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## From John The Chairman

Hello! In this 80th year since D Day can I welcome you to an exciting new chapter for 47. We have a new website, a new newsletter and we're a new branch of the RMA. We're still run with help from all the same amazing friends. Best of all we have the best members - that's you - making the same memorial visits. You can see our new website and read my message sent to you with best wishes inside. Page 2.

## From Anne-Marie our Secretary

Hi. It's been great to hear from you about your hopes and plans for this year in France. The people of Port en Bessin have offered us rooms to help plug the shortage of hotels. Please see below from Geof and share your plans. Page 7.

## From Geof: Your D Day plans please !

Geof here. I'm just back from a visit to Port en Bessin with John. Please read my message inside about sharing your D Day plans. Vive La 47! Page 8.



## Smiles Flags and Thanks

Members mixed in March with Royal Marines and some of the best musicians in the world at the Royal Albert Hall for the Mountbatten Festival of Music.

### *Mayors from abroad*

We were proud to host mayors from France and The Netherlands at the Royal Albert Hall. Seen above [from the right] are Rob van der Zwaag from Walcheren, Christophe van Roye, the Mayor of Port en Bessin, Pierre Aubry (centre) Deputy Mayor of Fecamp, David Roussel Mayor of Fecamp and his wife, and NATO officer, Edith.

Reactions sent afterwards included:

"We had such a family welcome in the pub, thank you."

"A great privilege and honour to join you."

Thank you to all our friends abroad who have worked for years in their hometowns to honour the sacrifice and courage of the men of 47 RM Commando.

More inside .. see pages 10,11,12 photo credit Bob Perry.



## From The Chairman

Hello Friends and Fellow Members,

Our move to a Branch of the RMA is now complete and the new website is available to see. We hope you like it and suggest changes. A new monthly news letter is the perfect way to keep up to date with news and events in real time. Please share news of your own.

This new website will run alongside the existing one created by Marc de Bolster. We await your feedback to run this as our sole website as the best "shop window" for 47 we can possibly make it.

The MFM weekend was a huge success and it was great to see so many loyal members coming together to enjoy each other's company in the usual 47 friendly way.

Normandy 80 is only round the corner and lots of behind the scenes preparation has been done to make this a fantastic trip. Thanks to the hard-working committee and I hope to see you in June or soon.

John Prentis.



RM musicians mixed with our members make sweet music.



## November 2023. 47 back in Walcheren



**47 RM Commando Association has always travelled to Walcheren to honour the sacrifice and courage shown in Operation Infatuate in November 1944. Here we share the perspective of a serving Royal Marine - Sergeant Tom Reynolds of 47 RM Commando Raiding Group - who travelled with our party on the recent November visit.**

**Introduction:**

The Battle of Walcheren, a pivotal engagement during World War II, remains etched in history as a testament to the unwavering courage and sacrifice of those who fought on the shores of this strategic Dutch island. Recently, as representatives of the Unit, we embarked on a profound journey to Walcheren, Holland, to pay tribute to the heroes who faced the challenges of war with indomitable spirit and fortitude.

**The Battle of Walcheren:**

In November 1944, Operation Infatuate was launched, aiming to seize control of Walcheren, a heavily fortified island at the mouth of the Scheldt estuary. The importance of this operation lay in securing access to the vital port of Antwerp, significantly to enhance logistical capabilities. ***Below Lou Sartorel 47 Standard Bearer and Kelly Heathfield 47 Piper plus RM Bugler on parade - Thank you.***







***Above: The scene at the Polderhuis Museum as Colonel Piers Strudwick UK Defence Attache spoke to the crowd in Westkapelle.***

German forces, well aware of the strategic significance of Walcheren, had turned the island into a formidable defensive stronghold. The battle began with a massive amphibious assault, with British and Canadian forces, supported by naval and aerial bombardments, attempting to overcome the entrenched German defences.

The fighting that ensued was fierce and brutal, as Allied troops faced a myriad of challenges, including heavily fortified bunkers, extensive minefields, and the ever-present threat of German artillery. The island's flat terrain and intricate network of dikes and dunes further complicated any advance.

The relentless struggle for control of Walcheren exacted a heavy toll on both sides. The battle's intensity and the challenging terrain led to significant casualties, with soldiers grappling not only with enemy fire but also with the harsh environmental conditions.

