

Despatch



 THE
**ROYAL
MARINES
CHARITY**

Summer 2025



Despatch

The Magazine of
47 Royal Marine Commando Association



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From the Editor...

Hello all,

I'm finally surfacing after a whirlwind few months finishing my master's degree. It's been full-on, but I'm happy to say that all the hard work is starting to pay off - and I'm officially on my way to becoming a qualified therapist (no unsolicited woes just yet though, unless you're planning to pay me hourly 😊). Now that the dust is settling, I'm looking forward to getting properly stuck into my role as editor of the Despatch.

Massive thanks to Bob, our brilliant chairman, for keeping hold of the reins while I've been buried under deadlines. This edition is packed - over 30 pages of updates, stories, news and community contributions - and I hope you enjoy every bit of it.

As many of you know, my connection to 47 Commando is through my grandad, and it's a real privilege to carry on this legacy alongside my mum and the wider association. The strength of this community is something I've always admired, and I'm excited to be part of keeping it alive and thriving in the years to come.

If you've got ideas for future articles, stories, or anything you'd love to see in Despatch, please don't hesitate to get in touch - either with me or with Bob. We'd love to hear from you.

There's lots to look forward to, and I'm proud to be on board.

Warmest regards,

Georgi

Cover: Bob & Shirley Perry with Kelly Heathfield at the Kapelsche Veer memorial following the 80th Anniversary commemorations on 31st January 2025.

From the Chairman...



It is often said that the first year in a new role in any organisation is exciting and challenging - a chance to show what you can offer, review existing procedures and set the style for the future. This has certainly been true of my time so far as we became accustomed to life without our beloved veterans, improved our own internal practices and administration, strengthened our relationship with the RMA-The Royal Marines Charity and the serving Corps, especially 47 Commando (Raiding Group) RM.

It has certainly been a busy 12 months; for me the highlights were the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Fécamp and hosting Elizabeth Walton, daughter of Major Dennis Walton MC RM, the first time that she has visited her father's grave; persuading the First Sea Lord to be part of the commemorations at Walcheren; the unforgettable dinner on Nelson's flagship, HMS Victory; the 80th anniversary of the battle of Kapelsche Veer; hosting Stéphane and Nathalie Pitel in London at the Mountbatten Festival of Music; and, of course, our recent return to Port-en-Bessin and the parading and dedication of the new standard. The Association's global reach was amply demonstrated by Nicola Lloyd, daughter of Captain Roger Lloyd RM, travelling from her home in South Africa to visit Normandy for the first time and also welcoming back from New Zealand, David Cousins who we all know so well.

We now have a full committee of dedicated volunteers (one based in the USA), a healthy blend of veterans' family members, retired Royal Marines and a sprinkling of like-minded civilian players who bring much to the well-being and future of the Association - all of our contact details can be found on the editorial page so do not hesitate to get in touch!

On the administrative front I am delighted to report that the Association's application to the Microsoft Social Impact Programme was successful. This has resulted in *gratis* access to MS technical support and products, named email addresses, a much increased mailbox capacity and unlimited use of the MS Teams video conference facility. Elsewhere, the revised constitution was approved at the AGM, a membership information pack will be available on the new website, our treasurer is working on a five-year rolling financial plan and the intricacies of subscriptions versus voluntary donations is being championed by our membership co-ordinator (see page 31). You will also have noticed some initial cosmetic changes to the layout of *Despatch* as we aim to move from a newsletter to a community magazine style format. So, exciting times lay ahead and there is much to look forward to.

However, it's not been all plain sailing: the new website is taking much, much longer to launch than initially anticipated - our commercial web services company have experienced persistent problems with porting 'The Men' information and photographs across from the old website - plus, at the AGM, some disquiet was expressed that the Association's identity could be at risk due to our closer involvement with the RMA, especially during the Port-en-Bessin commemorations. We are working hard to eliminate the technical gremlins of the website and I fully understand membership concerns regarding the latter - please be assured the website will soon be live and Four-Seven members, especially veterans' families, will be front and centre at all future events.

As always, I thank you all for your individual and collective support, encouragement and advice during my first year in the chair. I would especially like to thank our hard working committee for ensuring that the 47 RM Commando Association remains a beacon for best practice, and for continuing to preserve the memory and high achievement of our veterans - all part of the greatest generation that ever lived.

Best wishes,

Bob

In Remembrance...

The 80th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of Kapelsche Veer

Kapelsche Veer is not a place that the Association visits too often therefore it was extremely important that we were represented at the 80th anniversary commemorations on 31st January, the date that the Dutch consider to be the end of the relatively short but bloody battle for a small bridgehead on the River Maas.

The dignified and moving ceremony was hosted by the mayor of Waalwijk, Sprang-Capelle and Waspik, Ms Sacha Ausems, and attended by the ambassadors of Norway and Poland along with military representatives from Holland, Belgium and Canada. Unfortunately, the British Embassy was unable to provide anyone to attend. However, Bob Perry laid the huge floral wreath provided by the local municipality on behalf of the Embassy and Kelly Heathfield laid the 47 RM Commando Association wreath. As an added honour Bob was also asked to deliver the Exhortation on behalf of all those who made the ultimate sacrifice eighty years ago.

On completion of the ceremony we moved to the community centre for hot refreshments and an opportunity to personally thank representatives from Stichting V.O.G.W, the Friends of the Allied War Graves, Waalwijk and surrounding districts Foundation, who with the most respectful reverence tend the graves of Lieutenant Ian Adam RM and Marine William Stovell, whose final resting places are at Sprang-Capelle General Cemetery and Werkendam Protestant Cemetery respectively.

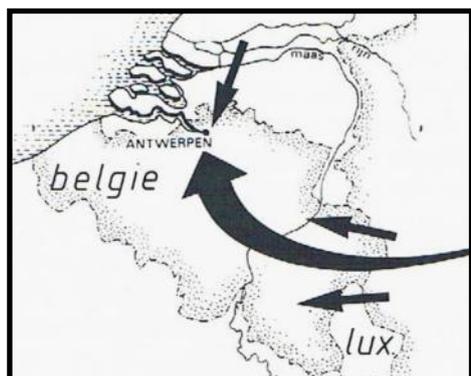


The Battle for Kapelsche Veer

Most of the membership will be familiar with 47 RM Commando's battle actions at Port-en-Bessin and Walcheren. Perhaps what is not as well known is that during the harsh winter of early 1945, the Commando was involved in another fierce and bloody battle to overcome a tiny German bridgehead on the River Maas in Holland. Ultimately, the Allies triumphed, but the victory came at a high price.

Kapelsche Veer island is a segment of low-lying land between the main course of the River Maas, or Bergsche Maas, and a much narrower tributary known as the Oude Maas. The island is about 8 kilometres long and 1.5 kilometres across at its widest point. Along the rim of this bleak countryside ran a 3-metre high dyke that protected the island from the strong river currents and floods. A track ran along the tops of the dyke. The land was very flat, treeless and didn't afford much cover from view. In winter the soil was wet, muddy and prone to flooding, making movement difficult. Only the hard packed earth of the dyke was good for tactical movement.

