chapel', it was affiliated to the Royal Marines in 1974. The Chapel is dedicated to serving and veteran members of the Corps and is open to all for quiet and private prayer.**

# The social scene...

Following a long day on the road attending numerous commemoration events our late veterans enjoyed nothing better than gathering in the bar each evening with beer in hand. They trained us well and we are only too happy to continue the tradition!

**Fécamp - some things never change!**

**'The famous Bénédictine factory in Fécamp had apparently been well used by the Germans and was now anxious to establish its bona fide with the British overlords. Somehow one of the medical boxes seemed to have been designed for the shape of Bénédictine bottles!'**

(John Forfar - 'From Omaha to the Scheldt')



**Walcheren - whether in the Hotel De Burg bar, Kafé Domburg, Steaker restaurant, El Fuego Mexican or Ristorante Verdi, there was plenty of time to get to know each other...**



***St Andrews - on a dark, cold, wet and windswept evening in Dundee we still managed to brave the elements...***



***Ramsgate - Mac McGlynn and the crew of Salutation were glad to reach terra firma where they were joined by Steve Hignett.***

**And finally, in November family and friends visited Sue Lord at Gerrards Cross. Many photographs were forwarded to the editor for publication - unfortunately the images below were the only ones deemed suitable for inclusion in a family publication...**



# *In the news - the stories making the headlines...*

## **Memorial garden gates**

The new memorial garden gates, generously funded by the Mayor's office, were recently fitted to replace those that were damaged beyond repair during last winter storms. I'm sure you will agree the gates look fantastic. Thank you to Alex Wilson, our resident reporter in Port-en-Bessin, for forwarding the images below.



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## **The Corps Family weekend at the Commando Training Centre**



*Geof and Jill Haywood set up the 47 RM Commando Association shop at the Corps Family weekend at CTCRM 13th-14th September. With the photographs of our late veterans on display the stall was a popular attraction for the hundreds of RMA members and recruits who attended the weekend, including the 1st Sea Lord and Commandant General Royal Marines, General Sir Gwyn Jenkins KCB OBE ADC.*

*Geof commented: "It was a very long day - much stock was sold but more importantly, being able to tell the story of 47 Royal Marine Commando to the current generation of Royal Marines made it all worthwhile."*

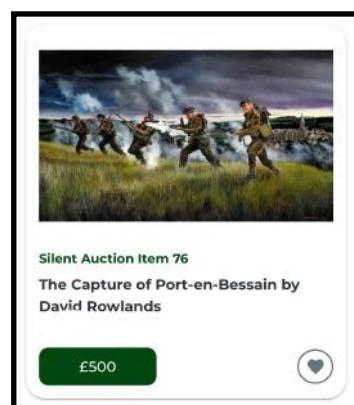
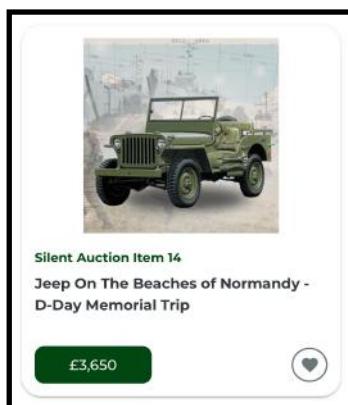
## The RMA charity fundraising event at the Guildhall

The annual RMA-The Royal Marines Charity fundraising auction at the Guildhall Dinner on Thursday 13th November raised an extraordinary £1.1 million, with pledges of support still coming in. The 47 RM Commando Association was pleased to contribute to the overall amount with the following items offered in the silent auction:

**Lot 14** - Offered by Paddy O'Connell, was an opportunity for three persons to travel by WW2 jeep on the sacred sands of the D-Day beaches. The winning bid was £3,650.

**Lot 65** - Offered by the 47 RM Commando Association, a framed copy of a map carried by Corporal Edward (Ted) Cox on D-Day. The item, expertly crafted by Ted's son, Martin Cox, was also personally signed by Christian Lamb, a former Women's Royal Naval Service officer, now in her 105th year. Christian served in the mapping section at Combined Operations HQ in Whitehall. The final bid raised £3,000.

**Lot 76** - Although not associated with the Association, a copy of the David Rowlands painting signed by several of our veterans raised an impressive £500.



