

German soldiers taken aback by islanders' warm welcome

Allied Rapid Reaction Corps group reflect on time cleaning military cemetery



Bailiff Sir Richard Collas talks to the soldiers during a special ceremony after they had completed their work at the military cemetery. (Allied Rapid Reaction Corps)

THE FIRST German soldiers to visit the island in uniform since the Second World War said they were taken aback by how much the Occupation is at the forefront of islanders' minds.

A group from the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps – German and British soldiers affiliated with Nato based in Gloucester – spent almost two weeks cleaning the military cemetery at Fort George ahead of a special ceremony on Thursday.

The trip was organised by the Commonwealth and German War Graves Commissions, who arrange for soldiers to maintain graves across Europe.

The graves are usually maintained by the parish. The oldest tombstones date back to the 1800s and were pressure-washed with specialist equipment by the group.

The men stayed on-island and were taken on frequent tours to areas of historical significance and met many local people.

'I was surprised the Occupation is still on the minds of the people. Everyone knows lots about it and it was 70 years ago, but it is still such an important

by Alex Warlow

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event,' said Captain Christophe S, one of the team leaders.

'We were shown a lot of places, something almost every day. With the other European trips they have maybe two museums to visit, we learnt so much,' he said.

The men said they were all apprehensive about how they might be received on the island, but were very grateful to all the people who made them feel welcome.

'I would usually make trips to B&Q in my normal clothes to get supplies for the clean-up. But one day I decided to go in uniform and a lady came up to me, she had read the article in the Press, to say thank you for the work we were doing.

'You should see the cemetery now, it looks amazing.

'There were builders too working in Fort George, they would often help us, telling us what is best to buy and where from. We had a very warm welcome,' said Captain S.

On their penultimate day the soldiers were taken to Sark by Marco Ciotti, the

ADC to the Lt-Governor, for a tour in the footsteps of Operation Basalt – the British night-time raid at Dixcart Bay in October 1942.

It was the intention when the trip was planned several years ago for some of the group to meet Sark resident Werner Rang, who was stationed in Sark as a doctor for the German army and married a local girl named Phyllis.

Unfortunately, both Mr and Mrs Rang have since died, although Captain Erik W. was able to meet their daughter on the island, Rose.

The captain said hearing about the couple's story whereby Mr Rang was at first rejected by some of the islanders, taught them about individuals being able to bring nations together. 'I was actually given a signed copy of the book about his life, which I am very thankful for.

'We have met many people who have shown us kindness.

'I hope what we did may have did that too, I hope it helped to change the minds of some people,' he said.

The military cemetery at Fort George includes 111 German war graves.



Local builders also worked on the cemetery and provided the visiting soldiers with advice on what materials to use and where to buy them.



Two soldiers give metalwork on a war grave a fresh coat of paint.

Inflation rise over the quarter

INFLATION has risen over the quarter but is down on this time last year.

Measured by RPIX, which excludes mortgage interest payments, the figure was 2.4% in June, which is 0.5% higher than March and 0.4% down on June 2017.

Services providing heat and light, alongside leisure services, such as foreign holidays and cinema tickets, were biggest contributors to the annual change in this figure.

RPIX in the UK was 3.4%.
RPI in Guernsey was 2.6%.

Over the quarter, an increase in the price of kerosene and butane gas cylinders saw fuel and light prices rise by 4.6%.

Seasonal increases in sea and air fares as well as hire car fees meant that the travel index rose by 5.2%.

There were increases in the price of whisky and bottles of red wine, which were the biggest contributor for alcoholic drink rising by 2.3% in total.

Clothing and footwear fell by 3% because of seasonal offers in blouses, dresses, men's jackets and cardigans.

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