



A Rededication Service for

Marine Geoffrey Albert Johnson

Royal Marines

Killed in action on 23 April 1945

Geldermalsen General Cemetery, The Netherlands

Tuesday 31 October 2023 at 14:00 hours

Service conducted by

The Reverend Philip Carroll

Chaplain, Commando Training Centre, Royal Marines



Marine Geoffrey Albert Johnson
9 March 1924 – 23 April 1945

Geoff, as he is known to his family, was born on 9 March 1924 in Woodville, Derbyshire the son of Albert and Irene Johnson. He enlisted into the Royal Marines at Lympstone on 14 July 1942 not long after his 18th birthday and was described as 5ft 6 ½ with fair hair, hazel eyes and a fresh complexion. He was working as a general assistant and his religion was given as Church of England.

Mne Johnson was posted to 30 Royal Marines in January 1945. With the war in Europe entering its last phase, and the need for more infantry becoming urgent it was decided to raise two RM infantry brigades to take part in the final defeat of Germany. 30 RM, as part of 116 Infantry Brigade RM, began to assemble at Dalditch, Devon on 15 January 1945. Few had any training as infantry soldiers, so the task to train them began in Yorkshire during what was described as "bitter weather". Mobilization started in February and on 13 February, after a parade in front of the Commanding Officer, the unit was told they were going abroad immediately. They moved to Bergen-Op-Zoom where intensive training took place for the next 6 weeks.

On 22 April, 30 RM were ordered to attack across the River Mass - Operation Mamba - during the first stage, capture of Alem Island, they met with little opposition but at Kerkdriel it soon became evident there were far more Germans than previously reported. During the action 22/23 April, 3 Marines were reported as missing - Johnson being one. On 25 April they were ordered to withdraw across the Maas to hold their original position.

It was a disappointment, but it was recorded that the assault across the river, in infantry assault craft, was one of the most difficult operations that was carried out at short notice without a hitch.

Order of Service

The Gathering

Chaplain

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." *John 11:25 & 26*

We have come together to rededicate the final resting place of Marine Geoffrey Albert Johnson and to honour him this day with family and friends gathered here.

As Christians, we believe that those who die in Christ share eternal life with him. Therefore, in faith and hope we offer our prayers of trust and thanksgiving to God. Facing the certainty of our own death and judgement we yet proclaim that Christ is indeed risen, and that all who believe in him will rise in him.

Opening Prayer

Chaplain

Heavenly Father, in your son Jesus Christ, you have given us a true faith and sure hope: Strengthen this faith and hope in us all our days, that we may live as those who believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to eternal life through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Scripture Reading

Ecclesiastes 3, 1-8 (King James Version)

Read by Colonel Piers Strudwick OBE

British Defence Attaché

To everything there is a season,
And a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones
together;
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace.

Moment of Reflection

Reading

Remember Me by Harry Riley

Read by Lieutenant Benedict Cunningham RN

Remember me
Duty called and I went to war
Though I'd never fired a gun before
I paid the price for your new day
As all my dreams were blown away

Remember me
We all stood true as whistles blew
And faced the shell and stench of Hell
Now battle's done, there is no sound
Our bones decay beneath the ground
We cannot see, or smell, or hear
There is no death, or hope or fear

Remember me
Once we, like you, would laugh and talk
And run and walk and do the things that you all do
But now we lie in rows so neat
Beneath the soil, beneath your feet

Remember me
In mud and gore and the blood of war
We fought and fell and move no more
Remember me, I am not dead
I'm just a voice within your head.

The Act of Dedication

We remember with thanksgiving at God's throne of grace all those who have died during operational service. We remember this day especially Marine Geoffrey Albert Johnson. Merciful God, you have made us all and given your Son for our redemption. We once again commend our brother to your perfect mercy and wisdom and rededicate his final resting place into your care. For in you alone we put our trust.

Amen.

Reading

The Soldier by Rupert Brook
Read by Kevin Johnson (Nephew)

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

The Exhortation

Read by Colour Sergeant Matthew William RVM RM

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.
We will remember them.

The Last Post

Played by Bugler Callum Budden RM

Silence

Reveille

Kohima Epitaph

Read by Colour Sergeant Matthew Williams RVM RM

When you go home tell them of us and say:
'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Laying of Wreaths

The Royal Marines Prayer
Lieutenant Colonel Richard Thurstan RM
RM Liaison Officer

O eternal Lord God, who through many generations has united and inspired the members of our Corps, grant your blessing, we beseech you, on Royal Marines serving all around the Globe. Bestow your crown of righteousness upon all our efforts and endeavours, and may our laurels be those of gallantry and honour, loyalty and courage. We ask these things in the name of him whose courage never failed, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Blessing

Chaplain

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all mankind, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and may the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and all those whom you love now and always.

Amen.

Geldermalsen is a town in the province of Gelderland. It contains two graves that are in the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. With the identification of Marine Johnson, both casualties are now known by name.



Marine Johnson being inspected by King George VI – this photo was hung on his mother's wall in pride of place.



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

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