

Commando Veterans Association

spatches

Founder: Vic Ralph (No 1 Commando) 1925-2007

Patron: Countess Mountbatten of Burma CBE., MSC., CD., JP., DL.

President: Brigadier (Retired) Jack Thomas CBE (No 6 Cdo) Chairman: Trooper Stan Scott (No 3 Cdo)

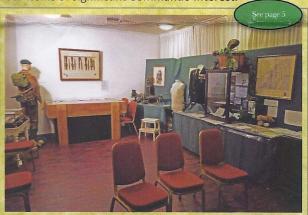
National Secretary: Geoff Murray (3 Cdo Bde)

What another great year for the Association! Great events, great attendance, great company! We had a very special day at the Royal Hospital Chelsea for St George's Day in April; an outstanding weekend at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas (which will be even better this year!); another record attendance at Fort William which included the opening of our new fabulous Commando Exhibition. These are but a few and I would like to say a huge thank you to all of those that attended and we hope that you continue to join us next year. We would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our members, wherever you are in the world, a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2013. Editor

New Commando Exhibition now open!



The new Commando Exhibition was finally opened in the West Highland Museum in Fort William on Saturday 10th of November 2012. The turn out was beyond expectation and we are now absolutely delighted to have our own official exhibition where we can donate or loan our items of significant Commando interest



Humble beginnings - the new Commando Exhibition at the West Highland



SITUATION

If anyone is up for volunteering to assist with the running of the CVA please see page 2

Issue 26 - January 2013

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Merchandise & Info

CVA Standard Bearer Fred Davies leading the way 'up the hill'. Photo Stephane Saint-Martin



Wreaths laid at the Commando Memorial - We will remember them. Photo Jennie Barlow



The Field of Remembrance and wreath laying ceremony Westminster Abbey.



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our National Secretary and great friend for so many years. Jack

A few words from our President - Brigadier Jack Thomas CBE (No 6 Cdo) As we shiver and hope that the weather will improve for our annual January visit to Elmwood Junior School for the award of the George Knowland Certificates of Merit we can reflect on another very successful year culminating in an outstanding gathering at Fort William. The Association continues to go from strength to strength thanks to the untiring work of our outstanding National Secretary Geoff Murray who, I am delighted to report, has very deservedly been promoted to Major. Sadly for us, he and his family intend to emigrate to Australia later in the year when he transfers to the Australian Army. He will be greatly missed but the many events he has instituted and organized; memorials that he has planned, designed and implemented and the goodwill that he has engendered during the last nine years will remain as a constant reminder to us of our good fortune in having him as



A few words from our Chairman - Trooper Stan 'Scotty' Scott (No 3 Cdo) Firstly, congratulations to our Geoff on his promotion to Major with effect January 2013 - Well done Geoff! Secondly, my branch in London has a remarkable team i.e. Doug Roderick (No 3 Cdo and Royal Scots Fusiliers) - daughters Sylvie, Heather, Tarnia and son Tom - a true example of the Commando Prayer - to labour and not to ask any reward. Since our formation, the London Branch has been very fortunate to have such members as them - well done and thanks a million. We are looking forward to our upcoming events -Elmwood School in January, the Royal Hospital Chelsea in April, our Commando Summer Service in June. We also have the Not Forgotten Association events such as the Thames Dunkirk Small Boats Trip in September, St James Palace and Thames Cruise Xmas Parties in December amongst others. To finish a great year for 2012 we now look forward to a great 2013. Scottu

A few words and 'a plea' from the National Secretary: Firstly Happy New Year to you all and thank you to all those that have assisted with our many events and activities throughout 2012, it is very much appreciated and we could not do anything without you.

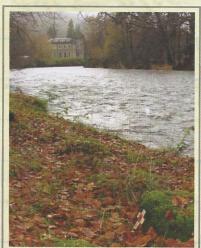
It is with the utmost regret that I inform that I shall be standing down as National Secretary in June of this year. A very difficult decision was made easier by the fact that Claudia, Josh, Jack and I shall be emigrating to Australia in October 2013 and I will therefore be in no position to carry on in the capacity that I have over the last nine years or so. My reasons for originally committing to the CVA