#### **Our Journey of Remembrance:**

Arriving at Walcheren, we found ourselves standing on a landscape that bore witness to the tumultuous events of the past. Day one of our visit was dedicated to multiple ceremonies across Walcheren that paid respect to the fallen. As we stood amidst the stillness of the island amongst the Local Mayor, the Dutch Defence attaché, multiple national representatives, and local school children, we reflected on the valor displayed by those who, decades ago, faced the chaos of war on these very grounds.

Day two we found ourselves in the physical and symbolic retracing of steps the courageous individuals who fought during the Battle of Walcheren had undertaken. The gusty winds, reaching speeds of 60 mph, and the stinging sand served as reminders of the inhospitable conditions faced by the soldiers during the actual conflict. Despite the adversity, we ventured into the dunes, traversing a landscape that had witnessed the ebb and flow of war.





**Above: Silhouette as planned for the Westkapelle memorials in November this year. Artwork David Rowlands adapted with permission by Bob Perry.**

Bunkers, once integral to the German defences, were now weathered by time and partially buried in the shifting sands. The pathways, now entwined with nature, guided us through a journey back in time, offering glimpses into the challenges and sacrifices of those who fought here.

Our time in Walcheren was characterized not only by our historical journey but also by the camaraderie shared among the members of our group, including veterans and supporters from the 47 Cdo association. Together, we joined a community dedicated to ensuring that the sacrifices made by the heroes of Walcheren were not condemned to the oblivion.

#### **The Journey Home:**

The return journey, though marked by challenges such as a Channel Tunnel delay and a three-hour standstill on the M25 due to an injured horse, provided a stark contrast to the reflective and respectful tone of our time in Walcheren. These obstacles served as poignant reminders of the difficulties faced during wartime, underscoring the resilience required in the face of adversity.

#### **Conclusion:**

Our visit to Walcheren transcended the boundaries of time, connecting us intimately with a pivotal moment in history. The Battle of Walcheren, with its stories of valour and sacrifice, became more than a chapter in a history book—it became a living narrative etched into the landscape and forever preserved in the hearts of those who paid their respects. As we departed the shores of Walcheren, we carry with us not only the memories of the fallen but also a renewed commitment to ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten. **Reprinted from Globe and Laurel.**

*Tip: Contact our secretary Anne-Marie [47rmcsec@gmail.com](mailto:47rmcsec@gmail.com) to attend this year's trip in November.*

## Membership of the RMA and the 47 Branch

We are delighted to report new members are joining all the time this year.

But some long-standing friends have forgotten to pay their subscriptions and the committee would greatly appreciate if you can check your payments. [See below from Allen our Treasurer.] Please also join the RMA **for free** to assist in merging our operations and also to reflect to the Corps Family how active and supportive we are from the famous 47 Association.

You can join the RMA here: <https://members.rma-trmc.org/register/>

Thank you!



Our fabulous treasurer Allen writes:

Your 47 branch continues to be very active including installing a new memorial bench at Asnelles, creating a new website, inviting French and Dutch mayors to MFM and advertising the 80th 47 walk on the 6th June to name but a few.

This of course all needs to be financed, so if you still have not paid your annual membership fee of £15.00 please do so now.

The bank account remains the same:

47 Royal Marine Commando  
30 97 12  
03793869



## D Day 80: Plans for visit to Port en Bessin, June 2024

**Above: Officers group photo Herne Bay Kent May 1944**

Members are politely encouraged to share their plans with Geof and Anne-Marie for visiting Port en Bessin this June for the commemorations in Normandy. Hotel rooms and camp sites are impossible to find and so far we know friends are using a mix of solutions. One group of 47 members is travelling with the RMA coach and has found RMA accommodation. Several members are hiring apartments in and around Port en Bessin and others have been offered rooms in the homes of citizens of Port en Bessin. So we need to co-ordinate!

47 Events planned this year include:

**6th June:** Please note, main roads will be closed. Individual car drivers will need official stickers from landlords hoteliers town mayors and other groups. The 47 secretary cannot provide you with one but we all want to help each other share what we know.

