

The 28th of this month celebrates the 350th anniversary (1664) of the formation of the Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot - known to us now as The Corps of Her Majesty's Royal Marines. Hurrah!! (This reflection may be a little bias, as I served with the Corps for a 10th of its history.) Although its early history was interrupted a number of times by disbandments, it was too good a thing to stay dead; in 1755 the Royal Marines were permanently established, today primarily famous for their elite commandos and premier bands.

The step between Corps and Church was not a particularly large one. A sense of loyalty, duty, courage and striving for excellence is common to both - as is the voice of prophecy. Not just NCOs and officers but every marine is expected to be confident in taking the initiative when the need arises. "Why didn't you do something about it?!" is a frequent challenge given to a recruit in training (ignore distorted TV versions). "It wasn't my job," has never been an acceptable reply. Royal Marines (bootnecks) are also expected to overcome obstacles, mental as well as physical, as well as to uphold one another.

Despite this bare outline, the parallels of living as a bootneck and living as a Christian should not be hard to grasp. Alright, so your average bootneck is perhaps a little "earthier" than your average Christian; for example, some of the current Corps' recreational idiosyncrasies you're never, never going to understand if you've never lived as one of them.

But every Christian ought to understand that the example of Jesus is entirely followed by the Corps. *The Commando Mindset*: be the first to understand, the first to adapt and respond, the first to overcome. *Corps Values in Life*: excellence - strive to do better; integrity - tell the truth; self-discipline - resist the easy option; humility - respect for others. *Commando Spirit in Adversity*: courage - get out front and do what is right; determination - never give up; unselfishness - self last; cheerfulness. Indelible membership, too: a bootneck is anointed with a green beret and its globe & laurel badge; a Christian is anointed with the waters of holy baptism and its mark of the cross.

It is said that you can take a man out of the Marines but you cannot take the marine out of the man. I hope all Christians will be inspired equally to know that you can take the Christian out of church but you cannot take Christ out of the Christian. As indeed every bootneck will be rejoicing - thoroughly! - his place in the story of the Royal Marines, rejoice in your place, O Christian, in the greater story of The Faith.