Following Walcheren, the German counter attack in the Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge) caused 47 RM Commando, reinforced by No 5 (Norwegian) Troop from 10 (Inter Allied)

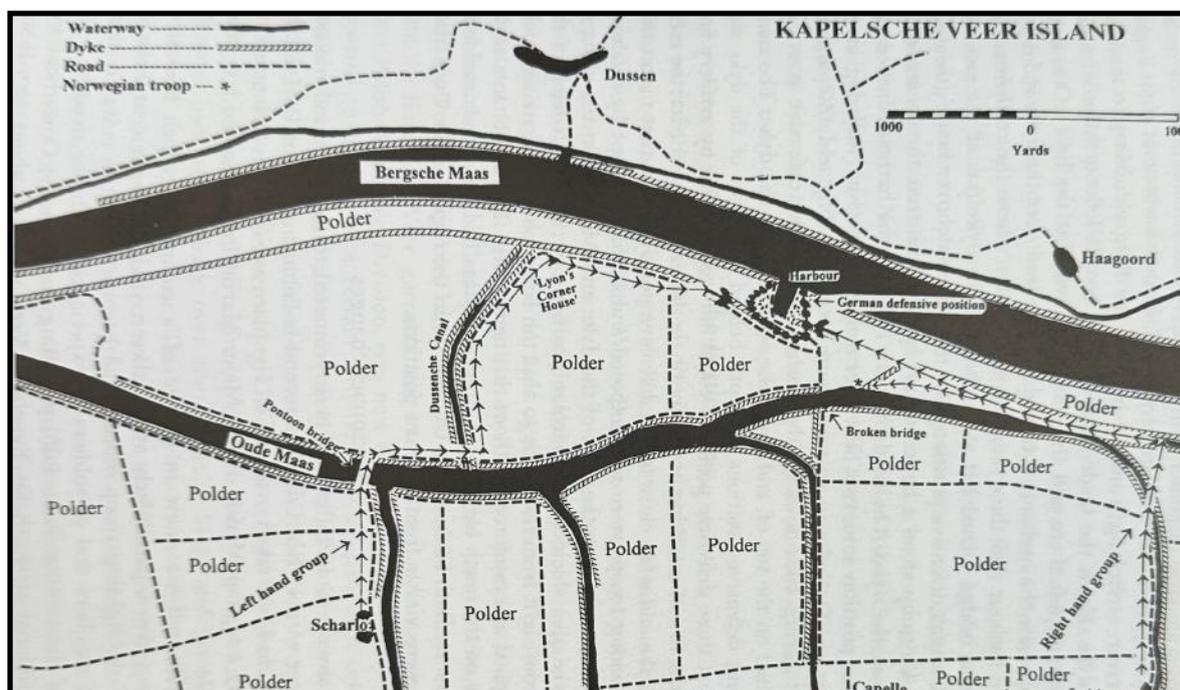


Commando, to be sent to strengthen the defensive line along the River Maas held by 1st British Corps. On the night of 13th January, the Commando was ordered to attack the German garrison defending a riverine crossing/ferry point on the north side of the island. The defending troops came mostly from the German 6th Parachute Division and were young and fanatical. In preparation to reinforce the Ardennes offensive the paratroopers had converted the island into a network of trenches and bunkers almost impervious to artillery shelling.

Above: The Ardennes Offensive took place between 16th December 1944 and 25th January 1945. It was launched through the densely forested Ardennes region between Belgium and Luxembourg with the aim to stop the Allied use of the Belgian port of Antwerp and split the Allied armies. Note the potential route across the crossing point at Kapelsche Veer to reinforce the main assaulting German army.

The German bridgehead was a major annoyance to the 1st Polish Armoured Division that guarded the sector. A first patrol on 28th and 29th December 1944 yielded nothing, except ten Polish wounded. The first serious attack on 30th December (Operation MOUSE) ended in a bloody fiasco for the Polish troops. The flat, snowy polder landscape offered no cover and the attempt left 48 dead and wounded to mourn. The second major Polish attack, on 7th January 1945, also failed, with 123 dead and wounded.

It was against this bleak backdrop that 47 RM Commando and the Norwegian troop commenced their attack (Operation HORSE) on the night of 13th January. A bitterly cold, heavy frost carpeted the ground and artillery was shelling the defensive positions. Q troop, together with attached Norwegians, launched an assault attacking the right flank, while a main force of A, B, X and Y troops attacked on the left flank. The only possible means of approach to the enemy position was along the base of the dyke from the east or west.



Above: Map of Kapelsche Veer showing the island and the routes taken by 47 RM Commando on 13th January 1945 (Reproduced from 'From Omaha to the Scheldt')

The first phase, crossing the Oude Maas, was accomplished with difficulty as the heavy ice flow made it very difficult to get boats across. On the way to the forming up position, A Troop who were leading ran into a small enemy outpost which was eliminated. By 1am both groups were in position and the code-word was given for the simultaneous attacks to commence from both flanks. However, the enemy were determined to hold out and brought down withering machine gun and mortar fire inflicting heavy casualties on the marines and Norwegian troops. The bitter hand-to-hand fighting endured throughout the night and, shortly before dawn, when its ammunition was running low, it was obvious that the well defended position could not be taken by a small lightly armed force in a night attack, and the order to withdraw was given. 47 RM Commando casualties numbered forty-nine including eight killed. No 5 (Norwegian) Troop suffered four killed and seventeen wounded, a 50% casualty rate. An estimated 140 Germans were thought to have been killed and wounded during the night.

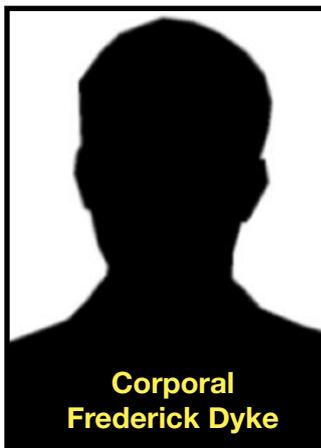
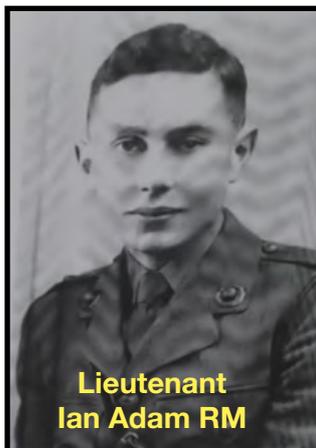
Kapelsche Veer was eventually seized a fortnight later by brute force from elements of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division supported by tanks and armoured vehicles, but despite the superior force it took four days of fighting for the last German soldiers to withdraw across the River Maas. Operation ELEPHANT - another upgrade from the names of the previous operations - was therefore an appropriate name for this large scale attack which cost a further 350 allied casualties.

In all, nearly 1100 men of both sides were killed, wounded or missing in the snows of Kapelsche Veer during a month of heavy fighting over a minuscule bridgehead.

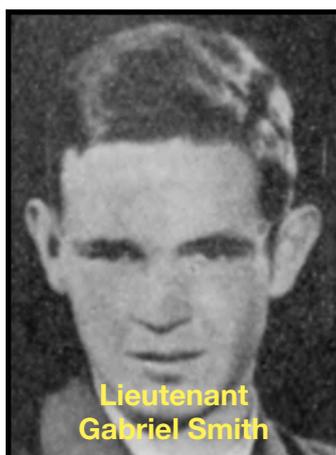
(For further reading a detailed account of the planning, battle and aftermath of Kapelsche Veer can be found in 'From Omaha to the Scheldt' (Chapter Twelve: The Battle for Kapelsche Veer - Death on the Dyke)).

Battle for Kapelsche Veer Roll of Honour

47 Royal Marine Commando



No 5 (Norwegian) Troop - 10 (Inter Allied) Commando



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

Port-en-Bessin 2025

by Anne-Marie Nicholls

As the stormy grey skies gathered in Port-en-Bessin this June for D-Day 81 commemorations, so did the representatives and members of 47 RM Commando Association under cover of their brollies! Lucky for us we weren't facing a deadly enemy determined to stop our advance; in fact on the 6th June 2025 in Asnelles our group and those of us partaking 'In the Footsteps of 47 Commando' march were welcomed not with a battery of guns but a battery (well, a very gentle battery!) of media in the form of Vice-Chairman Paddy O'Connell, son of Captain Guy O'Connell, who was commentating the event live for the BBC. Paddy interviewed our own Kelly Heathfield who piped off the walkers at the start of their journey, and our Chairman Bob Perry. This represented quite an historic moment for our association as even though our veterans have now all sadly passed, what they helped to achieve can still command national interest and retain the memory of their unique contribution to the end of the hostilities.

The main ceremony of remembrance later that day takes place in Bayeux War Cemetery.



Phil and I arrived a little early to witness part of the local commemoration ending with a school choir singing an emotional presentation of 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'; so beautiful, and a reminder that in these extremely uncertain times hope has never been more needed. The beautifully kept graves of Bayeux are a credit to those responsible for their impeccable plants and structures. Some years after the war my dad was a grave digger, and then groundsman, at local churches in Salford when I was a child. I loved it when he took me to work with him on a Saturday morning so that I could flit under the drooping willows and shady oaks. Consequently, I have always found graveyards to be tranquil places. Bayeux emits this quality like a huge cupped hand cradling the sleep of those at rest.

Above: Bayeux CWGC Cemetery - Below: Nicola Lloyd pointing to a photo of her father.