From 0800 Asnelles 47 RM Commando Bench unveiling and Memorial walk. You can find all the details here to join or support our famous walk from Asnelles to Port en Bessin. <https://www.47rmcommando.org/walk>

Royal British Legion events at British Memorial Ver Sur Mer and Bayeux Cemetery. Public ballot is closed but see below to register for seats with RMA bus access. Also we have found a Commonwealth War Graves site for you to look at - again see below.

**7th June:**

Port en Bessin 1000: Memorials Western Feature Eastern Feature and Town Centre

1300 Vehicle Parade: Contact Marc de Bolster

D Day 80 is coming and the plans are still being made. We will make our programme with your help.



Hello From Geof!

John and I visited P en B to help learn the French plans and draw up our 47 Programme of events. The Mayor's office and our friends Nathalie, Stephane and Family all look forward to seeing everybody again. On the 7th there will be the usual events planned in P en B. If you plan to attend any of these we'd like to know who is coming so to look out for you! Please share your plans.

As for everything else, there will be massive security and road closures so it's best to share info among us all. Cars and buses will need access passes on 6th June and most big events will need tickets by ballot. You may still be able to register individually here <https://www.cwgc.org/liberation/liberation-80-events/> If you have success please let us know. The RMA offers limited coach seats "first come first served" to attend Bayeux Cemetery. Please plan ahead and send your request. There will not be room to just turn up.

For the 6th June there is the amazing walk organised by Ken from Asnelles back to PeB. The RMA have offered spare seats on their coaches to get to the start for those that wish to walk - 12 miles with numerous stops to hear all about what happened on D Day. There is a "Just Giving" website to raise money to cover the overheads and donate to the Royal Marine Charity which helped our Veterans widows and memorials and could even be there to help you too. If you wish to drive to the start of the walk you need a security sticker and we are arranging transport back to Asnelles at the end to recover your car. Visit <https://www.47rmcommando.org/walk>

On the 8th June I am testing demand to hire a coach for a day. Would you like to join a 47 RM Cdo Branch group visiting such as Sallenelles, Ver-sur-Mer and a location **you** choose or to be decided. I have a quote for a coach of €800 so to make it worthwhile I'd love you all to "Ride our Coach"! Let me know and the committee will decide in May if we can lay this on based on your interest.





On the evening of the 8th we will hold our "Last Supper" in the La Crie Bar.

Nathalie and Stephane have been supporting us since 2007. They've hosted us, have changed the name of two bars and during covid ensured the Walk and Ceremonies continued in or absence - truly an amazing couple.

The meal will be Pate, Chicken & Chips with a dessert costing at the moment €20 each. We will reserve 50 places initially so if you wish to attend please give me your name(s) so we can book the correct number. Other RMA Groups will hold back as we are holding our 47 dinner that night. All will join from 2100 for a Charity Raising and fun Auction. The Crie also plan an outside bar.

**PLEASE** reply to [geofandjillh@btinternet.com](mailto:geofandjillh@btinternet.com) by the latest 30th April to tell me your wishes to help us produce a programme for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your support and I look forward both to hearing from you and meeting up in June. With your help we will make a programme fit for the occasion and circulate it in May.

Cheers,

Geof 47's Chef de Ceremonies

For all other matters to do with D Day 80 please contact Anne Marie Nicholls [47rmcsec@gmail.com](mailto:47rmcsec@gmail.com)



## Visit of French and Dutch Mayors to London March 2024



**Above: Christophe and Isabel van Roye, of Port en Bessin plus Citroen 2 CV in London.**

In March, members hosted the mayor of Port en Bessin - Christophe van Roye and his wife Isabel, the mayor of Fecamp - David Roussel and his wife Edith and Rob van der Zwaag and his wife Ingrid - he was mayor in Veere covering Westkapelle for seventeen years. Also attending were Pierre Aubry Deputy Mayor of Fecamp and his wife Sophie, Ivo van Beekhuizen of the Polderhuis museum, Kelly Heathfield our 47 friend and piper and Marcel Adriaanse head of ceremonies in Walcheren.

A welcome dinner in the Hereford Arms on Friday was followed by dinner on Saturday in the Elgar Restaurant of the Royal Albert Hall before the Grand Concert itself on Saturday night.

