

R.N. COMMANDO "N" by Lt/Cdr M/V. Redshaw

On January 13th 1943 we were alongside in Liverpool, and were sent on leave. My bodyguard, Able Seaman Adams, to Higher Irlam, near Manchester, and Tom and myself to London, where we were met on Euston Station by a taxi full of friends and beer. After consuming the beer we continued our separate journeys, Tom to Whetstone and myself to Chalfont St. Peter. After a couple of weeks at home I was instructed to report to our new headquarters at Ardentinn in Argyllshire, H.M.S. Armadillo, situated on the side of Loch Long, just outside the village. Many old friends were there under training for the next operation. We formed a new Beach Party (N), Tom as Beachmaster of N3, and myself of N2, Lieutenant J. Russell RN was Beachmaster of N1. As Assistant Beachmasters I had Sub Lieutenants Alec Varley and 'Jumbo Jervis', both RNVR, two Petty Officers, Grainger and Underwood, two Leading Seamen, Mills and Jones, together with twenty Able and Ordinary Seamen. They seemed a good crowd indeed they proved themselves in the months ahead. I was fortunate enough to have a bodyguard in Able Seaman Syd Kipling, who managed to save my life on more than one occasion.

During the last half of March we were sent down to H.M.S. Foliot III at Bickley in Devon, where, among other things, we commenced to construct an assault course by the River Plym. Returning to Armadillo we proceeded to Spean Bridge in Invernesshire, marching from the station there to the Army Commando Basic Training Centre at Achnacarry. We marched straight on to its parade ground as the previous course, 42 Royal Marine Commando marched off. The Commandant Lieutenant Colonel Vaughan of the Buffs addressed us, he more or less informed us that we had come there to learn how to die like soldiers. We were all issued with denims and rifles and from then onwards followed the most strenuous time I shall ever know. The weather was very cold, and the hills were full of snow.

Immediately after breakfast each morning we fell in, wearing denims and battle order, officers and ratings in the same file, for inspection. Denims had to be free of mud, webbing blanched and brasses polished, and rifles immaculate, after inspection, which was rigid we proceeded over the assault course, through mud and water and snow, and how cold was that water coming down from the mountains. Our lives were made up of inspections, assault courses, speed marches, cliff climbing and a thousand ways of endeavouring to demoralise raw soldiers. Only one of the ratings couldn't make the grade, and he was returned to Armadillo. It seemed to rain all the time and I'm sure we all hated Achnacarry at first, then, gradually without our being aware it seemed to change. We learned to laugh at hardship. Actually the only thing that had changed was ourselves. They taught us that we were on the winning side of the war. I'm sure that when we marched back to Spean Bridge Station at the end of the course we were all the better for it, both physically and mentally.

The Castle was the home of the Chief of the Clan Cameron, the Lochiel, Sir Donald Cameron, how I appreciated the odd moments we met and he would stop and talk, it was indeed a real privilege to know him, he told me how the War Office had approached him regarding the use of his lands in Lochaber as a Commando training area, and how, at first he had hesitated at the thought of having 'Redcoats' in his glens again, but when it was agreed with Whitehall the Lochiel felt that they could have been more circumspect in the choice of the regiment to which the first Commandant belonged. In 1745 the Lochiel's ancestor had led his clan against Cumberland at Culloden, and after the battle it was Howard's Buffs who had burned down Achnacarry Castle and laid waste Lochaber.

Colonel Vaughan who was the first Commandant was wearing as his cap-badge the same Tudor dragon as was carried by Howard's Buffs, however, two such gentlemen such as the Lochiel and Colonel Vaughan could not be anything but friends. I suppose the speed marches were the worst thing about it all, they certainly sorted out the sheep from the goats.

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The training staff, although they nearly killed the lot of us, were really hand-picked, they knew their job, and I think they did us the world of good. The Lochiel's pipers woke up in the morning and put us to bed at night, the castle was old and the room I shared with other Naval officers was devoid of furniture except for a mattress for each on the floor, (the soldiers called them biscuits: the sailors called them donkey's breakfasts). We collected fuel from the woods, and spent most of the evenings cleaning and drying denims, rifles and equipment and trying to keep ourselves warm.

It was during this period Combined Operations H.Q. changed our title from Beach party to R.N. Commando.

Before we left Lochaber I had collected a large carbuncle on the back of my neck, on the way back to Armadillo I saw the doctor at H.M.S. Quebec at Inverary, he sent me by ambulance to Mearnskirk hospital at Newton Mearns in Renfrewshire where they operated on me, the staff at the hospital were nothing short of magnificent, nothing was too much trouble, there was even a supper awaiting any of we convalescents who went out for a quiet pint in the evening, regretfully I left Maernskirk on 29.4.43 after my Wife had come to visit me in the hospital, then a quick week's leave and on to H.M.S. Rosenheath where I rejoined N2 and we took part in a number of exercises. During this time we were inspected by our Chief of Combined Operations, Admiral Mountbatten, who told us he was very much impressed by our appearance and turn-out.