were many, however the main reason was simply that I was very proud to have the opportunity, as a serving Army Commando, to do my bit for our wartime veterans; I also made a promise to Vic Ralph, our founder, that I would make the CVA a success. I have to admit that I did not initially realize the amount of time and commitment that it would entail, particularly after sadly losing Vic in 2007. However with the help of many others, the Association has flourished and we have allowed our veterans to enjoy many more years where they have been able to continue to

meet up with their pals and our Commando family. I take much pride in what we have achieved and can say without any doubt that I have upheld my promise to Vic and that he would be delighted with how the Association has grown. We now have a great mix of WW2 veterans, post-war veterans, serving Commandos, and families and friends. The Association has not only allowed our veterans to get together, it has also been the platform upon which many new friendships have been forged and allows our associate members to remember with much pride, their fathers and grandfathers who served with Commando forces over the years. Each and every one of our events is testimony to this and I would be devastated to think that this may all come to an end. So, in order for the Commando Veterans Association to continue I now call out to our membership for assistance. I require a team of volunteers to take on the running of the association, in whatever shape or form that can be managed. I say 'a team' because I sincerely do not think that there is an individual out there that would be prepared to commit to the appointment in its entirety. I have been fortunate to take on extra responsibility over a period of time and have also enjoyed the benefits of the Army (i.e. flexible leave, transport etc). It would be unfair to expect anyone to take everything on as it is now. I would expect that it would take maybe four or five volunteers to carry on as we do now, each to take a particular share of the many areas of the administrative responsibility. If there are any members who, fully appreciating the commitment required of such a long term undertaking (time, effort, fuel etc) would like to become part of the team, then please give me a call or send me an email; I would be delighted to hear from you. If we are successful in getting a team together I would envisage a meeting in early March for all interested parties to discuss the finer details. I shall expect to hand over the reigns in their entirety by mid June ready for a farewell at the Arboretum on 29-30 of June. If we are unsuccessful in getting a team together then we shall have to look at what we can salvage without a National Secretary or bespoke team in place. The website will be in good hands, and certain events will continue, it will just mean that there will be no central focal point and important things such as subscriptions, membership, newsletters, welfare (in liaison with Commando Benevolent Fund), wreaths and pavers, merchandise, annual draw, etc etc may have to cease. It would be such a shame if this happens - particularly having no focal point for the wartime veterans and their wives. So, if you are in a position to help and have thought hard about the commitment, please give me a call. I do not intend to sound brash but we simply cannot accept timewasters: if you call, you are absolutely confident that you can play a major part on the committee. If individuals can be identified then I can then explain the roles and responsibilities that I currently have and we can discuss and agree where each member can possibly fit into that. I hope to be able to have a meeting at the Arboretum in June to finalize arrangements and hand over to the new committee. Some members may say that the committee should be nominated and voted in however it does not work like that as we know, so I will just be making it happen, fingers crossed. There will be an update in the April edition of Dispatches to inform you all of how we get on. I sincerely hope that we can make this work and that we do not have to give up all that we have achieved over the years!! Geoff Murray

Our annual pilgrimage to Fort William and Spean Bridge each year just goes from strength to strength. The turnout this year was again exceptional and we saw many more families attending in honour of their fathers and grandfathers, which is wonderful news!



North-west up the Arkaig to Achnacarry House from where the ashes of our dear friend Bob Bishop (No 2 Cdo) are scattered. Photo Jack Bakker

Our weekend kicked off on Friday afternoon with our annual musical delight at the Lochaber High School where we were entertained by the school's Wind and Pipe Band. The students were in very fine form under the leadership of Headmaster Jim Sutherland and the Band Master Mark Reynolds. This year's Vic Ralph Certificates of Merit were awarded to Amy Cameron (Wind Band Musician of the Year) and Rebecca Shearer (Pipe Band Musician of the Year), congratulations to both of them for their dedication and professional attitude to music. A huge thank you to all teachers and students for yet another wonderful display of musical talent.

Saturday was a big day with the opening of our new Commando Exhibition at the West Highland Museum in Fort William (see page

5). This was the fruition of many years of planning by the museum trustees and the CVA and although humble in its beginnings, the exhibition has huge potential to be a fabulous vehicle on which to carry forward the history of the Commandos, particularly those who trained at nearby Achnacarry. The expected turnout was surpassed tenfold and those who could not fit into the museum enjoyed tea and cakes in the cafe next door, or the delights of John Whyte and his band who played throughout on the Square. Many thanks to all of those members who have donated/loaned items for the exhibition and also to those who were involved in preparing for the actual opening day - United We Conquer!