Photos show a trip round London in a Citroen 2 CV. A trip to Billingsgate Fish Market and some happy pub moments. Thanks to the hard work of members Patrick O'Connell Bob Perry (see Bob's article Page 11 below) and Geof Hayward who put this all together under the direction of John Prentis. BZ Dave Shorrocks and Allen Withington for getting places for all in the Elgar Restaurant. ***Above all, thank you from the heart to our many friends in France Belgium and the Netherlands who do so much to honour the men of 47 and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.***





### **47 RM Commando Branch RMA at MFM with French and Dutch Mayors By Bob Perry.**

During World War Two and the many battles fought by 47 RM Commando, history shows that many French and Dutch civilians provided valuable assistance to the men of the Commando, and took many of the wounded into their homes despite the threat of enemy reprisals.

Since the end of WW2 the inhabitants of the towns and communities freed from enemy occupation by 47 RM Commando have never forgotten the courage, determination and self sacrifice of their liberators. Every year, on their return to the battlefields, veterans, widows and their families were enthusiastically welcomed by the mayors and residents, a level of enduring friendship which has continued to the present day.

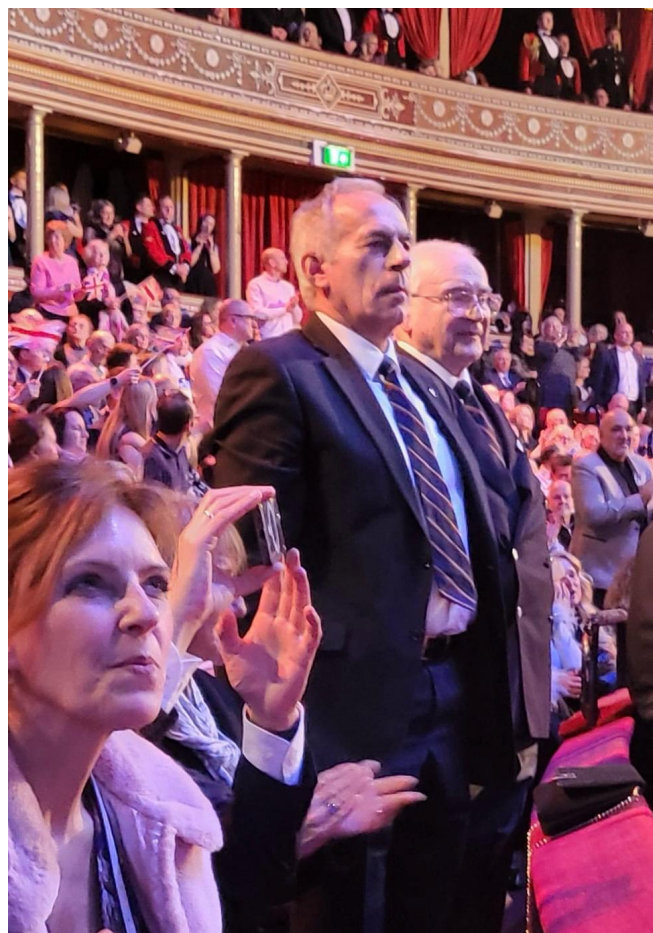
In this 80th anniversary year of D-Day 47 RM Commando Branch of the RMA decided to demonstrate their appreciation for that ongoing support by inviting the mayors of the towns and communities liberated by the Commando to London as our guests to thank them and the communities they represent. Accepting our invitation was the Mayor of Port-en-Bessin, Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Fecamp and the Mayor of Texel (formerly Mayor of Veere, Walcheren). Regrettably the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Asnelles were unable to be with us on this occasion.

After settling into their hotel in South Kensington, the mayors and their partners were welcomed by branch members at the Hereford Arms, a traditional London pub for an informal evening of dining and beer drinking! Early the following morning several of our guests accepted an offer to tour Billingsgate Market, the UK's largest inland fish market. This was particularly beneficial for the mayors whose home towns are heavily dependent on the fishing industry. The remainder of the day was left to enjoying the sights and museums of London prior to all meeting up again at the Elgar Room Brasserie at the Royal Albert Hall prior to experiencing the Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines at the Mountbatten Festival of Music. It was particularly gratifying that the presence of our guests, resplendent in their sashes of office, was acknowledged by Major Ian Davies RM, Director of Music who came beforehand to greet them.

