

The Croaker

SPRING 2004



Cap Badge Inauguration Ceremony

18th November 2003

Steve Wakely

ONE FOR THE LINE BOOK

It is not everyday that a unit changes its regimental identity, but the 18th November 2003 saw the Special Boat Service do that very thing at an official Cap Badge Inauguration Ceremony held at RM Poole. The guest of honour was the Captain General Royal Marines, his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh who was hosted by Admiral Sir Jonathon Band (CINCFLEET)

By way of background, it is worth bringing your attention to the current CO's Croaker article (published in Nov/Dec 03 *Globe & Laurel*), which seeks to explain the main reasons why the SBS has sought its own unique identity. What is not mentioned in the article and worthy of note is that from October 2001 Full Command of the SBS was transferred from CGRM to CINCFLEET, in itself a major move, which could be construed by many as the foundation stone of unit identity. After much consultation CGRM was to give his full support in October 2002 followed shortly by that of CINCFLEET. In brief, the SBS had been given approval to wear their own cap badge, parachute wings, and stable belt in addition to flying a regimental flag.

It will come as no surprise that deliberation over cap badge and accoutrement design followed the democratic line with all those so artistically inclined tendering their proposals, many presenting their clearly latent and comical talents. In fact, the design stage began as far back as January 2002. Although the 'Frog & Paddles' was seriously considered and a sample produced the design proved too complicated for a hand embroidered cloth cap badge. But consensus ruled that having stood the test of time and with deep seated historical roots the 'Frog & Paddles' should become the official badge of

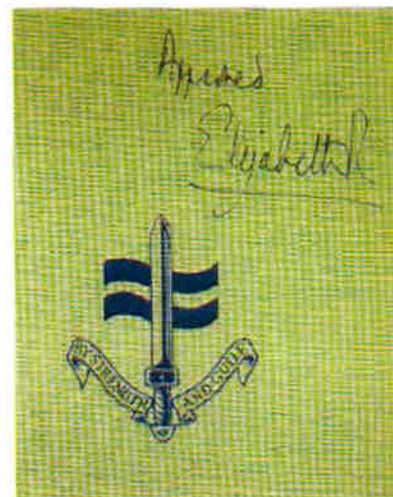
the SBS Association. In any case, it's a good excuse to own another tie.

Mindful of the 'kiss' acronym the design needed to reflect the maritime dimension and uniqueness of being the Royal Navy's Special Force, yet maintain a link with the past; so waves, daggers, swords etc were much in evidence. Indeed, it transpired the final design was to have some hint of historical similarity with one of the forebear units, No2 Special Boat Section (Army Comms unit founded by Lieutenant Roger Courtney KRRC, see below). This team must be credited with the very first canoe/demolition raid conducted by Lieutenant Tug Wilson (Army?), and Marine Wally Hughes at the end of June 1941 when they landed on the Sicilian coast from the submarine HMS Urge to attack a railway tunnel. So eventually, by the end of January 2003 there were several serious designs which were e-mailed to and from the SBS TGHQ for the final vote.



Meanwhile, back at Poole there were still two more hoops to jump through, firstly, that of engaging the College of Arms and secondly, seeking final approval from Her Majesty the Queen. The College of Arms is part of the Royal Household and are charged with all heraldic

matters both civilian and military. After much correspondence and not to say a little frustration the College endorsed the final design which was forwarded to Her Majesty. The Queen issued her approval on 12th April 2003, the original artwork becoming part of the MOD art collection and on display in the CO's office. The official jargon for all you heraldic spotters: 'A Dagger point upwards Argent; the Blade over Bars wavy coupé Azure and the hilt surmounting the centre of a Motto Scroll Argent thereon the Letters in Sable the words BY STRENGTH AND GUILE'. There you have it. The badge is classed as a wire hullion badge hand sewn in Pakistan and the same badge is worn by all ranks.



Regarding the remaining accoutrements, a request was made to wear the SAS Wings, and why not, as the SBS undergo the very same course and 'joinry' is supposed to be the name of the game. However, and perhaps rather parochially, the request was denied. The wings finally selected are almost identical to those worn by the WWII Special Boat Sections and are issued for Blues, Lovats, Mess Dress, Combat Dress and the KD/Stone shirt. The Stable Belt, worn only with working dress, comprises of a plain mid green canvas belt fastened with an etched



bronze 'Victor' style clasp surmounted by the SBS badge. The flag is of simple design divided equally into 3 bands (green, black and green) with the badge positioned centrally. The flag is flown directly outside the SBS Regimental HQ with a ceremonial flag on permanent display within the building. A new lanyard was also adopted as the previous lanyard was identical to that worn by the Royal Green Jackets.