Winners of the 2013 Vic Ralph Certificate of Merit with Geoff Murray and a very smiley Stan Scott



Scotty reminiscing as the Chief of Clan Cameron looks on.

aspirations to attend the All Arms Commando Course and serve with the Commando Sappers. The potential Commandos had on display all of their Commando Course equipment and weapons, much to the delight of the wartime Commandos, the cadets from the 1st Battalion the Highlanders, and the children (some older than others!). Many thanks to WO2 (QMSI) Stu Damon for organising this. Our Chairman Stan Scott gave us some of his Achnacarry memories which unfortunately had to be abridged due to the

On completion at the West Highland Museum we all made our merry way to Achanacarry House where the Lochiel made us as welcome as ever. With more numbers than I have seen at Achnacarry for many years, we enjoyed a display by 'Achnacarry

Troop' of 24 Commando Engineer Regiment. This Troop is a holding troop for the Commando volunteers who have

incessant rain. After a stroll along the River Arkaig, and respects being paid to our dear friend Bob Bishop, we said a very fond cheerio to Lochiel and made our way back to Fort William.

Commando recruit, wee Jimmy Lain discusses Xmas presents. Photo Stephen Donnison

On return to Fort William we had our annual parade of the Highland Cadets outside the Alexandra Hotel where our CVA Certificate of Merit for 2013 was awarded to LCpl Oskar Wineberg for his professionalism, leadership and dedication to duty. Immediately following the parade, some of the Year 6 students from Lochaber High School along with some of the Highland Cadets took the opportunity to interview a number of our wartime Commandos in the warmth of the hotel. This was an excellent addition to the educational element of the day and many thanks go to the wartime veterans who gave their time - Stan Scott (No 3 Cdo), Jack Johnson (44 RM Cdo), Fred Sanky (44 RM Cdo), Ernie Mason (No 4 Cdo), Billy Moore (No 5 Cdo), Harold Nethersole (No 6 Cdo), Joe Vose (RM) to name but a few. See additional article on Page 5.

The evening events kicked off after dinner with a few presentations and our annual draw. We also held a small auction which raised just under £500, a percentage of which will be donated to the development of the Commando Exhibition. Congratulations to all those who won a prize in the draw (see back page for winners) and many thanks to all of those who

donated prizes and items for the auction - very much appreciated indeed. A great night of catching up was then enjoyed by all.

A mild and dry Sunday morning saw a packed Fort William town parade with a short service on the Parade followed by the service proper in the Duncansburgh Church. Tea and cakes were available as usual in the Alexandra Hotel where many members warmed up on completion of the town parade ready for the Commando Service later in the afternoon. Again the afternoon weather was kind and although we had no sunshine this year, the rain and wind were also absent on parade, thankfully. Our Standard Bearer Fred Davies led the Commando Veterans proudly 'up the hill' under command of our Parade Marshall Dave Burgess and the service was an outstanding first effort from our temporary (Commando) Reverend Dr Adrian Varwell, we hope to see him again next year.



Highland Cadets on the drive at Achnacarry House. Photo Jennie Barlow



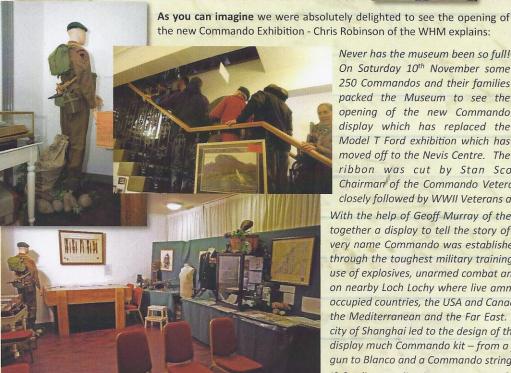
Billy Moore laying the wreath at the morning Fort William town parade. Photo Nick Collins

Our weekend was topped off by a lovely Sunday evening simply chilling out and reminiscing over the previous few days. What a wonderful experience! For those yet to join us in Fort William, please make the effort next year and you will most definitely want to join us each year thereafter. See the CVA website for more photos.



