

Dear All

Introduction

After two years of postponement due to COVID19 we are once again planning for the last organised visit by The Royal Scots to Le Paradis. As advised in our message on 6th September last year Lestrem Commune have set the date for the 2022 Commemoration as Saturday 28 May. We therefore plan to assemble at the Campanile, Fouquières-lès-Béthune on Friday 27th May with dispersal on Monday 30th May. As you will be aware the 2022 May Bank Holiday has been moved to Thursday 2nd June with an additional bank holiday Friday 3rd June, creating a four-day weekend for the occasion of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This should make travel easier for the Le Paradis weekend, and we hope that COVID19 related travel complications to and from France will have eased by then.

General

The villagers of Le Paradis and the Lestrem Commune have once again invited The Royal Scots and The Royal Norfolks back to Le Paradis, this time for the 82nd Anniversary of the Battle for Le Paradis.

We will be commemorating the events of May 1940 when The Royal Scots (1st Bn) and The Royal Norfolks (2nd Bn), as part of the 4th Infantry Brigade, were ordered to "Stand and fight to the last man!" to delay the vanguard of the German "Blitzkrieg". This force's gallant stand helped allow 330,000 of the BEF and Allied troops to be evacuated a few days later from the beaches at Dunkirk. This email is to invite Royal Scots, their relations, and friends of the Regiment to attend.

Outline of Events For 2022

Friday 27th May

PM - Those attending arrive and stay in Campanile Béthune (approx. 1 hour drive from Calais). We will plan on having supper at the hotel after drinks at about 8 pm.

Saturday 28th May

1000 - 1200 - Three short open-air services are held. The first at Louis Creton Farm (near Le Paradis village and 20 mins drive from the hotel) this was the site of the massacre of 97 POW mainly from 2 R NORFOLK. The village Marching Band then leads everyone to Le Paradis Church, and finally to the British Military Cemetery to the rear of the church. RS wreaths will be laid at each ceremony.

1215 – Commune Reception location to be advised - normally about 200 people approx. The History Room will be open.

1300 - Possible visit to the new Memorial in Lestrem where wreaths will be laid. Then there will probably be a lunch at a local restaurant or civic centre arranged by the Community (Commune) for a number of local people and visitors - payment is normally required. Lunch is optional.

Evening - Supper at Campanile or at a local restaurant/inn.

Sunday 29th May

TBA – We are planning a Wreath laying ceremony at Mont-Bernanchon Churchyard CWGC near to Le Paradis where a number of the fallen 1RS of May 1940 are buried alongside WWI 8th Bn casualties. This would be followed by a guided tour of Le Paradis to visit the positions of The Royal Scots and The Royal Norfolks and to hear accounts of the action. Time & weather permitting we may be able to have a picnic lunch in the vicinity.

For those who have already seen the battlefield they might, instead, like to plan a day to visit the Ypres Salient (50 km from Bethune - 1 hr by road) and attend the Menin Gate Ceremony there in the evening at 2000 hrs.

Afternoon & Evening - We will probably plan to have supper in Béthune town, or at the Campanile as people wish.

Monday 30th May

Béthune Market and the town centre is worth visiting on Monday morning.

Background

There is a short film clip that was made of 75th anniversary events in 2015 organised by the Lestrem Commune Mairie at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmaklVM-P4A>

It gives a good flavour of the events that the Commune organises.

The 2020 Virtual Commemoration with its account of the events leading up to and the battle itself made by the RS373 Team may be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gz42hSZg7-M&t=3s> "Battle of Paradis" Room

The room was officially opened in May 2018. It contains a series of Story Boards, with photographs and subtitles in French and English, giving an account of the fighting around Le Paradis 25 - 27 May 1940, including the massacre of the Royal Norfolks. There are also 5 film clips to view. The display also reflects on the contribution of the people of Paradis and the Lestrem Commune since 1945 in their acts of commemoration for all those involved in the fighting.

The Story Boards may be seen at <https://www.theroyalscots.co.uk/le-paradis/>

For further information including 1RS Major Jimmy Howe's first hand account from 1940, photos of previous visits and other data please visit

http://www.laird.org.uk/Scots/The_Royal_Scots_at_Le_Paradis_May_1940.aspx .

The Royal Norfolks relatives also have their own excellent website telling the story of the battle <http://www.leparadismassacre.com>

Travel & Accommodation

Road/Rail/Air Travel -Individuals will need to plan their own transport and movement to and from Le Paradis. The Dover-Calais Ferry, Eurotunnel are the closest channel crossings or Eurostar (Lille being the closest Eurostar railway station) and Brussels is the nearest airport. Béthune is 80 km (less than 1 hr) from Calais. SatNav, or at least a large scale map, are strongly recommended for driving around the local area.

Accommodation

We will be staying at the Campanile, Fouquières Les Béthune, please book online <https://fouquieres-les-bethunes.campanile.com/en-us/> . As there is still an element of uncertainty due to COVID19 it may be prudent to take a higher rate which allows cancellation without forfeit.

Piper & The Royal Scots Association Standard Party - Matt Hoggan, from The Royal Scots Association Pipe Band will once again be coming with us. The RS Association Standard Party will attend for the first time.

EU Visa Free Travel

ETIAS stands for European Travel Information and Authorization System. It is an electronic system that allows and keeps track of visitors from countries who do not need a visa to enter the Schengen Zone. In a way, it resembles the US Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), which serves a similar purpose.

ETIAS was due to be launched on January 1, 2022. It intended to be obligatory for travellers coming from outside the Schengen Zone by the end of 2022.

<https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/etias/>

Travel and Health Insurance

A valid EHC Card and its UK replacement GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card) will allow for emergency treatment in the EU for non-EU citizens. It is therefore advisable to obtain travel and medical insurance.

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>

Conclusion

We will be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to join us at Le Paradis this year. After the due solemnity and respect given to the Saturday and Sunday morning events we will ensure that we have a relaxed and enjoyable and interesting weekend. Please let me know if you wish to attend and book your own travel and accommodation accordingly. Further details will be sent out to participants in due course.

Best wishes

Iain