Around early evening time the welcome sound of Kelly's pipes leading the 47 walkers home at the end of their trek can be heard. She leads the walkers into town and finishes outside of what has been our '47 home' for many years with Stéphane and Nathalie at Bar de la Criée du 47ème. At this point the walkers' pressing requirement tends toward liquid refreshment. It would have been rude of us, after waiting for them, not to participate in recognition of their effort and well-earned thirst!



7th June Port-en-Bessin commemorations are special to the 47 RM Commando Association and begin at the Eastern feature with the Captain Terence Cousins memorial, this year attended by the niece and nephew of Terence Cousins; Essie and David. David takes this year's prize for the most well-travelled of our group after his epic journey from New Zealand to Normandy. He was in good company this year as also in attendance, and for the first time, was Nicola Lloyd, daughter of Captain Roger Lloyd of B Troop, who had travelled from South Africa to honour her father and meet us all.

The second event on our itinerary the morning of the 7th June took place in lashings of rain on the Western feature. This year Lou, our standard bearer, had been proudly displaying our splendid new standard and that morning, in a very touching ceremony, our old, much loved standard was retired and respectfully carried away by Madame Laurence Scoupe who has previously borne the 47 standard on our behalf. The commemorations finalised at the Place Georges Seurat car park where we remember the French personnel lost in the war. At the conclusion of the ceremonies Mayor Christophe Van Roye welcomed invited dignitaries, our members and other guests to the salle des fêtes to attend presentations and enjoy the town's hospitality.



47 RM Commando Association was delighted to present a donation to the town's lifeboat station, 'Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer' in the form of a cheque representing the total cost of clothing and equipment of a rescuer and also a bright yellow, ornamental RNLI welly boot planter! The sentiment behind these donations being to continue the strong ties between Port-en-Bessin and our association where we have always been made so welcome.

Left: Paddy O'Connell presenting the welly boot planter!

The 8th of June is a day for the association AGM which was well attended and contributed to this year. We were kindly given the use of the salle des fêtes for this to take place. Our final event is the much anticipated last night supper arranged by Geof with Stéphane and Natalie at the Bar de la Criée du 47ème. Every year Stéphane and Nathalie manage to cater to our increasingly well attended special meal. Now, I am not saying that you have to be particularly well connected to attend this 'invitation only' event but ...well... **YOU** might well say that, I couldn't possibly comment! We comprise a loud, happy and largely inebriated group of diners including the RMA and the RMA Bikers. Our Chairman conveyed his thanks to all those involved in the organising and supporting this year's commemorations before the floor was cleared for the annual auction to take place which raises money for the RM Charity. In his usual inimitable way, our 47 German member Jurgen Baas provides a colourful (sometimes truthful!) description of the items that he kindly donates. Phil Gilby, our chosen auctioneer for the evening, then shouts at us all to get our money out and bid. His fluent banter has surprising results following the questioning of character, romantic prowess, courage, commitment and resolve! It's like being caught up in a whirlwind of competition fuelled by a master manipulator!!! As our evening was blessed by the attendance by D-Day landing craft veteran Norman Ashford and his family, it couldn't have gone much better. My last memory that night was singing into the early hours with Scott (RMA biker), Phil and Kelly, all mainly northerners - I shall just leave that there!

I left Port-en-Bessin with fond memories of dear friends past and present, still with us and since departed - and a special edition 2016 Kevin de Bryne shirt from Emile Vreven and his family!

(by Editor: Someone remind me who is Kevin de Byrne...???)

The New 47 RM Commando Association Standard

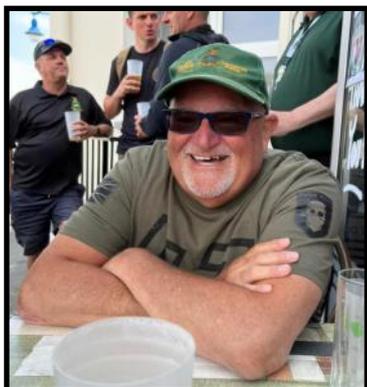
The new 47 RM Commando Association Standard was paraded for the first time on 7th June in the Memorial Garden at Port-en-Bessin. Former Royal Marine, The Reverend Justin Montague, Chaplain to the RMA-The Royal Marines Charity, formally dedicated and blessed the standard for use by the Association. The retired standard will be appropriately folded and housed in a glass fronted triangular shaped oak wood box (to be expertly crafted by Martin Cox, son of 47 veteran Edward Cox) to be known as 'The Veterans' Flag'. It will be displayed at the AGM and annual events as a reminder that everything we do in the Association is in memory of our veterans.

The Association is indebted to Christine Hagan, widow of Royal Marine veteran Pat Hagan, who very generously funded the new standard in its entirety. For many years Christine and Pat were staunch supporters of our Association and Christine asked that the new standard be dedicated in memory of her husband and all those who served with or were attached to 47 Royal Marine Commando. Thank you Christine.



Riding with Giants

by Terry Featherstone



In 2024, nearly a quarter of a million people visited the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer, many of whom experienced the power and poignancy of the 1,475 servicemen placed with heads bowed on the hillside overlooking Gold Beach, each representing a life lost on D-Day, 6th June 1944. In this 80th anniversary year of VE-Day the 'Standing with Giants' figures returned, including 200 new creations including radio operators, nursing sisters and medics along with a Scotsman playing the bagpipes. How did the figures get to France? Read on and Terry will explain.

28th March 2025 - I know it's a well used saying but I'd forgotten that there were two 5.30 occasions in a day. I ride a Harley and as such am a member of the 1066 Harley Owners Group. As a group we had been invited to ride escort for the Standing With Giants silhouettes for their journey from Blenheim Palace to Fort Nelson, Portsmouth, hence for me the ridiculous early start!

There were seven of us, meeting up at a Macy's (well they do serve a nice coffee) for a strict 7.00am start. Mel was the lead rider and like a mother hen with her chicks, or more like our own Geof Haywood she was very, very clear that the timetable for arrival needed to be adhered to! Her first words on meeting up were: "all of you put your waterproofs on as it is going to rain and I will not stop for anyone to put them on", but in a much more feminine voice than Geof's but no less authoritative!

So off we set at 7.00am on the dot, guess what my avid reader? It rained all the way on the A22 and M25. Rain or drizzle.....the day before if you remember was lovely sunshine, the day after, guess what, lovely sunshine. We stopped at M25 services for me to refuel as I've only got a little tank which Mel had of course factored in like all the



best leaders. Then it was the final leg to Blenheim Palace; as we pulled into the east entrance spot on our allotted time due to the security and police timetable, the sun started to break through and I unfurled my Union flag and also the Royal Marines flag, the only one on display there, to show my support for 47 RM Commando flying on the rear of my bike. We were greeted by security and given a very exclusive security pass which was a knitted poppy which later on I found out was made by the W.I. and, with the local school children, knitted 32 thousand of these poppies to



give to well over a hundred bikes, plus to go around the trailers of the four articulated lorries that carried the Silhouettes, quite lovely and a moving sight to behold. Whilst waiting for the off at 1.00pm there was a military band, food and drink wagons. Prompt at 1.00pm the off was signalled. The lorries carrying the silhouette figures left at five minute intervals escorted by at least twenty motorcycles following each of them.

The ride down to Fort Nelson was in glorious sunshine and it was amazing the number of people along the route waving and applauding. On arrival we were welcomed by music from the Forties sung by Zak & Ruby (D-Day Darling Juniors) and Portsmouth City Band. It was there that I left the silhouettes to return home, some of the other riders were going with the vehicles over to France to do the final leg of delivering them to the Normandy British Memorial.

Hopefully next year I'll do the complete journey, it was quite special to be a very small part in such a moving event to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day.

Terry's partner is Lyn Bruce, the niece of Corporal Tommy Cole RAMC attached to B Troop 47 RM Commando. He went with them to Scotland to undertake commando training and was part of John Forfar's medical detachment. He was with B Troop on D-Day, during the battle of Port-en-Bessin and through France and the Netherlands to Operation Infatuate II and the landing at Westkapelle. He had the distinction of taking the surrender of a Germany bunker, during that operation (see Despatch edition 50 for more detail regarding 'Tommy's bunker'). In 1945 with the war in Europe coming to an end he was transferred to the Holding Operational Commando Wrexham in readiness to join 44 RM Commando in India for Operation Zipper, the invasion of Malaya, however before that happened the war ended. Since uncovering Tommy's story in 2019, Lyn and Terry have been avid supporters of 47 RM Commando Association and the Royal Marines Association. In 2019 they visited every location mentioned in John Forfar's book 'From Omaha to the Scheldt', not only to follow Tommy's war journey but also that of 47 RM Commando.

