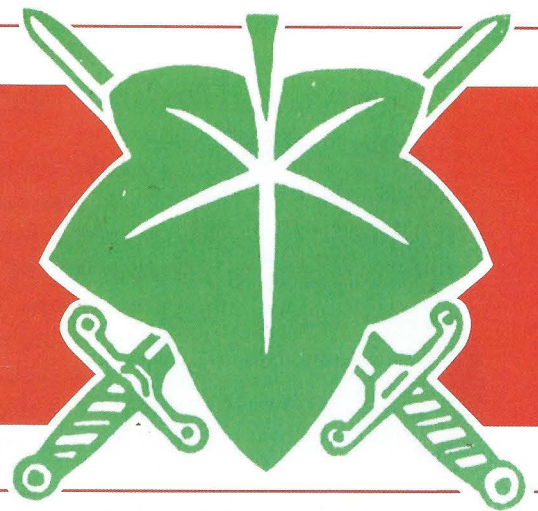


THE FORMATION SIGN

JOURNAL OF THE MILITARY HERALDRY SOCIETY



ROYAL AIR FORCE COMMANDOS



Attending a Remembrance Sunday commemoration at a local memorial erected to the memory of Sgt John Mortimer Ellis, a pilot with 85 Squadron killed when his Hurricane crashed at Chelsfield on 1st September 1940, the Editor was surprised to meet a young RAF officer sporting the Commando dagger shown here, an uncommon sight on RAF blue.

Flight Lieutenant Chris Carrington-Smith (below left), a local resident, former cadet with the Biggin Hill ATC squadron and recently a Merlin Helicopter pilot with 28 Squadron, earned his Green Beret and dagger in 2011. On the front page of *RAF News* in September 2011 he was pictured together with RAF Regiment Flight Lieutenant Ant Casson, a Forward Air Control expert previously attached to 40 RM Commando in Afghanistan, who had earned his beret on the same course. Chris, who had a longstanding ambition to do the Royal Marine selection course, said "it gave me a better understanding of what the guys on the ground do which helps in my role supporting them." Both now have the right to wear their green berets when serving with the Royal Marines. *RAF News* noted that Chris and Ant are among only a handful of airmen in the past decade to have won Commando status. Our thanks to Chris and *RAF News* for permission to tell this story.



Formerly the sign of the Commando Brigade, the dagger badge was introduced to the Army by Defence Council Instruction 216 of 1976 as "a distinctive mark of achievement" for every officer and soldier successfully qualifying for a Green Beret by completing a commando course. As our member **Mike Jackson** noted at the time "a successful conclusion to a struggle that has been going on since before 1965."

The green beret, introduced in October 1942 for the Special Service Brigade was not issued to the Army after 1946 as the Royal Marines had assumed the Commando role. In

April 1955 the War Office Dress Committee, asked by GOC Troops, Malta if REME personnel serving with 3 Commando Brigade could wear the green beret, Commando flash and Brigade HQ green lanyard, deferred a decision until the position of other attached army personnel was considered. When the Committee met in January 1955 it learned that GOC Troops, Malta wished all attached Army personnel to wear the distinguishing items. Objections to use of the lanyard by the attached RE and RASC personnel were waived when it was pointed out that only a single RE officer and 2 ORs together with one RASC officer and one OR were eligible. All three items were approved for Army personnel attached to 3 Commando Brigade.