

ELEVEN EMPTY SPACES

PART OF AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT RECORDING AND REMEMBERING
THE EVENTS OF THE IRA ATTACK ON THE ROYAL MARINES SCHOOL OF MUSIC, DEAL
ON 22 SEPTEMBER 1989

*“We’re not full time soldiers ...
we are professional musicians in uniform” – D Cole*

Marines, emergency services and civilians were in shock at this unexpected attack on the bandmen at the School of Music in Deal.

“These people in war are stretcher bearers ... although every Marine is a combatant they’re right at the left field of combat. They’re not Marine commando’s, they’re the guys who go in and make sure that ... people are saved and for the IRA to do this was beyond contempt” – T Bartlett

“I mean war is war, where one man fires his gun at another man because he’s got a different uniform on, he knows the enemy, but this sort of warfare is just cowardly” – D Goodban

“Because the real thought about all this at the time was what a cowardly act it was. Of all the targets they could have picked was a bunch of young musicians” – M Mitchell

“Unexpected ... to target innocent band, not fighting men ... If the commando had been still there perhaps it wouldn’t have been so unexpected” – J Duffy



Inspector Bill Bryan and Police Officer Martin Dale lay a wreath on behalf of the Chief Constable, Officers and Staff of Kent County Constabulary. Copyright Express Newspapers. Picture provided by M J Dale

“I can remember ... having a reporter in church and having to preach about what happened and to somehow try and express the mood of the congregation and indeed the community, resultant upon Friday’s event ... that was a tough thing but I actually said that we had to absorb it, but forgiveness wasn’t in my vocabulary at that point” – B Hawkins

“They always say that if somebody wants to get in they will get in and I have to believe in that. I’m still angry. I’ll never forget it and in some ways I think it’s very sad, because I’m usually a very forgiving person, but there’s just something in me that can’t forgive” – T Dixon

“Everybody in the music business knows we’re not full time soldiers. We wear the Royal Marine cap badge with pride of course, but we’re not trained soldiers ... our total concentration, our lives, is making music for the services ... we are professional musicians in uniform” – D Cole

“It was not a legitimate military target for military people and it was sickening to that extent” – J Perkins



The press wait to capture images of visiting dignitaries
Picture courtesy of the East Kent Mercury



Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher views the floral tributes
Basil Kidd Photograph provided by the East Kent Mercury

Tricia Dixon, wife of Lt Col Richard Dixon, was later awarded the MBE for her work with service families in various locations including Deal. Although she appreciated the honour it was accepted with poignant feelings.

“I said to her Majesty ... when I went to the palace ... if I could have my eleven marines lives back ... then I would gladly give the award back” – T Dixon

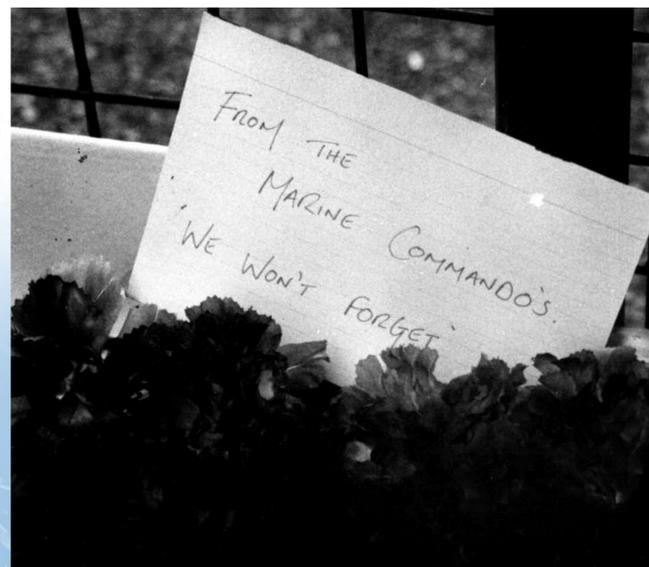
Maureen Bane, Matron of Deal Hospital, was also to receive the MBE for her hard work during this difficult period.

“The whole incident generally was one that I found difficult to come to terms with because within the fire service we are used to rescuing people ... but they’re all accidents and I couldn’t get my head round the fact that somebody had done this on purpose. Somebody had killed 11 people on purpose” – T Hardie

“It’s brought it home to me how fragile the body is when it’s up against steel and concrete” – M Gidman



Security checks at the gates of South Barracks
Picture courtesy of the East Kent Mercury



A floral tribute from a Commando unit
Picture courtesy of the East Kent Mercury

Back at the barracks, the community began to express its collective grief by placing tributes at the gates of the barracks.

Local resident Derek Goodban was interviewed by the BBC in the days after the bombing and he had the chance to express his anger towards the IRA, a feeling shared by many.

“At the end of the interview I said ‘why don’t the so and so’s learn that we will never, ever give in to them. Never.’” – D Goodban

“Outside the gates ... there was a huge amount of bunches of flowers and wreaths and messages” – W Walters