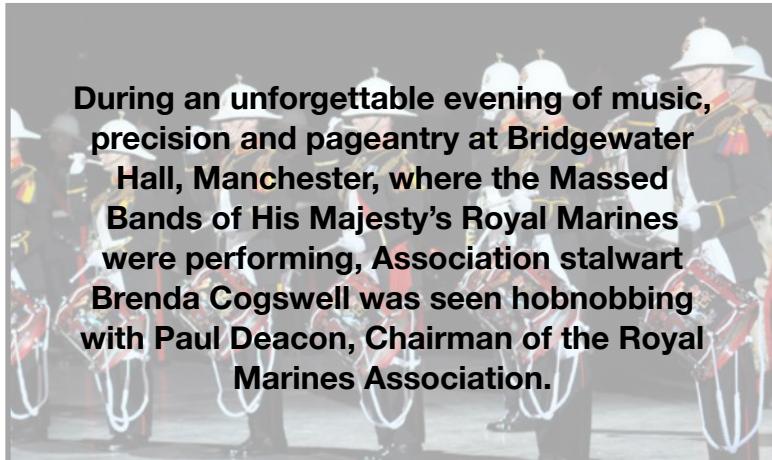
## The John Prentis Emporium & Gift Company



*Former chairman, entrepreneur and greengrocer of repute John Prentis was on hand at Walcheren to present his latest gifts to all those attending the last night dinner and other deserving individuals! At the Tourist Church, Dishoek, he presented Marianne de Veen a gift tin of 47 RM Commando chocolates and congratulated her on the award of the Dutch Order of Orange Nassau for her voluntary work, including the hosting of our veterans and members over many years.*



## Friends in high places...



## Friends in sunny places...



During a recent break on the French Riviera, Dave Shorrock and Allen Withington watched the sun set with the former Mayor of Port-en-Bessin Pierre-Albert Cavey and his wife Beatrice along with the Deputy Mayor of Fécamp Pierre Aubrey and wife Sophie.

## Lou Sartorel reselected as the RMA National Standard Bearer

Huge congratulations to Lou on being selected as the RMA National Standard Bearer for the second year running. The selection process took place at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines during the RMA Families weekend in September. The competition demands precision, strength, and an unwavering commitment to upholding military traditions. Other key aspects are: Flag Etiquette and Protocol, Uniform Inspection and Drill Performance. During the competition, Lou's ability to maintain composure under pressure, his attention to detail and overall standout performance were key factors that set him apart from his fellow competitors and secured his victory once again.



## Presentations



47 RM Commando Association Life President, Admiral the Rt Hon Lord West of Spithead GCB DSC PC, was recently presented with his Royal Marines Association honorary membership card by Bob Perry.

The occasion was also an opportunity to lunch with Admiral Alan and bring him up to date with all Association matters. He sends his best wishes to the membership and hopes to see many of you in 2026.

The photo, taken in Westminster, London, was captured by Paddy O'Connell.



Right: Bob Perry presenting a 47 RM Commando Association plaque to Gepko Prenger, owner of the De Burg Hotel, Domburg, Holland. The hotel, conveniently located close to many bars and restaurants, is now firmly established as the Association's comfortable 'patrol base' during our stay for the Walcheren commemorations.

Above right: The '47' sign which is displayed in the front window of the hotel.

Above left: This year's commemoration events were supported by many familiar faces but also by several members who were joining us for the first time.



## How to join the Royal Marines Association - The Royal Marines Charity

In 2023 the 47 RM Commando Association (47RMCA) membership overwhelmingly voted in favour of the proposal to become a virtual<sup>1</sup> branch of the Royal Marines Association - The Royal Marines Charity (RMA-TRMC). The RMA Membership Committee approved our application on 8 December 2023 and the 47RMCA is now able to fully access the support, facilities, events and funding that the RMA-TRMC is able to offer<sup>2</sup>

As a condition of becoming a RMA branch, all that was required, for those of you who were not already a member, was that you join the RMA, which is also mandated in the 47RMCA Constitution. Joining the RMA is simple and will not cost you anything - there is no joining or annual fee! In brief, there are three categories of membership:

- **Full Member** - Anyone who serves or has served in the Royal Marines or in a RM Unit or filled a Line Number in a RM Unit, regardless of length of service or colour of uniform.
- **Associate Member** - Anyone who is the parent, spouse/civil partner or child of a Full Member; this can be extended to grandparents or carers who have raised the Royal Marine, and grandchildren being raised by the former Royal Marine. Must be Sponsored by a Full Member.
- **Supporter Member** - For those who do not have a direct relation to a Royal Marine.

