



CHAIRMANS CHAT

The chairman welcomed our President, visitors with a special welcome to Brig Richard Spencer RM congratulating him on his appointment as CEO of the RMA.

On recent events he reported that the funeral of RM 20181 **ROY PODD** had see a great turnout from Branch members despite the distance. Our Standard Bearer **Chas Timms MBE** attended and with Bugler **Stu Bartlett's** superb Last Post the family was most grateful.

The Zeebrugge 100th Anniversary Commemorations had taken many hours of preparation but with the Belgian Military organising the main events at the memorial the services had gone exactly as planned. Everyone needed to muster at Stella Maris Church to receive an ID badge before going in to the Parade area.

In addition to the wreaths laid by Anne the Princess Royal and many others, anyone who was a descendant of those who took part in the Raid, were invited to plant a Poppy Cross in the flower beds in front of the memorial. These were sponsored by our Standard Bearer **Chas Timms MBE** and distributed to anyone of any nationality prior to the parade and it proved a very popular invitation.

The Royal Marines Band Scotland lead the march on followed by the German Army Band leading the contingents from the Belgian, British and German Navy and Military.

Three large screen had been erected showing a few short films of the Raid during which both bands played appropriate music. The wreath laying complete, the German Band played the British National Anthem and the Royal Marines band played the German Anthem. All those present saw that as a meaningful act of reconciliation.

Reader will appreciate that the parade meant that our RMA members, along with others were there for over two hours and all credit must go to those who stayed the distance. On completion of the service the German Band lead the parade off the Zeedijk. The our members and the Corps Band returned to the church for a coffee and hotdog before being invited to the Naval Base for *other* refreshments.

That evening saw us on our coach to Blankenberge where the two bands delighted a capacity audience with a variety of popular music at The Casino.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES:

Next Meeting

Thursday 14th June
1900hrs – At the Union Jack Club.

Sunday 3rd June. City of London OCA's parade.

13th – 16th Sept RMA & Families Day CTCRM

Editor's note:-

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Sunday was the usual three services, first in the cemetery where CG Maj Gen Stickland RM laid the RM wreath. Then it was the main service in St Donaaskerk before marching behind the Brugge Scout Band to Admiral Keyes Plein where **Lt Col Chris Nunn OBE** explained the construction of the memorial from stones which were part of the original Mole before **Lt Gen Sir Robert Fulton KBE** laid the wreath.

The scene there was enhanced by five Corps Buglers who attracted dozens of photographers.

The final march, again behind the Scout Band, was the Town Hall to witness the prize giving to the schoolchildren who score the highest in their Raid on Zeebrugge Exam. Our Branch have sponsored the coveted engraved plaques for many years but it's a fair reward for what they have to learn about that part of our joint history.



We also distributed 300 special commemorative enamel Lapel Pins to the Belgians, the Bands and many of those who have helped us over the 35 years since we started this event.

Finally, for the last serial of the weekend, we moved to the Naval Base for what was to be a feast to be remembered before herding our members back on the coach to head south to Calais, Dover and on to London with our Standard Bearer and photographer, David Mott to prepare to return to Dover for the annual Zeebrugge Bell Ringing at 12 noon on 23rd April and the Royal Marines Heritage Trail at Deal.

FUTURE Events Sunday 13th May is GRASPAN PARADE.

CITY of London OCA's 3rd June

CTCRM AGM & Families Day 13th - 16th Sept

The chairman then invited **Brig. Spencer** address members on the future objectives of the RMA.

'He then proposed the TOAST.

Absent Comrades'