47 RM Commando Association Commemorates VE-Day on Zoom!



On Sunday 4th May Paddy O'Connell invited the membership to come together for a virtual gathering to commemorate VE-Day. Although only 45 minutes long - we could have chatted and exchanged 'dits' and hilarity for much longer - it was a great opportunity to harness the power of the internet and bring many of our members together from as far away as South Africa and France.

The article below was recently uncovered in a box of documents forwarded to the Association by Betty Quinney, widow of 47 RM Commando veteran Bert Quinney. The article, written by Captain John Bennett, also 47 RM Commando, was originally published in the 1995 Annual Report of the King George's Fund for Sailors (KGFS). It is published in Despatch by kind permission of The Seafarer's Charity (formerly the KGFS).

ON THE Beach

On 6th June 1944, I was a Subaltern in 47 (RM) Commando, when we landed in Normandy. I landed apart from the Commando with Sergeant Ellis and four Bren Carriers of the reconnaissance company, loaded with ammunition, wireless sets and other odds and sods - my orders being to contact the Commando if possible and accompany it cross country to assault Port-en-Bressin - and if I did not make contact, to get to P-en-B somehow.....but get there! (Port-en-Bressin was about half way between the British and US landings and where the oil for

*John Bennett, member of the General Council,
recalls his part in the D-Day landings.*

both armies was to come into). I had a good crossing and no seasickness, but we came under very heavy shell fire as we approached the beach, which was a shambles. Various craft were on the beach or waiting offshore, many lying beam on to the shore. There seemed to be no space to land and the tide and wind were fast taking us eastwards. Happily our skipper saw a vacant spot and went straight for it and with a silent toast to the Royal Navy, I stepped ashore dry. I had no idea where we were and nor did anyone else. It was chaos, so I took my Carriers straight inland and turned right at the first track which seemed to be going in a westerley direction. A mile or two on I came across some green berets. It was 47 Cdo regrouping after a very bad landing. About 50% of its personnel were missing, plus most of its weapons, wireless gear etc.

We set off inland and then turned right cross country in the direction of P-en-B. We had not gone far when I realised that my heavily loaded Carriers would not go cross country and I was obliged to leave the Commando and try to find my own road through. After several minor skirmishes with small units of German resistance, we holed up for the night near Arromanches.

Next morning, at daybreak, I set out again to find a road to P-en-B. I took the coast road only to be stopped by the 2nd Devons and

warned of an impending bombing by seven squadrons of US Fortresses on the coastal battery at Longuss. This heavy and successful bombing took up a lot of time and left "my road" a mass of craters to be negotiated.

The Colonel of the Devons, who seemed to know more about what I was supposed to be doing than I did, lent me a Sergeant and two Bren Carriers, which gave me more firepower to deal with the many pockets of ever strengthening German patrols. After several skirmishes and attacks successfully fought off, we arrived at Port-en-Bressin just as the Navy and the RAF were beginning the softening up process against the German stronghold and 47 Cdo were moving into position to assault the port. It was approx 4pm and everyone seemed pleased to see me and delighted in telling me of the previous evening, when arriving on the outskirts of P-en-B at dusk, they had come across a German RAP manned by a doctor and sick bay attendants, who were immediately put to work to help tend our wounded, whilst our own doctor plus the padre installed themselves in this convenient billet.

Next morning, down the road came a German NCO marching the sick parade to the RAP - only to find a strange doctor to deal with their complaints. Obviously the battle was still fluid. I took the Carriers to Point 72, a small hill

Cover Story

The front cover shows a Royal Navy beach party during the D-Day landings. The Normandy landings took place on 6th June, 1944, and were the beginning of the liberation of Europe. All the Allied armed and civilian services were involved in the operation, the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy playing a vital role. 50 years on, the heroes of that time are now largely in their seventies and eighties. Many of them fight different battles today, against failing health and financial difficulties. King George's Fund for Sailors is the charity that works to provide assistance to all seafarers and their dependants. It raises funds and distributes them to other charities meeting specific needs. KGFS has been fulfilling this role since 1917. Today more than ever the Fund is called upon to respond to those in need. It can only do so through the continued generosity of its supporters.



inland from P-en-B where Commando HQ. Not long after we were attacked and overrun by a strong German force. We lost valuable men in this costly incident. However I managed to take the Carriers through the Germans and on to the Port, where the final assault was about to go in.

The Commando had occupied the Port, but the Germans were still strongly entrenched on the eastern feature overlooking the port and were proving very hard to dislodge. Captain Terry Cousins, commanding "A" troop, asked the CO for a couple of dozen men, as he had discovered a small path to the top of the feature and thought, that in the dusk, he could get up to it. He needed maximum covering fire and I was given command of the Brens and all the mortars and we threw all we had at the strongpoint, which Cousins assaulted and took. He was killed doing so. I thought his courage worthy of a VC. Then suddenly the opposition collapsed and it was all over for the moment

...suddenly the opposition collapsed and it was all over for the moment except for rounding up the prisoners, tending the wounded and burying the dead.

except for rounding up the prisoners, tending the wounded and burying the dead. I was sent off to assist Captain Denis Walton in mopping the western feature. It was dark and we were having a quiet smoke behind a hedge by the road, when we heard a vehicle approaching from the West. I suggested to Denis that he might jump out and challenge the vehicle whilst I kept him covered. He explained that he was senior to me and that he would keep me covered whilst I jumped out into the road - which I did shouting "Hande Hoch" - which



*Top: British troops move inland, past the White Ensign of a naval beach party, Normandy, June 1944.
Above: John Bennett.*

was answered by a voice from the darkness - "Say, are you British?" "Yes", said I, "Are you American?", "No, we're not Americans" came the voice - "we're Texans - do you need any help?" And thus we joined up with our Allies - both of them!

Further information regarding the role of John Bennett on D-Day can be found in 'From Omaha to the Scheldt' (Chapter Four - The Battle for Port-en-Bessin and the Life-Blood of an Army).

Captured Flak Ship Dog Adopted by Crew of HMS Ursa

During the battle for Port-en-Bessin, the destroyers HMS Ursa and Polish ship ORP Krakowiak had been patrolling outside the harbour, unable to provide naval gunfire support because of the danger of hitting the assaulting troops of the Commando. At around 9pm on 7th June 1944, both ships came under fire from one of the flak ships berthed in the harbour, and both returned fire with unknown results. The captains of Ursa and Krakowiak decided to send naval boarding parties to secure the enemy vessels. At around 10.30pm, two armed motorboats, one from each destroyer, entered the harbour and engaged the flak ships with rifles and machine gun fire. No return fire came from the flak ships and the reason was soon discovered - their crews had abandoned ship, leaving behind three dead Germans and a small black dog which was adopted by the crew of HMS Ursa.



“One thing I remember - very outstanding - was 47 Royal Marine Commando, who were part of our brigade for this individual landing, coming past us, soaked to the skin. A lot of their landing craft had turned over but I’ve never seen men so resolute as these.”

(Private James Donaldson, 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment (from ‘Forgotten Voices of Normandy’ recording published in Despatch by kind permission of IWM))

Presentations and Awards...

Presentation to the Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer

It has been a long time ambition of the Association to make a donation to a local community group in Port-en-Bessin as a token of our thanks for the many years of hospitality and support afforded to our veterans, families and supporters. As a working fishing port the local branch of the 'Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer' was deemed the most appropriate organisation to receive a donation. The Mayor, Christophe Van Roye described the Association's gesture as an 'excellent initiative'.

The presentation was made in the salle des fêtes on 7th June following the series of commemorations in Port-en-Bessin. Prior to a presentation cheque being handed over Bob Perry made the following remarks:

"Port-en-Bessin is renowned for its rich maritime heritage with deep roots in the fishing industry. Like the fishing industry in the United Kingdom, commercial fishing in the cold, rough seas around the English Channel is a hazardous profession. Pushing their boats ever further out in search of a catch, the men and women who supply us with freshly caught seafood risk accident and injury every time they do their jobs. Those fishermen and other mariners rely on an organisation whose volunteers are without fear or thought of self.