The overwhelming majority of the 47RMCA membership will become either Associate or Supporter Members. Please do not delay in applying to join the RMA - the link below will take you to the appropriate webpage:

<https://rma-trmc.org/membership/>

For those of you unable to apply via the webpage, please call the RMA Membership Office Tel: 023 9298 1922 or Email: [membership@rma-trmc.org](mailto:membership@rma-trmc.org) where the friendly staff will be only too pleased to assist.

The 47RMCA Membership Co-ordinator is also able to provide advice and guidance as necessary: [lisa.roberts@47rmcommando.org](mailto:lisa.roberts@47rmcommando.org)



<sup>1</sup> A virtual branch means a branch which comprises a particular specialist type, nature or description, including RMA members located outside the UK, and who have a common interest but which is not geographically located.

<sup>2</sup> The 47RMCA has already benefitted from generous grants from the RMA-TRMC to help offset the cost of several of our formal events.

# ***The Back Page...***

## **Events/Dates/ideas for your diary:**

**Mountbatten Festival of Music 2026** - The Association has block booked tickets for the evening performance on Saturday 21st March 2026. Geof has distributed the tickets - if you have any queries then please contact him direct.

**Normandy** - Bob and Geof will be travelling to Port-en-Bessin 3rd-5th March to meet with the Mayor and his team to firm up this year's programme of events between 6th and 8th June. Draft outline programme: 6th June - Commemoration service at Asnelles followed by 'In the footsteps of 47 Commando' walk to Port-en-Bessin following the route taken by the Commando Eighty-Two years ago; 7th June - Main commemorative service in the Memorial Garden on the Western Feature followed by a reception in the Salle des fete; 8th June - AGM and last night dinner.

As in previous years the Association has reserved ten rooms in the iBis hotel. If you require this accommodation then please contact the hotel direct: [h6865@accor.com](mailto:h6865@accor.com) stating that you are a member of the Association.

**80th Anniversary Black Tie Dinner** - To mark the 80th anniversary of the disbandment of 47 RM Commando, the Association will be holding a prestigious black-tie dinner at HMS President in London on Saturday 11th July 2026. This promises to be a memorable evening of commemoration, camaraderie and celebration, bringing members and supporters together to honour both our history and our continuing Association. Your committee has secured exclusive use of the Wardroom and outside deck area of HMS President, situated on the northern bank of the River Thames near Tower Bridge. Places are limited, and members are encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment. Further details on ticket prices, booking arrangements and payment information can be found on page 31.

**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.

**Walcheren** - As in previous years the Association will block book rooms in the Hotel De Burg in Domburg 31st October - 3rd November. 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.

Further information for all the above events is available from Geof Haywood BEM, Events Co-ordinator, at [geof.haywood@47rmcommando.org](mailto:geof.haywood@47rmcommando.org) - 07816 284073 or 01202 888194.

**Despatch is published bi-annually by the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association. The next edition (Summer 2026) will be published in July.**

**The editorial team is always pleased to receive articles and/or photographs at anytime.**

**Contact: Georgi Nicholls or Bob Perry**



## 47 Royal Marine Commando Association

By kind permission of the  
Commanding Officer HMS President

A prestigious black tie dinner to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the  
disbandment of 47 Royal Marine Commando

**Saturday 11th July 2026**

Wardroom HMS President  
St Katherine's Way  
London  
E1W 1UQ

**Tickets:**  
Member price £47.00 each\*  
Non-Member price £150.00

(Includes three-course meal, wines and port)

**For online bank transfer payments:**

**Sort Code: 30-97-12**

**Account No: 03793869**

**Reference: Payer's Name + Dinner**

**To reserve your place contact:**

**[allen.withington@47rmcommando.org](mailto:allen.withington@47rmcommando.org)**

*\* The discounted price applies to attendees who are registered members of both the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association and the Royal Marines Association-The Royal Marines Charity.*