



CHAIRMANS CHAT

The chairman welcomed members and guests with a special warm welcome to the **Brigadier Haydn White** the **DCGRM**, **Dan Cox**, from the Board of Trustees and **Colonel Parish of the SAS**, a guest of John Long. A good number of the RMR City of London were welcomed, and he apologised for not naming the many others who had joined us following the Corps Carol Service of which there were so many but informed them they were always welcome to the City of London Branch meetings. Of our own members present were those who had travelled from Devon, Channel Islands, France and one even from Italy. That is what makes our branch what it is.

Welfare; Eve Green was home and doing well and hoped to join us very soon. We were in constant touch with all members who we knew were unable to attend due to ongoing treatment.

The chairman went on to express special thanks to many members of the Branch; Firstly to our President, **Lt Gen Sir Robert Fulton KBE** for his guidance and the time he spends with individuals at our meetings. He then paid tribute to the committee who were in daily contact on all matters requiring attention and decisions on behalf of the branch. He commended **Tony Luckens, BEM**, our Secretary, who always goes that extra mile **Graeme Golightly** for the excellent work on producing our *Cityroyal* newsletter and the branch dinner, **Norman Saints** for his attention to the welfare of members and finally **Stephen Gilkes**, our treasurer for the immaculate branch accounts he produces to committee every month. Our Standard Bearer **Chas Timms MBE** and his constant escort, **Don Mott** who attend all events which promote the image of our branch, they travel many miles to support families at funerals of former Royals who were not known to us prior to the request for Royal Marine presence. Letters of thanks always follow. Like all branches, we have an input from our ladies who help our raffles the prizes of which are generously donated by members but the ladies organise the event and we want to say a big 'Thank You' to them, so, we invite **SANTA** ; alias **Norman Saints**, to present a token thanks to **Eve Green – Sharon Golightly, Jo Briggs and Joy Ellard**.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES:

Next Meeting

Thursday 10th Jan
1900hrs – At the Union
Jack Club.

Editor's note:-

If you have any items for '**City Royal**' please email/contact me at:

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Jim then called the members attention to the tremendous efforts of our Secretary, **Tony Luckens BEM** in his time devoted to assisting a former Royal Marine in need of accommodation in London. Tony had made specials journeys to town in order to locate the man and had spend a great deal of time talking with him to ascertain just what could be done. Tony learned a lot and was still working to solve the man's problem.

The Chairman closed by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, a Happy and Healthy New Year and asked all to rise for the toast

'Absent Comrades'



The Latest Article Submitted to the Globe & Laurel - by Tony Luckens

We look forward each year to visiting HM Tower of London on, or around the date of the Corps Birthday, for a Sunday church service in St Peter Ad Vincula Royal Chapel. This quaint Chapel is very atmospheric, not least because it is the burial place of famous queen's, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, the second and fifth wives of Henry VIII respectively, to name just two. On the occasions I have visited this chapel, I have found it very easy to mentally slip back to the reign of Henry VIII and imagine the scene at one of the Queen's burials - which would have been shortly after they were both beheaded. We form-up outside the Yeoman's Club and are marched up to the Chapel by wannabe Drill Instructor Norman Saints, our Welfare Officer. That "boy" certainly could have made the grade as a DI - straight back, chest out and clear instructions - and he is only 90 years of age!! After the service we march back to the Yeoman's Club for a few wets and some light banter with the Warders. They always do us proud and we are always very grateful for their friendship and support. On Remembrance Sunday, whilst some members attend the parade at The Cenotaph, I take a group to St. Paul's Cathedral to attend a Remembrance Service there. Afterwards, we marched to The Royal Exchange in the City where I laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch. From there, we marched the short distance to The Mansion House for a reception hosted by the new Lord Mayor, which is always excellent. Us Royal's march under the umbrella of the Old Comrades Association (OCA) - a City based organisation. This year there were more 'Green lids' than in another Corp/Regiment on parade. Indeed, such has been our support in recent years, this year we were asked to provide our Standard and two escorts to lead the other Standards into St Paul's; they looked very impressive. A number of our members attended the Family Carol Service in St Lawrence Jewry, at the Guildhall, in the City of London. It was a nice touch by Central Office in arranging for a mince pie and wine reception beforehand and I'm sure there was much more enthusiasm in the carols during the Service! From there we went back to the Union Jack Club for a buffet, the room was packed and it was great to see others from the wider Corp. Afterwards we had our Christmas bash in our normal room and we were pleased to have some of those who attended the Carol Service and reception as our guests for the evening albeit, we were at capacity for that room, just like many of our meetings throughout the year. Before we had our Christmas Raffle, it fell upon Father Christmas (Norman Saints) (it's that 'boy' again!), to present a Christmas 'prezzie' to our wonderful ladies who organise our monthly raffle - thank you Eve, Jo, Joy, and Marion with a prezzie also going to Sharon for her assistance to her other half, Graeme Golightly for organising a great branch dinner at the beginning of the year. I mentioned before that our Branch is very fortunate to hold our monthly meetings in the UJC. Other than being a great venue, it gives us the opportunity to socialise with present and former members of the Corps who are passing through on our meeting night. They often join us, and in a number of cases, join the RMA and our branch. Overall this year we have 11 new members and a number of applications going through the process at present. I have already mentioned some of the earlier joiners so a warm welcome to Terry Sylvester, David (Paddy) Wilkes, Neil Asten, Ashley Bourne, Leslie Pike and Derek Pockington.