After a thoroughly enjoyable and socially hectic weekend we bid our guests and each other farewell safe in the knowledge that the bonds of friendship and mutual respect formed by our veterans over many years remain as strong as ever. We look forward to all meeting up again later in this momentous year in France and the Netherlands to commemorate the high achievements of 47 RM Commando and to remember the 114 members of the unit who made the supreme sacrifice in WW2.



Some happy photos of a happy weekend



It's a good sign when the broadest smile belongs to the treasurer ....



This April newsletter has been produced by the 47 Committee of friends and members. Thanks to Patrick O'Connell for making final adjustments.

The new website work has been done by the amazing Ian Lodge of BroadBiz. Please explore the site. A May newsletter will follow in one month's time and a new edition of Despatch will come your way in July. Please take a moment to see the entire archive of all editions of Despatch on this website. It's a good opportunity to pay thanks to the work of past editors Dave Shorrock, and our late beloved Lannah Battley and others whose tireless work can now all be seen together in one place for the first time.

Please share this with people who can support us and especially keep an eye on the fund-raising target for the 47 Walk on June 6th. [47rmcommando.org/walk](https://47rmcommando.org/walk)

John Prentis, Patrick O'Connell, Anne-Marie Nicholls, Allen Withington, Geof Haywood, Steve Hignett, Dave Navatte.

***Seen below in action at Bruneval pre-pandemic with Harry Prescott and Ken Parker is Alex Wilson who we are delighted has recovered from a brief brush with the French doctors to be back in action again.***

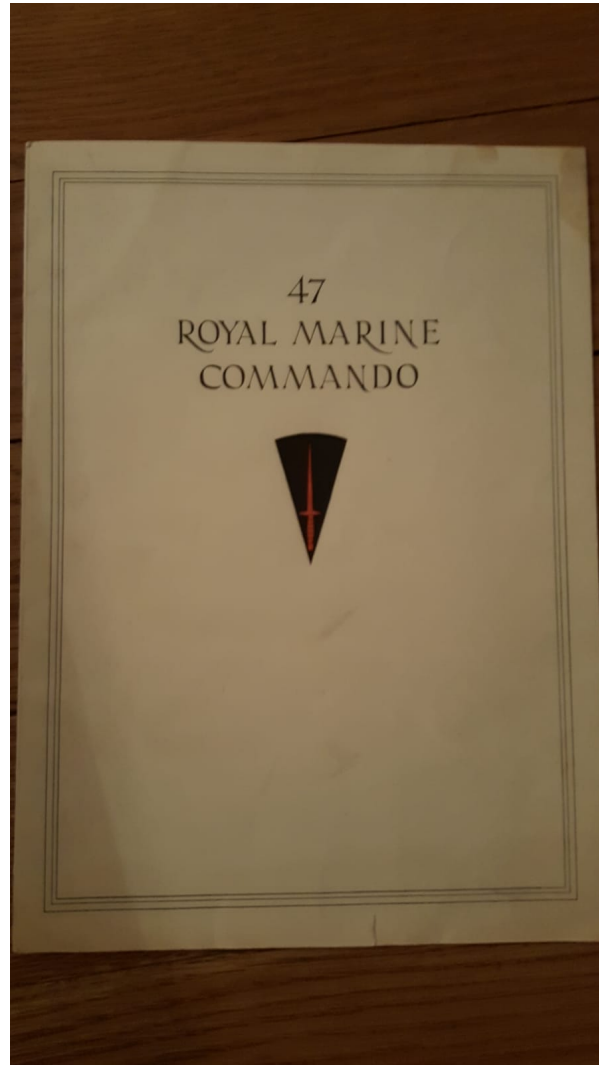




From the archive:













## Caption competition !



**“Can this fish really join as a member?”**



**“What’s the quickest way to the 47 bar?”**



**“Why did we tie our legs together for the 47 walk?”**





#### In Memoriam: Norman Rose 1925-2024

Veteran Norman travelled with 47 Association for many years. We all met his wife Daphne and shared stories from his remarkable life. He was remembered by family, friends and military at a service in Brecon, Wales attended by 47 friends and Lou Sartorel carried the 47 Standard. Our heartfelt condolences to Daphne and family and RIP Norman.