Rev Dr Adrian Varwell keeping his hands warm prior to his excellent service. Photo Nick Collins





Wartime Commandos interviewed by students from Lochaber High School - by Rebecca Robertson, 6S

In preparation for Remembrance day, four Advanced Higher English students and four S4 students were asked by Mr Richard Sidgwick, from the West Highland Museum, to interview a small group of Commandos about their memories of Achnacarry and the war for the museum's forthcoming Commando exhibition. After having various meetings discussing what we would question the Commandos on and how to work the complicated recording devices, we finally met with the six men on 10 November in the Alexandra Hotel. Having to ask possibly personal and emotional questions to these brave men was quite a daunting task as none of us knew how well they would respond to our questions about training at Achnacarry; life as a Commando and their traumatic experiences such as D-Day. To our great relief, most of the men were more than happy to go into great (and often shocking) detail about their recollections of the war. Hearing these stories from men who had experienced the war first-hand made them seem all the more real and touching. There were a few moments when even the Commandos felt very emotional whilst talking about witnessing some of the dreadful sights that they encountered; eyes were watering from both students and soldiers alike.

Being given the chance to interview the Commandos allowed us all to really appreciate the magnificent job they did in fighting for our country all those years ago and it heightened our respect for these brave men even more. It was an honour and a privilege to have had the opportunity to speak to these great men. It was with great sadness that I realised - after that weekend - that the Commandos are a dying breed and the acts of valour that they displayed may be forgotten. That is why the West Highland Museum's Commando exhibition is so important.

Never has the museum been so full! On Saturday 10th November some 250 Commandos and their families packed the Museum to see the opening of the new Commando display which has replaced the Model T Ford exhibition which has

moved off to the Nevis Centre. The History of the FS Knife complete with ribbon was cut by Stan Scott, original 1st Pattern. Loaned by Geoff Murray

Chairman of the Commando Veterans Association, who led the way into Room 1 closely followed by WWII Veterans and their families.

With the help of Geoff Murray of the Commando Veterans Association we have put together a display to tell the story of Commando Training in Lochaber in WW2. The very name Commando was established here at Achnacarry where 25,000 men went through the toughest military training of WWII. They became skilled in shooting, the use of explosives, unarmed combat and silent killing and took part in landing assaults on nearby Loch Lochy where live ammunition was used. They came from Britain, the occupied countries, the USA and Canada and left for daring raids on mainland Europe, the Mediterranean and the Far East. On display we tell the story of how the lawless city of Shanghai led to the design of the Fairbairn Sykes Commando knife. We have on display much Commando kit – from a first pattern F-S knife and a Thompson machine gun to Blanco and a Commando string vest!

If funding applications are successful, we will be constructing a full professional exhibition on Commando Training for Spring 2013. We thank all those visitors who have left us their contact details to help support our ambitions. Please email Colleen, our manager at colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk if you too would like to be kept informed of our progress.

If any members have items that they feel would be suitable for the exhibition then please contact Colleen. Thank you to all those who have already donated or loaned items - a particular mention to Mrs April Richer (daughter of Eric Groves MM - No 2 Cdo), whose fathers personal kit (see photo top left) made a significant addition to the exhibition - very much appreciated.













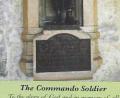


Remembrance Events at the Field of Remembrance and West Minster Abbey

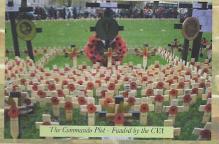
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Members of the CVA attended the opening of the Field of Remembrance and also the wreath laying ceremony at West Minster Abbey on Saturday 10 November. The service was taken by sub-Dean, the Venerable Dr Reis, Jimmy Dunning (No 4 Cdo) and his dear wife Jane were joined by Mrs Deslree Roderick MBE, Roy Cadman (No 3 Cdo) of the Royal Hospital Chelsea and Bill Webster (son of Sgt Douglas Webster (No 2 Cdo)). Photos courtesy of Bill Webster.





the Commandos who fell in the Second World War 1939 - 1945









Our annual visit to The Royal Hospital Chelsea - 14th April 2013

Please add to your diary our annual visit to The Royal Hospital

Chelsea on Sunday 14th April. We will meet as usual on the Figure Court at 10 o'clock for a short parade of In-Pensioners and Commando veterans before moving to the Hospital Chapel for the Sunday morning service. We shall then retire to the bar for a lovely curry and sandwhich buffet (£5 per person in advance), a



raffle, and a good old catch up. We would love to see you there -please contact Sylvie on 0208 4734651 to book your food.