Speaking to my eldest grandson it struck me that another two years and he will be the same age as me when I walked through the gates of RM Deal - one year later I was Bren gunner in Zulu Company, 45 Cdo (Aden). Looking back at my photo's I didn't look much older than my grandson but in the environment of alpha male 45 Cdo I soon aged mentally, if not facially....in my 70's now and some of the older hands still call me 'skin'!! All of this reminded me of a book I read recently; It's the story of one man's fight against the Taliban bomb-makers of Helmand - Kim Hughes GC, the leader of a Counter-IED team defused 119 improvised explosive devices during his six month tour. What reminded me of this book was one 0430 patrol Kim was part of. 20 minutes after the patrol set off and after the patrol leader had led them into a wadi there were a number of explosions. When Kim reached the front of the patrol there was an unbelievable scene of carnage - multiple casualties with the rest of the patrol frozen against the wadi bank. What struck Kim was how young some of the patrol were and in fact one 18 year old had only been in theatre for a few weeks. The point I'm making is there is not much of a gap from someone deciding on their exam options and resting against the bank of a wadi in some foreign land. We have all been familiar with the situation in Afghan...aggressive patrolling, defending a remote compound, casualty evacuation to Bastion etc but this book tells a different story. It's called ***'Painting the Sand' by Kim Hughes GC.*** And finally, I would like to thank all those branch members who have supported me in attending our various events and funerals etc during 2018. A special thanks to our very supportive Standard Bearer , Chas Timms MBE, and his oppo, Don Mott who pop up all over the place!

**From the City of London branch
Best Wishes for a Very Happy and Healthy 2019 to you all.**

David Harris writes:



THE ROYAL MARINES THE ADMIRALTY ACCOUNT OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENT 1939 - 1943

16. SPEARHEAD OF INVASION: THE MARINES IN SICILY

For many months before the invasion of Europe began, the Chief of Combined Operations had, in the two Royal Marine Commandos, a weapon waiting to be used when and where the striking power would be most effective. He was like an archer with a bow whose string had never been fully extended; but the arrows had been skilfully fashioned and were ready in the quiver. The target was known only to himself and to others in the Higher Command. Those in the Commandos did not know it until after they had embarked in troop ships at the end of June 1943, and found themselves steaming in convoy to the southward.

Then, and not till then, did they learn the meaning of the operation they had been rehearsing in Scotland for many weeks, and the end of the speculation came with the announcement that their destination was a sandy bay in southern Sicily. Their task was to assault and silence the coastal defences of the main beaches before the 1st Canadian Division was put ashore. No mission could have been more fitting for Royal Marines. It had been assigned to them by one who was not unmindful of the high achievement of their Corps.

Once the secret had been revealed, maps and air photographs of coastline were minutely studied. Every detail of each troop's task was reviewed in the light of the latest intelligence reports. There was the narrow beach - Commando Cove, they called it - in the most southerly tip of the island, backed by low cliffs midway between two headlands, Punta Ciriga on the west and Punta Castellazzo on the east. One Commando, led by Lieutenant- Colonel B.J.D Lumsden, would land first and scale the cliffs.



The leading troop would mop up enemy resistance on the top and form a bridgehead behind which the main party would organise before pushing off. The remaining troops would move off to the right, clearing machine-gun nests and pill-boxes along the cliff and assaulting the enemy's posts on and behind Punta Castellazzo which might prove an obstacle to the Canadians' landings. Finally, they would destroy what appeared to be a formidable strong-point which covered the western end of the main landing beach, and would make contact with the Canadians.

The second Commando, led by Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Manners, was to land in the same cove ten minutes after the first, pass through the bridgehead and move to the left, attacking the coastal defences as far as the village of Solarino, a mile and a half on the west. Once the coast had been cleared, both Commandos would consolidate their positions and hold the left flank of the Canadian beach perimeter. Alternative plans were made in case a landing in Commando Cove proved impracticable, or if the ship carrying one of the Commandos should be sunk, when either would be prepared to take on all the tasks allotted to both.