The 'Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer' or SNSM - in English the National Sea Rescue Society - is a national volunteer organisation dedicated to saving lives at sea around the French coast. It's the French equivalent of the UK's Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The SNSM is funded by the generosity of the public and private donations and operates a fleet of over 450 boats with 8,000 volunteers.

We don't have a precise date for the Port-en-Bessin station's creation, but it predates 1939. Indeed, in 1940, the portais rescuers demonstrated incredible courage when a Norwegian merchant ship was attacked by German aircraft; the rescuers set sail and, under German fire, rescued the crew, ensuring their survival. Today, the station operates 24/7 with a 10.5m vessel and a 5m RIB and 29 volunteers, 20 of whom are lifeboat crew; 19 men and one woman, from diverse backgrounds: Gendarmerie, French Navy, Maritime Affairs, professionals, project managers and retired fishermen.

Every year, volunteers carry out around twenty assistance and rescue missions. Over the past 50 years more than 3,000 people have been assisted and saved by volunteers from the Port-en-Bessin SNSM station, often in difficult conditions. To fully equip a rescuer with the necessary clothing and safety equipment costs €1387.

The current SNSM fundraising campaign uses the words 'Courage is offered but not the equipment'. Due to the bond of enduring friendship and mutual respect that exists between the communities of Port-en-Bessin-Huppain and the 47 Royal Marine

Commando Association it is the desire of our membership to provide some of the equipment to complement that courage.

It therefore gives me great please to present this cheque today”.



In reply, a message was read from Stéven Gerard, President of the Port-en-Bessin/ Arromanches SNSM Station (Stéven was unable to be present as he was in Paris attending a general meeting of the National Sea Rescue Society).

“Dear Friends,

It is with deep gratitude that I address you today through our Treasurer Michel Gerard, on behalf of the Port-en-Bessin Sea Rescue Service, to express our sincere thanks to the members of the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association for their generous donation of 1,387 Euros. This gesture demonstrates not only your gratitude to us and your solidarity, but also the unbreakable bond that unites our two communities, united by the sea, united by history.

The sea, which has been the scene of so much heroism and sacrifice, remains a powerful symbol of our shared history. It reminds us of the D-Day landings of June 6, 1944, a decisive moment that marked the beginning of the freedom of Europe. The following day, June 7, 1944, Port-en-Bessin saw its lands and streets filled with heroes, those men who fought bravely for our freedom. British veterans, like those of the 47th Royal Marine Commando, played a crucial role in this historic adventure, and we will be eternally grateful to them.

Like other stations of the National Sea Rescue Society (SNSM), the Port-en-Bessin Sea Rescue Service has several essential missions, missions that make them key players in both safety and solidarity at sea:

- Assistance: Their primary mission is to provide assistance to people in distress at sea, whether they are pleasure boaters, fishermen, or professional sailors.

- *Search and Rescue: They respond to maritime accidents, shipwrecks, or situations of imminent danger.*

- *Training: They train crew members in rescue techniques, navigation, and emergency response, thus strengthening skills within the team.*

But the SNSM of Port-en-Bessin also supports veterans and their families: As part of their commitment, at the request of families, our volunteers can also be involved in actions aimed at fulfilling the last wishes of veterans who wish to have their ashes scattered at sea where they once set foot on French soil, thus strengthening the historical connection with these men who served in France and Europe. I was recently informed that the Royal Family is sensitive to these actions carried out by the SNSM of Port-en-Bessin for the benefit of British veterans and their descendants.

In conclusion, please be assured that we are deeply honoured to be able to count on your support - the support of men and women who share the same values of courage, heroism, and selflessness. This support will allow us to continue our mission of assistance and rescue at sea. Please also rest assured that your donation will be used with the utmost responsibility and that we will always respond to the requests of veterans and their civilian and military representatives.

Once again, thank you to the 47th Royal Marine Commando Association for their generosity and commitment. Together, let us continue to celebrate and honour our shared past and build a future where the sea remains a symbol of peace and unity.

Thank you all, and long live Franco-British friendship!"

Presentation to Madame Laurence Scoupe

Laurence Scoupe was awarded the 47 RM Commando Association Certificate of Appreciation on 7th June 2025 in the salle des fêtes at Port-en-Bessin. Bob Perry said the following:



"If you were in the memorial garden earlier you would have witnessed the retired 47 Royal Marine Commando Association standard being carried not by a former Royal Marine, or indeed anyone British. Please step forward Madame Laurence Scoupe.

Laurence hails from a military family. Her father served in the French Army in the airborne forces and was heavily involved in veterans' affairs. He taught her the values of the Republic and to place service before self. Since 1977 she has herself been involved with veterans' associations and in 2002 was awarded the Union Nationale des Combattants

Left: Laurence with D-Day LC veteran Norman Ashford.

(UNC) Bronze Medal with the Gold Medal last year. This was followed, for her energy and dedication, by the municipality of Boue awarding her the Commune's Medal of Honour. In 2015, she became the standard bearer of the UNC of Aisne.

She joined the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association in 2009 and was instantly admired and loved by all of our veterans and their families. Since then, she has supported each anniversary of the liberation of Port-en-Bessin-Huppain and even travelled further afield to support our commemorations in Walcheren, Holland. In 2020, she participated in the challenge of the 47 Royal Marine Commando '25 press-ups per day for 25 days' to support post-traumatic wounded of modern conflicts.

When Lou Sartorel, the Association's usual standard bearer, was selected for national duties in 2024, Laurence, when asked and without hesitation, readily agreed to parade the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association standard at Walcheren, in front of the First Sea Lord, and in Port-en-Bessin-Huppain. This is worthy of the highest praise and respect as she performed these duties in the typical British military fashion despite recovering from a hand injury.

Her sense of human contact and commitment make her a remarkable player in memorial events paying homage to all of the Allied service personnel who died for freedom between 1939-1945. In recognition of these qualities, her long and dedicated support to our veterans and their families, and for proudly parading the 47 Standard, Madame Laurence Scoupe is awarded the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association Certificate of Appreciation.

And Further Presentations...

The Mayors of Tracy-sur-Mer and Asnelles were presented with the 47 RM Commando Association Certificate of Appreciation for their support over many years to the 'Following in the Footsteps of 47 Commando' march from Asnelles to Port-en-Bessin via Tracy-sur-Mer.



*Left: Daniel Cattelain, Mayor of Tracy-sur-Mer.
Right: Alain Scribe, Mayor of Asnelles.*

104 Year Old WW2 Veteran Signs D-Day Maps

Early in 1944, Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS, also known as the Wrens) officer Christian Lamb was appointed to Combined Operations HQ at Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, and her new vital role:

"I was to be working on the actual maps of the planned landings. My small office below stairs was for me alone; there many of us working on individual pieces of the enormous jigsaw, none of us knew or ever discussed what the others were doing.

The real chosen landing places for the invasion on which my task was based were pinpointed for me on the large scale maps of France in my office, and my particular brief was to delineate everything that could be seen on every compass bearing from each landing position visible from the bridge of an approaching landing craft. The big scale Ordnance survey maps were spread out on the wall and showed railways, roads, churches castles, and every possible feature to an incoming invader and from every angle. It was intense and exciting work and obviously important to be detailed and accurate. D-Day happened on June 6th 1944 and when at 6am I heard the announcement on the radio I was thrilled to know that at last we had managed to carry out the plans, which had been envisaged for so long by so many brilliant brains. We were there! It was the beginning of our campaign to help get back France for the French".

Cajoled by Paddy O'Connell, Christian agreed to sign, on the 80th anniversary of VE-Day, several copies of maps belonging to the Association including a framed printed map that will be offered for auction at the RMA-The Royal Marines Charity's annual flagship fundraising Dinner at the Guildhall in November.



*Left and Right: Christian signing the maps and in WRNS uniform in WW2.
Centre: The signed copy of the framed map carried by Corporal Edward Cox on D-Day.*

With the Pitels at the Mountbatten Festival of Music 2025

A large gathering of the membership descended on London in March to reacquaint themselves with the attractions of the capital city, engage in numerous social activities (hic!) and, of course, thoroughly enjoy the Mountbatten Festival of Music featuring the Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines performing at the iconic Royal Albert Hall. It was also an opportunity to host Stéphane and Nathalie Pitel, owners of the 'Bar de la Criée du 47ème' to thank them for their sterling support and friendship to our veterans, families and friends over many years. An excellent weekend was had by all!

