

# Major Laurence MacCallum

Wartime Commando who later became a Wimbledon umpire

MAJOR LAURENCE MacCALLUM, who has died aged 86, was awarded an MC when serving with the Commandos in Albania.

After the war MacCallum became a senior umpire at Wimbledon, and at various times officiated in all the senior finals; he was noted for his perfect control.

Laurence Eric MacCallum was born at Wimbledon on April 15 1910, and during the First World War was evacuated to Weston-super-Mare, where he was educated. Aged 15 he became an area youth champion at boxing, and won a final bout at the Royal Albert Hall.

On leaving school, MacCallum worked for a time for the General Accident Insurance. But having joined the London Scottish in 1932, he was called up in 1939, and subsequently commissioned into the Manchester Regiment.

After intensive training he was posted to No 2 Commando, and in 1944 took over a troop from Captain the Duke of Wellington, who had been killed soon after the Salerno landings. Subsequently, MacCallum was engaged in operations against the Germans in the Adriatic, Yugoslavia, Albania and Italy.

By 1944, the British, in co-operation with Tito's Partisans, were putting maximum



MacCallum: freed Corfu

pressure on the Germans occupying Yugoslavia and the Dalmatian Islands.

In June 1944 the island of Brac was attacked to prevent the Germans withdrawing their 1,200-strong garrison, which was badly needed on the mainland. The British attack forced the Germans to reinforce the island rather than evacuate it, thus disorganising their plans. MacCallum was mentioned in despatches.

In September, the Commandos were ordered to seize the port of Sarande, Albania, to prevent German troops in north Corfu using it as an escape route. Sarande was strongly garrisoned and

the approaches to it were, it was said, "like the surface of a giant file".

The weather was appalling and the area favoured the defence. However, the operation was completely successful. It freed a large part of Albania and liberated the whole of Corfu. MacCallum won his MC.

On returning to civilian life MacCallum became a sub-postmaster, beginning at Eltham and eventually running three offices.

Although MacCallum was an able performer at rugby, football, cricket and badminton, he was soon devoting nearly all his spare time to lawn tennis. For many years he organised the Kent County championships at Beckenham. His happiest moment at Wimbledon was presiding over the ladies' championship final when it was won by Ann Jones.

He was a stalwart of the Commandos' Old Comrades Association, serving as chairman of the General Council, and as president.

Although he lived in England, Major "Mac" was proud of his Scottish ancestry and fond of playing and hearing bagpipes.

He was outstandingly generous, with time and money, to people in trouble or need.

MacCallum is survived by his wife Joan and by their son and daughter.