As far as wearing the new badge, the badge is worn by all tri-service ranks who pass UKSF Selection and join the SBS, and when appointed to UKSF appointments. The primary aim here is to have everyone who joins the unit wearing the same badge and headdress, no matter what tribe you come from. Currently, when returning to 3 Cdo Bde the Globe & Laurel will be worn, although it is now understood that NCO's returning briefly for all Command Courses can wear the new SBS badge. SBS parachute wings are not worn on normal working dress, however, are worn on all dress uniforms and also on combat dress when returning to 3 Cdo Bde. Whilst serving within the SBS the Loyat

uniform has become the No1 ceremonial dress worn on occasions such as Remembrance Sunday, the rationale here being that you cannot wear a beret with blues except during Kings Squad. Naturally, Blues are still retained for Command Courses and appointments within the Corps.

The final phase of 'Op Badge' was to crown the occasion with a suitable ceremony involving minimum drill movement for obvious reasons. Initially, Her Majesty the Queen's presence was sought, however, it was considered more appropriate that the Captain General should attend as the principal guest of honour. Once the ceremony date was confirmed the G1/G4 tale swung into action and the stage was set. The aim was to make it very much a family occasion with invitation spread widely throughout the RN Command, the Corps, the SF Group, OGD, the SBS Association, civilian staff and all families. Obviously November would not be everyone's choice for an outdoor ceremony and restricting rehearsals to one day might seem slightly short sighted but Royal diaries and operational tempo dictated in both cases. Thanks to WO1 Steve Ware (1st Drill CTCRM) and the enormous

patience of the RM Poole DL1 the SBS were eventually synchronized.

So the 18th of November came and the 'sun shone on the righteous' as the main body of guests congregated in the sumptuous marquee for coffee. Meanwhile at the Officers' Mess the VIPs arrived. The Captain General and CINCFLEET receiving their respective 'General and Royal Salutes' from the 12 man SBS Quarter Guard. By 1000hrs the guests started moving to the large covered seating area whilst the CTCRM Band played to their normal exemplary standard in the background. As the guests took their seats the SBS, totalling 200 ranks (less Z Sqn), marched smartly and proudly onto the specially prepared parade area and under the RSM went to 'open order'. The VIP guests then arrived including, Admiral the Lord Boyce (the new SBS Colonel Commandant), Maj Gen Keeling (SBS Association President), Lt Gen Sir Henry Beverley, VAdm Stanhope (DCINC), Brig Dutton (Bde Comd) and Director Special Forces.

Right on queue the Captain General and Admiral Band arrived and mounted the dais. After the Royal Salute and National Anthem the



Inspection of the SBS and Band followed, the Captain General noticeably belying his 33 years. All assembled were then treated to a short and evocative history of the SBS, thank goodness for Richard Clifford's '1945 to Present Day Account' which received a severe dusting of in its preparation.

The high point of the ceremony was to be the beret changing and the hoisting of the new flag which went without fault, although there was an extremely large pause of 'top three' as the SES got ahead of itself waiting for the C130, CH47 and Lynx flypast. The ceremony concluded with a short service impeccably led by the SBS Chaplain (Rev Rory Macleod) featuring

a reading by the youngest SC2, some fine hymn singing and a concluding address by the Captain General.

After the SBS was dismissed lunch was taken in the Officers' Mess and the marquee where much to everyone's delight the SBS cepage flowed in great quantities. It was extremely comforting to see so many different faces from the past and present enjoying the occasion. After lunch the Captain General visited the marquee to talk with various groups and on leaving the CO presented him with a framed badge to mark the occasion. That evening the festivities continued in the Sergeants Mess where of note the CO and RSM 'rang the bell' due to ceremonial difficulties



In sum, it was clearly an historical day and judging by the number of comments received afterwards enjoyed immensely by all. Since 1947, the SBS has developed and prospered almost beyond recognition from a small force of not more 30 ranks to regimental proportions commanded at the highest level. It continues to do so in the true Royal Marine and SBS tradition. But whatever your thoughts and perceptions, just call it evolution.



Post Note It was with some sadness that at the last moment General Milton (CGRM) and Lord and Lady Jellicoe were unable to attend due to ill health. The CO is planning to rectify this at a later date.

Approved

Elizabeth R