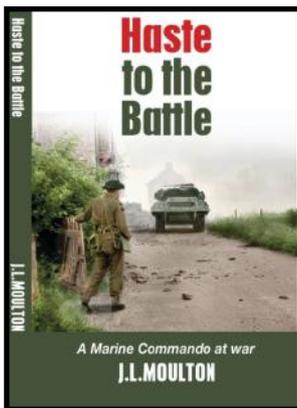


Book review...

As temporary editor of Despatch I would not usually want to stray into the territory of a rival WW2 Commando but there is occasionally an exception! The review below details the recently republished history of 48 RM Commando that has been made possible with a little help from Four-Seven. Tom Busby (former 47 Charity Treasurer) who on finding that copies of the original book were hard to locate, took it upon himself to arrange for this reprint. Chairman Bob Perry has been helping Tom with publicising the book and persuaded Mark Bentinck, former Corps Historian and 47 RM Commando Association member, to write the official review. For complete editorial balance, copies of the republished 'From Omaha to the Scheldt - The Story of 47 Royal Marine Commando' are still available from our own Association!

Haste to the Battle - A Marine Commando at War by J L Moulton. Originally published in 1963, new edition 2024 privately published, available via www.hastetothebattle.org.uk price £12.50 + £3.50 p&p or international shipping rates/multiple purchases via info@hastetothebattle.org.uk

In the early years of World War 2, the Corps manned - as it traditionally did - all the major ships of the Royal Navy. The main land formations were the RM Division, and two Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisations (MNBDOs). The latter have been described as "...unwieldy, defensive, and far from mobile..." (at one point MNBDO 1 had a strength of some 4,500 men) though when required eg in the defence and chaotic evacuation of Crete in 1941 the individual units fought bravely. The RM Division was disbanded in 1943, with the men in it becoming largely either Commandos or landing craft crews for the forthcoming invasion of Europe. Most elements of the MNBDOs followed in a similar fashion.



1943 thus proved to be a pivotal moment for the Corps, with 42 to 47 RM Commandos created and joining 40 and 41 formed the previous year. 48 was established at Deal with ranks from 7th

Battalion RM at the beginning of March 1944, completing the RM Commando order of battle.

All the RM Commandos have their WW2 histories on record, but none have been written by their COs except this one, published in 1963, 18 years after the war ended, by which time Moulton was a Major General. So, this is not an impersonal account, but, as he says in the foreword "...it seemed to me worth trying to record what it felt like to be the Commanding Officer of a fighting unit; in doing so I can only describe what I felt myself; others probably felt differently. This is, therefore, more a personal story than a unit history."

7th Battalion took part in the Sicily landings in 1943, and within days was rushed forward to attack an Italian position. A recce by unit officers revealed a strong German force with the Italians, but this was disbelieved. Attacking across open ground with no tanks and little artillery the Germans responded with overwhelming firepower, the attack failed, and the CO was sent home. When the demoralised Battalion arrived in UK and became 48 Commando in March 1944 Moulton took command, and by D-Day in June that year, had turned it into a Commando trained unit with high morale, fit and ready to fight. How he did

this is a model example of drive and leadership - in short he was an exceptional personality and leader.

The D-Day landing was a near disaster. Briefed to follow the first wave of Canadian troops, the beach at St Aubin was under heavy fire, confusion reigned, with dead and wounded everywhere and wrecked landing craft stranded on beach obstacles. He led his men ashore and they captured their target, German fortifications at Langrune, by D+1. A pause to then catch their breath revealed that they mustered 223 all ranks out of 500 who had embarked in UK. The Commando was static in the Sallenelles area, but patrolling constantly. Moulton here writes fluently about the stress of prolonged exposure to danger and how to detect its onset - the then phrases in use were 'bomb happy' or 'battle exhaustion', which we would now call post traumatic stress. Then, "For the dead, we must write letters to next-of-kin offering what inadequate sympathy we could. At Sallenelles we had time to write them, but they were difficult indeed to write, and a strain on one's fortitude. In the end, I limited myself to writing for officers, and for those other ranks with whom I had had particular contact. It is not what the books say a commanding officer should do; but it had the merit that I, and the troop commander who wrote for the others, could write in sincerity of men we knew well. It also limited my depression and strain, a not entirely selfish consideration."

So, on towards the dunes of Walcheren - the island guarding the entrance to the river Scheldt that led to Antwerp, with its vital port facilities that would allow the resupply of allied armies temporarily halted at the end of a logistic chain. But training first for the last major amphibious operation of WW2, on captured German defence installations in Belgium, and absorbing reinforcements. With growing confidence here Moulton reflects, "I should never again have quite the despairing feeling, which had dogged me so much of the summer, that soon no one would be left". Again, the German defences at Walcheren had not, as promised, been neutralised by bombing and naval shellfire.

41 and 48 Commandos made the initial assault on the breach at Westkapelle then split north and south respectively, 48 securing its prime target by nightfall. They spent a bitter cold night on the sands. On D+1 a reconnaissance troop from 48 took advantage of the enemy's confusion and swiftly secured Zoutelande avoiding injury to the town's inhabitants and damage to the its homes and buildings. 47 Commando then passed through 48 to secure the powerful W11 bunker complex, aided by the same 48 troop. As 47 continued its actions to the south, 48 was eventually ordered north, over the breach to assist 41 in its actions around Domburg. 48 Commando's casualty bill was 32 killed and 100 wounded, but Moulton records having the satisfaction of seeing the first minesweepers starting to clear the Scheldt.

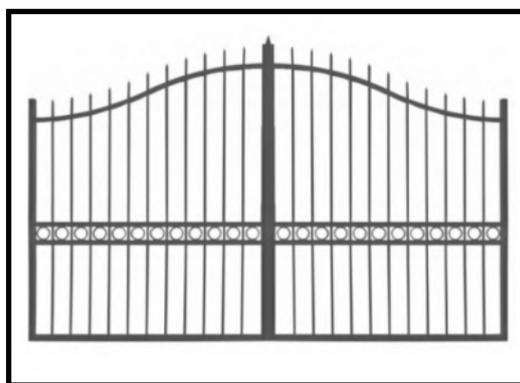
A final useful vignette; "Apart from personal temperament, a commanding officer has a particular problem. He must not expose himself too much, for a dead commander is no use to anyone; nor must he expose himself too little, for a scared commander never led anyone." The picture on the front cover of the book shows Moulton, with a Sherman tank, in the street fighting in Langrune.

There are two outstanding RM WW2 Commando accounts, both personal, and both covering the D-Day to Walcheren period. The book reviewed above is one, the other that of 47 RM Commando - *From Omaha to the Scheldt* - by John Forfar, their Medical Officer. Both are essential reading; they are fine examples of leadership, determination and Commando spirit.

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

Port-en-Bessin Memorial Garden Gates

The gates to memorial garden on the Western feature in Port-en-Bessin were damaged during a particularly violent storm during the winter months. Closer inspection by the town's maintenance department assessed that they were beyond economic repair and would need to be replaced. The mayor of Port-en-Bessin, Christophe Van Roye, generously agreed to replace the gates at no cost to the Association. The new gates, of a sturdier composition than the original design are due to be installed later this summer.



*Left: Bob Perry outside the original gates - everything in this photo has aged!
Right: The design of the new gates.*

A Right Royal Engagement



Obviously not content with receiving only the British Empire Medal from the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset, Geof and Jill Haywood also accepted an invitation from the King's Representative to be his guests at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party in May. The Royal couple (not HM Charles and Camilla!) looked fabulous in their attires and thoroughly enjoyed rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty!

Geof informed *Despatch* that on the day of the Garden Party, the Palace gates are open from around 3pm to admit 8,000 guests. The Party officially begins when the members of the Royal Family enter the garden at 4pm, when the National Anthem is played by one of the two military bands present.

Royal Garden Parties typically feature a light lunch and afternoon tea with a selection of sandwiches, cakes and pastries. Jill said she particularly liked the Mint and Lemon Cream Cheese sandwiches with the crusts cut off!