These plans were explained to every marine who would be taking part in the operation. Each man knew exactly what he had to do. All expected resolute opposition and were prepared to overcome it. Nothing was left to chance.

On the night of 9th July . . .

On the night of 9th July, the great invasion fleet drew under the lee of the Sicilian coast. There had been a stiff gale earlier in the day and the sea had been so high at one time it seemed doubtful whether the landings would be possible. After sunset the wind dropped, leaving a heavy swell.

The night was clear; the moon in the first quarter. At midnight, when the troopships were lying some eight miles off the coast, the Commandos embarked in their landing craft. The flotilla formed in two columns and headed for the shore.

As the moon went down, a new light sprang up on the horizon; flares which the R.A.F. were dropping over Pachino, the town north-east of the beaches. Their brightness silhouetted the coastline ahead. Then followed the flash and thud of bombs. The R.A.F. had undertaken to light up Pachino for the assault troops. They were keeping their promise.



The flat, black assault craft drove swiftly forward, leaving a luminous wake in the dark water. Engine trouble compelled one of them to turn back, with half a troop of Colonel Lumsden's Commando almost weeping with enraged disappointment. The following seas threw up the sterns of the remaining craft and caused their square ramps for'ard to dip perilously low. Spray drenched the tightly packed marines in the well decks. The craft began to ship a good deal of water. One took two heavy seas over her ramp. The steel doors for'ard were burst open and the water went pouring aft. The well decks began to fill alarmingly. Some of the marines clambered on to the gunwales and the flat top of the engine-room so that their comrades might have room to work the hand-pump and bale with their steel helmets. Nevertheless, the water continued to rise until it was knee-deep.

By the time the flotilla had closed the coast the high seas had thrown it somewhat off its course. Steaming barely 200 yards from the shore, the assault craft skirted the cliffs for nearly a mile, searching in the darkness for Commando Cove. This was the tensest moment. Would they find the beach before they were seen? Or were the enemy watching their advance, ready to open fire? Support craft astern of the flotilla were prepared to give cover, but held their fire in the hope that surprise would be achieved.

The flotillas steamed on, expecting at any moment to be shelled by the coastal batteries. Suddenly there was a report and a gun flash from the cliff. Instinctively every marine ducked his head. But it was an anti-aircraft gun engaging the R.A.F. bombers overhead. Then the flotilla turned into the dark embrace of Commando Cove and deployed into line- abreast for the final dash to the beach, apparently still undetected.

While the flotilla was racing ashore a solitary machine-gun opened fire with a short burst, then was silent. The assault craft sped on. As they grounded, the same gun fired a second hesitant burst. Silent and unhurried, the marines of Colonel Lumsden's Commando jumped from the ramps into the waist-deep sea and began to wade ashore, holding up their weapons, each with his allotted load. Some carried ammunition, some equipment, others cans of drinking water.

As the dark mass of men were struggling through the gleaming surf the machine-gun on the cliff was strangely silent. Not a shot came from the positions known to be on Punta Castellazzo, the eastern headland. Beyond the sandy beach, instead of the expected cliff, was a rough shelf of limestone, over which the marines were able to scramble with both hands full.



“The whole process seemed fanatically deliberate and leisurely,” wrote a Royal Marine Officer who accompanied the Commando. “It was hard to believe that this land beneath us, the first we had trodden on since leaving Britain, was enemy soil, the first bastion of the fortress of Europe.”

The machine-gun on the left opened up again, and this time there were a few casualties. The Lewis guns of the assault craft engaged it.

The bridgehead is secured

The touch-down had been made within 100 yards of the point originally planned. Landmarks that had been well memorised from the maps and photographs were picked up and each troop moved off to its appointed task. Soon, from an isolated building on the immediate left, came the sound of a bursting hand-grenade, rifle shots, and cries in Italian. A red stream of tracer from the marines' Bren guns shot towards the post, some of the bullets ricocheting high into the air of the stones of the emplacement. there was little more trouble from this post.

As soon as the bridgehead had been established, Colonel Manner's Commando was signalled ashore, and passed through, and turned left handed on its mission. Bursts of fire on the right and brilliant streams of tracer showed that Colonel Lumsden's men were engaged. But the resistance was irresolute. The Italians would fire a few short bursts from their rough stone emplacements, thatched to resemble farm buildings, but surrendered when they saw the marines at close quarters. Step by step the defences were silenced, until the attackers reached Punta Castellazzo. There was a sharp engagement with a wired-in strongpoint. The the defenders raised their hands. As the marines closed in, one of the Italians threw a hand-grenade. “The sequel,” observed the officer already quoted, “was not one to encourage any repetition of these tactics.”

