



## SARK 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION BASALT 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2022



After the 75th Anniversary commemorations held on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Sark Branch of the Royal British Legion conducted further research into the raid with the help of Eric Lee (author of the book Operation Basalt – The British Raid on Sark and Hitler's Commando Order) and family members of those Commandos, who had written down details of the raid at varying periods of their lives. The research was to establish the remaining two Commando names to be added to the commemorative plaque, as at the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary only 10 names were listed. Out of the four possible names in contention the two strongest candidates from our research we deemed to be Corporal JW (Jimmy) Flint and Bombardier EJ (Eric) Forster and their names were added to a new plaque, together with a renewed plaque detailing the German casualties and prisoner.

On Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, some 60 to 70 people gathered on the Hog's Back to watch a team of nine Commando reenactors from the Guernsey Historical Society, organised by Mr Russell Doherty, climb the cliff, and pass through the crowd as if they were not



there. The team were fully kitted out in WW2 Commando operational dress with period firearms etc. Assembled in the crowd were family members of Geoffrey Appleyard (those living in Guernsey), the German Honorary Council for Guernsey and two Captains of the German Army (Bundeswehr), serving with the HQ of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, based in Gloucester. The commemorative stone with its new plaques was draped with the Union Flag and everyone was invited to approach the stone for the unveiling.



The Chairman of the Sark Branch made a short welcoming speech and invited Mr Simon Wood (a nephew of Geoffrey Appleyard) and Captain Karsten Adrian of the Bundeswehr to unveil the stone. The Union Standard and Sark Branch



Standard, were carried throughout the ceremony by Mr John Hunt and Mr Michael Lanyon. After the unveiling Simon

Wood and Captain Adrian both made speeches. Time was then spent in talking to the reenactors and the taking of many photographs.

The gathering then made their way down into Dixcart Valley, a short stop at Petit Dixcart House where Christopher Harris, owner, gave a description of the events at the house on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1942. Then we moved upwards and onwards to the re-sited Cassino Oak that remembers Geoffrey Appleyard, who went missing in action over the Mediterranean in 1943 during Operation Husky.





A talk was given by Mr Simon Elmont as to why the oak had been re-sited and how the planting of the oak came about. The oak came from an acorn picked up at the WW2 Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery at Cassino.

The group then made its way to the Stocks Hotel Bistro for a buffet and talk by Mr Eric Lee on how the two new Commando names had been selected. After the talk Captain Karsten Adrian was invited to speak again which he did most movingly.

As a final mark of the day, the Branch Chairman produced a WW2 Commando knife (a Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife) that had been found on Petit Dixcart land by the then owner, Mrs Pat Falle, who was present in the audience. The knife can only have come from the raid, as it was found on the land by Petit Dixcart on the route that the Commandos took back to the Motor Torpedo Boat, as they were hotly pursued by the German forces in the early hours of the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1942. The production of the knife brought huge excitement, as





everyone handled an original and iconic weapon of the Commandos of WW2. Pat Falle gave a description of how she found the knife and its current usage! (Poking the logs on her fire.)

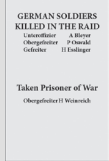
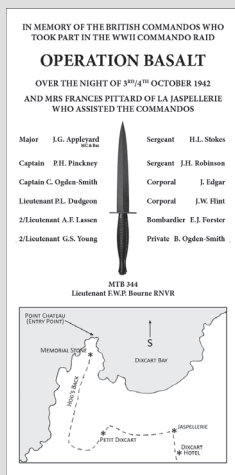
That concluded a most enjoyable and informative commemorative event and those day participants from Guernsey made there way back to the Maseline Jetty for their boat trip home while others stayed to talk more about the events of 80 years ago.

## *Lt Col Reg Guille MBE (Late Army Commando) Chairman - Sark Branch RBL*

### **WARNING**

**The Commemorative Stone should be approached with care, as the route to it is quite steep and rocky and the stone is placed on an outcrop of granite not far from the cliff edge.**

**The information engraved on the two plaques on the Commemorative Stone are replicated on this information and notice board.**



### **OPERATION BASALT - SARK**

#### **THE NIGHT OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> / 4<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 1942**

Operation Basalt (Op Basalt) was a raid by Commandos of the Small-Scale Raiding Force (SSRF) on the island of Sark. The object of the raid was to gather information on conditions in Sark and to capture one or more German soldiers to take back to England for interrogation. The objectives were achieved.

The raid was led by Major John Geoffrey Appleyard and he, with his Commandos, including the Danish Second Lieutenant Anders Lassen, made their way across the English Channel, to make landfall on the end of this headland known as the Hog's Back which they scaled. The raiders were transported on MTB 344 (Nicknamed "The Little Pisser"), which had the ability to run very fast (33 Knots / 40MPH / 64KPH) but with quiet auxiliary engines for close to shore work. The MTB Skipper was directed to wait until 3 am, then leave. This gave the shore party some two hours to conduct the mission.

Having scaled the cliff of the Hog's Back, the party made their way inland, coming across the house Le Petit Dixcart which was unoccupied. The next building they came to also seemed deserted, but on breaking into La Jaspellerie, they discovered a Mrs. Pittard, who was most helpful in providing them with information on where some German soldiers could be found, a few hundred yards away in Dicsart Hotel. She also provided information on the deportations that had happened in September. The Commandos made their way silently to Dicsart Hotel; discovering a sentry, Lassen was sent to deal with him, which he did quietly by knife. Entering the Annex of the Hotel, the Commandos captured five German soldiers and restrained them, by tying up their hands and then moving them outside to take back to the MTB. However, the German soldiers realising how few men had them captured, started to resist and cry out. In the ensuing melee two of the prisoners were shot dead, two escaped and the Commandos beat a hasty retreat with their one remaining prisoner to the Hog's Back. Fortunately for the Commandos, the MTB skipper had waited beyond his ordered time to leave and was still waiting for them when they arrived alongside, in their canoes at about 3.30am. Mission accomplished, the MTB went to full speed and headed north to arrive in Portland at about 6.30am.