Media Star Brenda Cogswell

Brenda Cogswell, daughter of Royal Marine WW2 veteran Frank Blackburn, recently appeared live on the BBC Breakfast Show and BBC Radio Manchester. Her appearances were as a result of a call by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) to share historical letters from VE and VJ Day generation relatives. Brenda's letter, written by her father on



Christmas Day 1944, when he was on board *Empire Arquebus* in the Pacific, was chosen to represent the many hundreds that were submitted to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as part of the 80th anniversary of VE Day. To read the the letter from Frank Blackburn click on the the link below:

<https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk/letter/amelia-kelly-grandmother/>

John Forfar to be Honoured



The Association has been asked to assist with the establishment of a teaching classroom in honour of Professor John Forfar, 47 RM Commando's medical officer. The teaching facility will be at the School of Medicine, University of St Andrews, where John trained as a doctor. It is further planned that the Forfar Medal will be presented to the top student on completion of their medical training. The classroom will be formally opened on 12th November 2025 (date TBC) with Association members joining John's family, along with School of Medicine staff and students.

Award of the Order of Orange Nassau

Some of the Association's more seasoned travellers will recall our annual service of remembrance outside the Tourist Church at Dishoek, Walcheren. The Association's memorial board to those killed during Operation Infatuate II is located adjacent to the main entrance to the church. Following the service our veterans along with families and supporters were invited inside and always warmly welcomed with refreshments (some stronger than others!) and pastries. One of the volunteers, Marianne de Veen, was recently awarded the Order of Orange Nassau for her voluntary work, including the hosting of our veterans and members over many years.

On hand to represent the Association - who contributed a written citation to the Dutch authorities to support the recommendation - was our very own Kelly who presented Marianne with flowers on behalf of our members.



Podcast with the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

Avid readers will recall the article in the previous edition of *Despatch* that reported members of the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) joining Ken Cowdery and Bob Perry on the 'Following in the Footsteps' march from Asnelles to Port-en-Bessin. A good liaison has been maintained with the Trust who invited Paddy O'Connell and Ken to their headquarters in Crawley to help record a podcast for SECamb medical staff. The recording covered 47 RM Commando's landing on Gold Beach, subsequent march behind enemy lines and the battle for Port-en-Bessin with emphasis on the medical aspects of Operation Aubrey.



Left: Ken Cowdery and Paddy O'Connell with Gareth Williams, SECamb Ops Manager (Gareth is also a Colour Sergeant serving with Royal Marines Reserve City of London).

“Aye, laddie, I told you before that smoking is bad for your health.”

(Captain John Forfar MC RAMC to a marine who complained that he had received a shrapnel wound while reaching out of his trench to retrieve the pipe he had dropped)

A VE Day Commemoration to Remember

A good day was had by all in Eastbourne when Association members Terry Featherstone and Lyn Bruce organised a VE Day party for their neighbours. Corned beef, Spam and egg mayonnaise sandwiches along with a Victoria sponge were some of the items on the menu all washed down with 1945 drinks appropriate for the celebration. Well done for making it a day to remember!



Brenda at VE Day Thanksgiving Service



Brenda Cogswell struck lucky when she entered the ballot to win a ticket for the national Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. The prestigious service was attended by the Royal Family, senior politicians and veterans. It began with a two-minute silence, as the royals stood around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Left: Brenda with Warrant Officer Class 2 Johnson Beharry VC COG.



Captain Jim Forbes RFA

A photograph of Master Mariner Captain Jim Forbes RFA, proudly wearing his 47 Royal Marine Commando Association tie, was recently published in the Royal British Legion (RBL) Annual Report.



In June 1944, Jim was a 16-year old deckhand on the Empire Russell carrying 5,000 tons of aviation and motor fuel to the liberated Port-en-Bessin - one of the first ships to discharge their precious cargo to support the Allied armies.

Jim regularly supported our commemorations in Port-en-Bessin every 7th June and continues to be a much loved and admired member of the Association.

The photograph (left), taken at the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer in 2024, is published in *Despatch* by kind permission of the Royal British Legion.



The RBL Annual Report can be found here:

https://storage.rblcdn.co.uk/sitefinity/docs/default-source/default-document-library/legion-annual-report-2024_lowres_singles55dd14359fad4a72a5e2e03af8c4706a.pdf?sfvrsn=2a705e2d_0

“A Marine should be sworn to the patient endurance of hardships, like the ancient knights; and it is not the least of these hardships to have to serve with sailors.”

(Spoken by Field Marshal Montgomery when a Brigade Commander in Portsmouth)

Proposed Heritage Centre at the Commando Memorial

A charity has unveiled plans for a £7.4m heritage centre honouring the birthplace of many of Europe’s commando and special forces units. Thousands of servicemen from the UK and its allies trained in commando warfare in Lochaber during World War Two. The area’s role in the war is recalled by the Commando Memorial, which was unveiled near Spean Bridge, north of Fort William in 1952. The newly-formed International Commando Heritage Trust has proposed building a ‘discrete’ centre near the monument.

The Trust is gathering support for its plans among politicians, senior military staff and local communities. The Commando Association and the Royal Marines Association have offered their backing to the proposal.

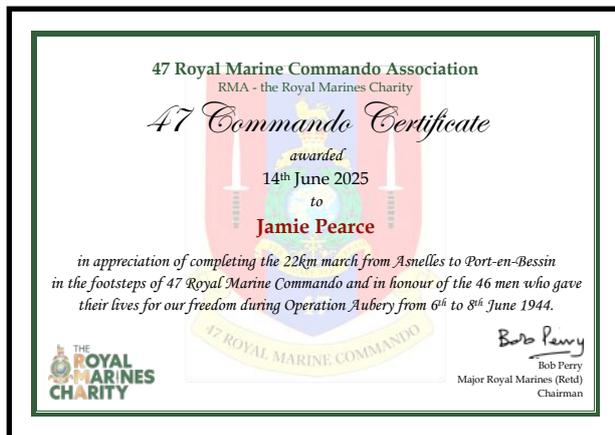
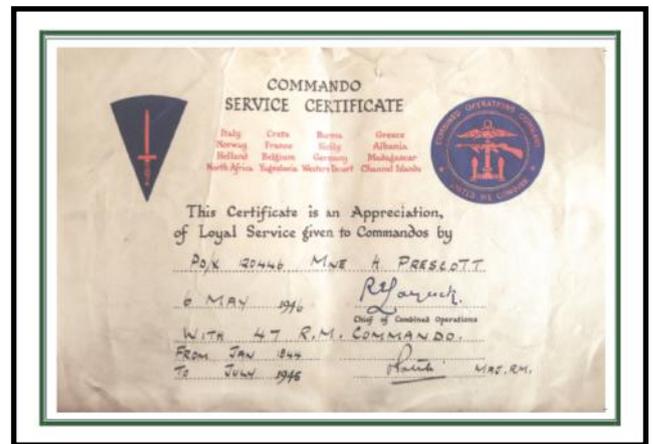


Duchy College Students Following in the Footsteps of 47 Commando

Former Royal Marine Jamie Pearce, led ten of his remarkable Military & Protective Services (MaPS) students when they recently retraced the 12-mile route by 47 RM Commando on D-Day. Their meaningful journey culminated in laying a cross at the grave of Marine Wilfred Sambrook (killed on 6th June 1944) at Bayeux War Cemetery - a marine the College has 'sponsored' in honour of his memory.

The MaPS course at Duchy College Cornwall, equips 16 to 19-year-olds interested in a career in the uniformed services - five of these determined students hope to follow a path into the Royal Marines. Their efforts raised an inspiring £565 in support of the RMA - The Royal Marines Charity. Well done to all involved!

Below: All staff and students were presented with a double-sided 47 RM Commando Association certificate in recognition of their fine achievement.'



“How much might be done with a hundred thousand such soldiers as these.”

(Remarked by Napoleon Bonaparte when inspecting the Royal Marines guard on board HMS Bellerophon on 16th July 1815 (taking him to exile on St Helena))

It was worth the BBC Licence Fee on its own...

And finally, just to prove that Brenda Cogswell doesn't have a monopoly on starring roles with the BBC, it was the turn of Bob, Paddy and Kelly to feature on the Breakfast Show on 6th June broadcast live from Gold Beach at Asnelles. Judging by the numbers who messaged and said they watched the programme it can only be assumed that the 47 RM Commando Association membership makes up at least half of the BBC's daily viewing figures!



The interviewer, interviewee and piper all in the same frame!