A group of buildings occupied as barracks was cleared and prisoners taken. The remaining section of the troop which had been compelled to turn back to the ship accomplished successfully the task which had been allotted to the whole troop; exploiting east-wards, they finally joined hands with the Canadians, who by that time had landed and were pushing inland from the main beaches. Two other troops attacked a strongpoint known as Casa della Marza, which commanded the western exit from the Canadians' beach - the road from Pachino to Spaccoforno. The main building was cleared without difficulty, but two machine-guns opened from corners of the enclosure. Both surrendered when the marines began to advance for the assault. A sniper was dislodged from a tower surmounting the Casa.



Meanwhile those in the support craft and the destroyer lying close inshore watched the green success lights going up from point to point as Colonel Manner's Commando stormed its way westward, until the coastal strip as far as Solarino had been cleared of the enemy and the left flank of the main bridgehead secured. As the sun rose, the whole area between Solarino and Punta Castellazzo was firmly in the hands of the two Commandos. Landing craft bearing more Canadian forces were streaming towards the beaches, with no opposition. Overhead a solitary flight of Spitfires demonstrated the R.A.F's mastery of the air!! Patrols of marines and Canadians pushed inland along each side of the road to Spaccoforno, occupying the high ground to protect the beach perimeter. So completely had the defences been overwhelmed that by 7 a.m. an officer was able to ride an Italian bicycle down the Pachino road in perfect safety. The civilian population, peasants of the poorest class, seemed to have unhesitating confidence that they could go about their work unharmed. They smiled, touched their caps and offered thin brown *cigarellos* to the passing troops. They raised no objection when their brightly-painted carts, drawn by gaunt mules and donkeys, were commandeered and loaded with mortars and ammunition.

A cruiser and a monitor, lying close inshore, were administering a tremendous pounding to the defences far inland. In the sunlit bay a great mass of shipping lay at anchor, while the landing craft plied busily to and fro, and amphibious lorries rolled straight out of the water and up the beach, without interference from the enemy. All this had been accomplished within five hours.

The Royal Marine Commandos had been allotted an historic mission. They had been chosen as the very spearhead of the invasion so long awaited by the world. They had been the first seaborne troops ashore. They had done all that had been asked of them. They had destroyed the coastal defences which might have held up the Canadian Division. They had cleared the way for those who were to follow them. They had held the left flank of the main landings against possible counter-attacks: there had been no allied troops between them and the Americans at Gela, 50 miles to the west. Even had the opposition been fiercer, it is not likely that they would have failed.

After the occupation of Sicily the two Commandos took part in the first landings of Italy itself. During the night of the 7th September Lieutenant-Colonel's Commando secured a bridgehead at Vibo Valentia, in face of opposition from enemy mortars and 88mm guns, and captured the town. Later they made another landing in advance of the Eighth Army at Termoli on the Adriatic Coast. On 9th September Lieutenant-Colonel Lumsden's Commando landed with the Fifth Army at Marina, to the west of Salerno. In company with an Army Commando they took the town of Vietri and seized La Mollina defile, through which runs the shortest road to Naples.



During these operations, the two Royal Marine Commandos had performed tasks which were wholly in keeping with the traditions and functions of their Corps; their forebears had made just such landings at Gibraltar and Belle Isle, at Gallipoli, and on a hundred other beaches all over the globe. In the future their Silver Bugles will have yet another day - the 10th July - on which to blow a fanfare of honour.

“There is nothing like the Royal Marines”

This brief and most recent chapter of what Mr Churchill has called “the long, rough and glorious history of the Royal Marines” has shown that they have achieved much since the war began. They will achieve more before it ends. They are ready to assail the enemy at many points and are serving the Fleet with whom their past, their present and their future is so intimately bound. With their naval comrades-in-arms they are manning the guns of their ships in every sea. They are ready to land and fight as soldiers when they hear the bugle sound their Divisional call. Their M.N.B.D.O.s are standing by to build bases for the Royal Navy in any part of the world. Their gunners are helping to defend the Merchant Navy, and, in small craft, to give close protection to the assault ships of an invading Army. Their pilots are flying with the Fleet. The Royal Marine Commandos are waiting to fight again.

They are a formidable and versatile company of warriors, as highly trained, each in his own mode of warfare, as any the world has ever seen, eager to fight the enemy whenever they may find him, by sea, by land, by air.

“Their record is second to none,” wrote Lord St. Vincent a century and a half ago. “I have been with them on active service, on police service, in daily routine, and in gales of wind. I have had them with me everywhere, and I tell you there is nothing like the Royal Marines.”

“THE DIFFICULT WE CAN DO AT ONCE - THE IMPOSSIBLE MAY TAKE A LITTLE LONGER”

This was the last episode of the Admiralty’s brief account of the Corps activities between 1939 and 1943 - I hope it was of interest. In the next issue of our newsletter I plan to introduce

‘The Navy and Rum’ Jamaica, Grog, Pussers and Proof.

DH January 2019