Book now!

Our **Commando Summer Service Weekend** and Armed Forces Day at the National Memorial Arboretum and the Lea Marston Hotel - 29th & 30th June 2013

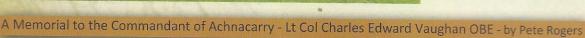
Our 2013 visit to the Arboretum for our Commando Summer Service has definite potential to be the best ever. On Saturday, we shall enjoy the delights of Armed Forces Day at the Arboretum, with the unveiling of our Army Commando Memorial Wall and a revamped Commando Memorial. We will then retire to the wonderful Lea Marston Hotel for a night full of surprises! This will also be an opportunity to wave off our National Secretary Geoff Murray and his wife Claudia before they set sail for down under.



Sunday morning will see us back at the Arboretum for our Summer Service with a

small remembrance service at the Army Commando Memorial. Rooms will be limited and seats for the dinner will be selling like hot cakes. Please contact Fred Davies NOW in order not to be disappointed. Fred would prefer email (fredtpnp@gmail.com), however you can also call him on 07980754478. We look forward to seeing you there.



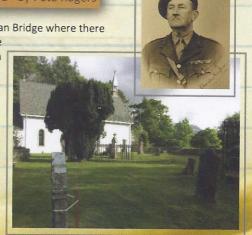


When visiting the Commando Memorial next, you may also wish to visit Kilmonivaig Church in Spean Bridge where there is a plaque in memory of Charles Vaughan. Looks a very peaceful little church as can be seen by the photo below. The photo of the plaque (courtesy of the Scottish War Memorials Project) is now in the gallery on the CVA website.



A quote below from Donald Gilchrist's book Castle Commando where he writes a forward note to the 'Colonel' . He ends by saying:

"But it is to you, Charles, that we who counted it an honour to serve you, wish to show our appreciation. You made us fit to fight. You taught us the art of living in a world at war, and to laugh in the most perilous circumstances. What we were - if we were anything - we owe in great measure to you."





42 RM Commando Died 29 September 2012



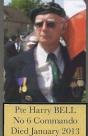
No 2 Commando Died 20 September 2012 aged 94 years



Arnold 'Arnie' WHEELDON No 6 Commando Died 28 September 2012 aged 96 years



No 5 Commando



LCpl Eugene GUINEBAULT No 10 IA Cdo & No 4 Cdo Died 12 September 2012 aged 89 years



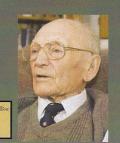
David AE ROBERTS Died March 2012



Anthony FIRTH 10 IA Commando Died 3 December 2012 aged 94 years



Maj Gen Tony DEAN-DRUMMOND DSO, MC &B No 2 Commando Died 4 December 2012 aged 95 years



No12 Commando Died January 2013 aged 95 years



Died 24 September 2012 aged 87 years

Les AUCOTT RM

Died October 2012

o 5 Commando



Mne JJW ARMSTRONG RM



No 3 Commando



Cpl John GIVENS No 4 Commando Died 30 September 2012 aged 93 years

Sgt George REES No 7 Commando Died 18 November 2012 aged 94 years



William B DAY 30 Cdo Assault Unit Died 28 August 2012 aged 95 years





40 Commando RM KIA Afghanistan 24 October 2012

Development of the Army Commando Memorial at Alrewas Our wonderful Army Commando Memorial at Alrewas which

was unveiled by HRH Prince Philip in 2007 has below it an area where we have added individual memorial pavers for those Commandos either killed during WW2 or on other operations, or who have passed away in later life. The pavers have been put in place by our very own handy man Fred Davies, and I must thank him for his work over

Something that has been an aspiration for many decades is to have the names of all of those Commandos who were killed or died during WW2 added to a memorial of their own. It was certainly an aspiration of the late Ronnie Williamson (No 1 & 1/5 Cdos & SBS) who offered to fund the addition of such a memorial to the area of the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge; this met opposition and simply did not happen. Well, being such a special tribute to such a band of warriors (and never one to take no for an answer), we have been saving our pennies over the last few years for such a memorial and have approached Anwick Forge (who installed the Commando Memorial at Alrewas in 2007) to take on the project. I am delighted to say that by the time we visit the Arboretum in June 2013, the paver area of the memorial will have been completely renovated, and a dedication wall with the names of all of the Army Commandos (see note below) who died during WW2 will be in place. The memorial will include an individual's Service number, rank, name, parent unit, Commando unit, and when and where they died. On completion of the renovation work, which is being headed up by Mr Lee Jakeman with his team from South Staffordshire College, Tamworth, we will only

then add to the paver area for members who pass away over the coming years whose family wish to have a paver laid in their memory.