“47 Royal Marine Commando had a terribly rough landing. The seas got rougher as the tide came in and they lost seventy men before they actually reached the beach. Then, when they got on to the beach, they found none of their wirelesses would work. How their commanding officer collected them, I don't know. He must have had a megaphone and shouted; sent people hither and thither; perhaps even put a flag up, I don't know. I saw the commanding officer for five minutes while they were assembling just behind the sand dunes and him worrying about where his men had gone to and getting his wirelesses and things and trying to get a move on. They were very independent, if I may say so. They knew what to do and they were quite happy to get on with it.”

(Brigadier Sir Alexander Stanier Bt DSO and Bar, MC, Commander 231st Infantry Brigade (from 'Forgotten Voices of Normandy' recording published in Despatch by kind permission of IWM))

A letter from the Chairman regarding membership voluntary donations

As you may be aware, due to our Association's charitable relationship with the Royal Marines Association-The Royal Marines Charity (RMA-TRMC) we are no longer able to levy a subscription fee upon our members (lately £15). Therefore your Executive Committee have unanimously decided to change the method, with immediate effect, by which you can continue to voluntarily donate to the 47 Royal Marine Commando Association (47RMCA). This change will bring the Association in line with the overwhelming majority of other RMA branches that have now moved away from individual subscriptions.

You will now be able to make a donation by Direct Debit to the RMA-TRMC; this will attract Gift Aid - for every £1 you donate that qualifies, the RMA-TRMC will receive an extra 25p from HM Revenue & Customs at no additional cost to you. The RMA-TRMC will retain the Gift Aid element and then forward your **entire donation** to the 47RMCA - a win-win for all concerned!

Due to Charity Law, the 47RMCA is unable to compel any member to make a donation by Direct Debit or even suggest a minimum or maximum donation amount - it is up to **you** to decide whether you wish to donate or, indeed, if you choose not to donate anything. However, voluntary donations are the only regular income that the 47RMCA receives and helps offset the routine expenditure that is incurred on items such as wreaths laid at our numerous commemoration events, welfare support, *Despatch* production and distribution costs, and website hosting fees. Your committee sincerely hopes that you will continue to generously support the 47RMCA so that it remains a strong and vibrant organisation dedicated to honouring the men of the wartime 47 Royal Marine Commando, especially those who made the supreme sacrifice.

If you wish to make a voluntary donation then the following will assist you:

- If you haven't already done so then you **must** join the RMA-TRMC. Becoming a member is easy, there is no joining fee or other financial cost. Please follow the link and register your details at: <https://rma-trmc.org/membership/> As the 47RMCA is now a branch of the RMA-TRMC, not becoming a member could put at risk your continued valued membership of the 47RMCA beyond 31st December 2025. Please act now to join the RMA-TRMC!
- Once you have been notified of your RMA-TRMC membership number you can then complete a Direct Debit form if you wish to do so. It is suggested that the start month for future donations is January 2026 (or earlier if you wish to donate for this calendar year). Once completed the Direct Debit should be forwarded to the address at the bottom of the form or, preferably, sent to Lisa Roberts, the Membership Co-ordinator, who will check the form and deliver to the RMA-TRMC membership office on your behalf. Please ensure that you then cancel your existing Standing Order or Direct Debit to the 47RMCA.
- It is recognised that our overseas members will not be able to complete the Direct Debit form (unless they have access to a UK bank account). If this is the case then they should continue to donate, if they wish to do so, via their existing method. Please contact our Treasurer at allen.withington@47rmcommando.org for further information.
- To further assist our hard working Membership Co-ordinator please also complete a Membership Information Form, duly noting the RMA-TRMC's Privacy Policy confirming that you are content to be contacted by the 47RMCA. The completed form should then be forwarded to the Membership Co-ordinator along with your Direct Debit form (if you have chosen to voluntarily donate) to: Lisa Roberts, 30 New Road, Rayne, Essex, CM77 6TG.

If you require any further information or are unsure of the way to proceed then please get in touch with the Membership Co-ordinator by email: lisa.roberts@47rmcommando.org Copies of the Direct Debit form, Membership Information and the new Membership Information Guide are available on the front page of our new website: <https://47rmcommando.org>

Thank you for your understanding and support in this matter.

In Memoriam

Reginald Arthur Hutchinson



The Association recently received news that D-Day veteran Reginald 'Hutch' Hutchinson (born 1923) passed away on 10th June 2025. Although not a member of the Association Hutch served with 502 Assault Flotilla embarked on Princess Josephine Charlotte. He was a Landing Craft Assault (LCA) crewman tasked with the delivery of elements of 47 RM Commando to Gold Beach on 6th June 1944. His LCA, despite badly damaged during the chaotic conditions of the landing, was the only craft (out of eight) that was able to return to the Princess Josephine Charlotte on completion of the offload of the Commando.

His funeral was held on Friday 18th July at Our Lady of Grace and St Teresa of Avila Church, Chingford. Internment followed at Chingford Mount Cemetery. The Association assisted the family with funeral arrangements and secured a Royal Marines Bugler as a final tribute to his naval service. Three Royal British Legion branches and the local Royal Air Force Association also paraded their Standards. Bob Perry and Anne-Marie Nicholls represented the Association at the funeral.

In Memoriam - Their Name Liveth For Evermore

Lieutenant Ian Adam RM

On the 80th anniversary of the battle of Kapelsche Veer (see page 5) a memorial board was placed outside Sprang Capelle cemetery to commemorate Ian Adam who was mortally wounded during the fierce fighting. The translation reads:

'On 13th and 14th January 1945 British and Norwegian elite troops storm the island of Kapelsche veer and attack the German troops. One of the men is Lieutenant Ian William Adam, a 19 year old student. During the fighting he is hit in the head and is seriously wounded. A Polish soldier finds Ian. He wants to take him on his shoulders, but Ian says he wants to be left behind because he feels that he will die. The 19 year old Brit is left behind in the polder and is given a temporary grave. Later he is given a grave in this cemetery.'



(For more information regarding the death of Lt Adam see 'From Omaha to the Scheldt' page 310)

The Big Four-Seven Quiz

A Selection of road and avenue signs, pathways and marker plaques all named in honour of 47 RM Commando and some of the key personalities who served in the unit. Do you know where they are located - some are a bit of a giveaway!

(Answers on the back page)



The Back Page...

Events/Dates for your diary:

Fecamp - The liberation of Fecamp will be commemorated on 2nd September 2025. Members attending normally arrive on the 1st September and depart for the UK on 3rd September.

RMA Families Day - This annual event will take place at the Commando Training Centre, Lypstone, Exmouth, Devon on 12th, 13th and 14th September. Geof and Jill will be manning the 47 RM Commando Association stand so why not turn up and say hello.

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.

Mountbatten Festival of Music 2026 - The Association will block book tickets for the evening performance on Saturday 21st March 2026.

Annual Dinner - SAVE THE DATE+++SAVE THE DATE+++SAVE THE DATE At the AGM many of you indicated that you would like the annual black tie dinner event to continue. Acting on your wishes the committee have secured the use of the Wardroom and outside deck area of HMS President in London. Situated on the northern bank of the River Thames near Tower Bridge HMS President, a shore establishment, is the largest Royal Naval Reserve unit in the country. The dinner will take place on **Saturday 11th July 2026**. More details to follow soon...

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

Answers to quiz:

1. Fecamp **2.** Port-en-Bessin outside former Hemingway College (this plaque cast in bronze was stolen several years ago!) **3.** Tracy-sur-Mer **4.** Pathway linking Huppain with Port-en-Bessin (there are identical cairns at each end of the pathway) **5.** Dishoek **6.** Port-en-Bessin outside former Hemingway College (replacement plaque crafted in stone) **7.** Huppain (path leading to the memorial garden) **8.** Port-en-Bessin **9.** Fecamp **10.** Port-en-Bessin **11.** Fecamp **12.** Port-en-Bessin (on bunker wall in Place Georges Seurat)

How did you do?

0 - 3 correct	Erm, you really do need to get out and about more often and perhaps consider joining one or more of our commemoration events!
4 - 6 correct	Much better, you are well on your way to earning your 47 RM Commando seasoned traveller badge.
7 or more correct	Well done! Your name will automatically be entered in the draw to be the next Chairman...

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

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

Contact: Georgi Nicholls or Bob Perry