All very exciting and a wonderful and everlasting memorial to those very brave men.

Note: The Secretary has spent many months attempting to ensure that the list of names is as accurate as possible. The Commando Roll of Honour and other lists have been found to be inaccurate in certain detail and actually omit some names of those that we know for a fact were killed or died serving with the Commandos. We have also added those who served with the Commandos but may have moved on (i.e. SAS, SBS) before they were killed, and also those that died of their wounds after the war had ended. We would have liked to have added the names of Royal Marine Commandos that served alongside them, however this was not possible due to many reasons.









The Commandos Benevolent Fund

CVA Merchandise & other bits



CVA Ties - £8 + £1.50 p&p

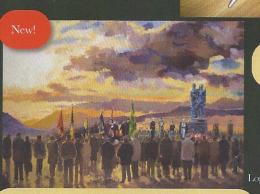


Pins - all £3 + £1 p&pFull, associate & FS knife

Coasters - £2.50 each + £1 p&p

Blazer Badge - £8 + £1 p&p

Please send your orders and payment to Gerry Keelor at 40 Maple Close, Billinge, Wigan, WN5 7PZ. Cheques made payable to: 'The CVA'



Polo shirts (Black or Green) (M, L, XL) -£15 + £2.50 p&p

Ballpoint pens - £5

for six + £1.50 p&p





Commando Commemorative Covers - £1.99 + 60p Lt George Knowland VC and Lt Col Geoffrey Keyes VC, MC

Greeting Cards - £3.50 for pack of 10 (with envelopes) +£1 p&p

Many congratulations to our Douggie!

Many congratulations to our dear friend and fellow Commando Douggie Roderick (No 3 Cdo) who shall be celebrating his 95th Birthday on Monday 28th January 2013. Douggie, a Royal Scots



Fusilier before joining No 3 Cdo, took part in the Vaagso raid during which he was Have a wonderful injured. 95th birthday Douggie and we look forward to seeing you very soon.

An injured Douggie on

Commando Veterans Association - Ordnance Branch

The first meeting of the Ordnance Branch was held at Derriford TA centre in Plymouth on the 12th December 2012. The branch will be open to all CVA members, particularly those who have served in an RAOC or RLC Commando units.

For further information please email: cvaordnance@hotmail.co.uk



The lucky winners of our CVA National Draw for 2012 are listed below. Well done to all and good luck to everyone next year! Our local draw

at Fort William was also a success and many thanks go to Sylvie Townshend (our very own 'ticket machine') for her unerring support each year! She's an absolute diamond.

The second second	SER	PRIZE	WINNER	REMARKS
	1	Apple iPad	Mrs Sheila Cox	Delivered
	2	Regency Hamper	WH Brown	Delivered
	3	Regency Hamper	Y McCulloch	Delivered
	4	M&S Gift Voucher £50	E Dower	Posted
	5	Sainsbury's Gift Voucher £50	Jack Glynn	Posted
	6	M&S British Beer Gift	Joan Davies	Delivered
	7	£50 Cash	Roy Davies	Posted
	8	£50 Cash	Jack Glynn	Posted
	9	£30 Cash	K Tudor	Posted
	10	£30 Cash	P Blakemore	Posted

Payment of Annual CVA Subscriptions

Your subs can be paid at any time during the year. Thank you to all who have paid their subs for 2013 already. For those who are still recovering from the festive season and need a little more time please use the following details:

If paying by cheque please make payable to 'CVA' and send to CVA HQ (address at bottom of front page). If paying by Standing Order please obtain a form from your bank and add the following details before passing back to your bank:

Account name: Commando Veterans Association

Bank: Lloyds TSB Branch: Peterborough Sort Code: 30.96.60 Account: 02627022