On June 10th 1943 we joined the assault ship MARNIX VAN SINT ALDEGONDE (Capt. H.W. Hetteime) in the Gareloch, N1 joined H.M.S. GLENGYLE, and N3 went to the assault ship DERBYSHIRE, we were indeed very fortunate in joining the MARNIX, lately a passenger ship of the Netherlands East Indies Line, we made many friends there. The Captain and officers were Dutch and the rest of the crew came from the Netherlands East Indies, everything to make us comfortable was done, they were Allies indeed. On two occasions before sailing Captain Hetteime invited the Wrens from H.M.S. Rosenheath to a dinner and dance on board, the Wrens were conveyed to and fro in the landing craft we were to use on the next operation.

Later the soldiers embarked, the Royal Canadian Regiment (Lt. Col. Crowe), together with a company of the Saskatoon Light Infantry and some Royal Canadian Artillery. The Saskatoons carried .5 Vickers Maxims to support the R.C.R's., Colonel Crowe and his 2/ic, Major Billy Pope were two of the very best, little did we know that both would be killed within a few hours of each other soon after we met the enemy.

Captain Hetteime had earned the highest Netherlands decoration, The Order of Willem, and the British Distinguished Service Cross for his handling of the MARNIX in the North African Landings, he came from Friesland, from whence, so he said, all good Dutch sailormen came!

We eventually sailed from Gareloch in the fast assault convoy for Operation HUSKY, the Sicily landing. At the time of course we were unaware of our destination, we had been at sea for about a week when we were told over the ship's public address system, that we were in the assault convoy for a sector just west of Cape Passero. and that we were now part of the Eighth Army. Canadian cheers rang through the ship as the news was announced, there had never been an Army like the 8th Army and to be part of it was felt by all concerned to be a great honour. "D" Day was to be July 19th 1943 and we were to land in the assault at "H" Hour, which was dawn. the last night on board Captain Hetteime invited me to his cabin for a last drink and we talked about what lay ahead, he said how much he wished he could accompany me ashore in the dawn and he gave me a pistol to enable me, on his behalf to shoot the first German I saw!, we looked at the chart and I offered to hoist the Netherlands ensign as soon as we landed so he could be with us in spirit, he sent for a new ensign which he gave me, he also pointed out that the Netherlands in London had overlooked to declare war on Italy, but he and I would do it for them, he would ask their approval on his return to London!, long afterwards he told me that this was the first Netherlands ensign to fly in occupied Europe after the Germans had invaded their country.

We landed in the assault and his ensign was hoisted where we had agreed on the chart, he told me after

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the war that the news had got around the ship and when the ship went into the inshore position after the assault landing all hands seemed to have binoculars and were looking at it. The run-in to the beach was without incident, though the barrage from our warships firing over our heads was a little un-nerving, unfortunately our landing craft assault in charge of Lieutenant Parker RCNVR hit a false beach in the half -light and we had to swim a little way, the weather was warm and a swim would have been welcome but for the fact we were in battle order and rather weighed down, (I carried a Tommy Gun, a Smith & Wesson .45, four hand grenades, binoculars, compass and a great deal of ammunition and 24hr rations pack), we landed against light opposition, consolidated on the beach and the Royal Canadian Regiment went on to meet what turned out to be the Herrman Goering Division, quick goodbyes on the beach with our very good Canadian friends, on meeting some of the best troops the enemy fielded they did not falter and though casualties were high (Col. Crowe and Major Billy Pope were both killed) they gained their objectives and went on to further victories.

On the run-in to the beach we had been particularly cheered by the sound of bagpipes coming across the water on our right flank as the 51st Division went in, the sound could be heard above the gunfire.

Owing to the beach being unsuitable for vehicles we were shifted further east to Portopalo to assist in getting follow-up troops and supplies ashore, our casualties from the enemy were light, Able Seaman Gilbert was wounded and removed to a Casualty Clearing Station, sickness later took it's toll.

After two weeks ashore we were picked up by two Tank landing craft together with N1 and N3, N2 were carried in LCT 412, we arrived in Malta on July 27th 1943 and were evidently the first troops to return from the Sicily landing which raised the siege of Malta, the inhabitants crowded the shore to cheer us in, on the north side of Grand Harbour at Valetta a number of warships were lying and it was particularly gratifying when the various ship's companies lined the rails and cheered us up the harbour, little did they realise that the soldiers on the decks of the landing craft were in fact only khaki-clad sailors. Two days in Malta and a L.C.I.(L) took us to a beach at Oued Merse in Algeria, just east of Bougie, here we rested and recuperated with an occasional day in Bougie, we lived under canvas with the British 4th Division. We had left Able Seaman Worracker in Malta, but now suspected malaria caught up with a further six Able Seamen-Spencer, Smith, Dowle, Ramsker, Stanton and Sykes.

One day I had the bright idea that it would do us good to have a route march to help us clear the beer and blowflies out of our heads, there were some hills at the back of the village of Oued Merse and these we ascended in battle order in line abreast carrying weapons, we had been going well over an hour when ahead of us we saw a great number of apes barring our way, they were bigger than us and greatly outnumbered us, they appeared definitely hostile, there was nothing in the drill book to tell me what action to take under the circumstances, I halted the Commando and as the apes were advancing from many directions I gave the order to my Petty Officer to 'form square', he looked at me as though I was suffering from heat stroke or gin, but managed to get everyone into a rough square, we had weapons and ammunition with us, so after asking if anyone knew anything about apes, I gave the order to load, but not to fire without instructions, I then fired a short burst over the heads of the apes and while they stood and watched from a distance of about twenty yards we retreated down the hillside in single file, my bodyguard and myself taking position at the rear of the column and firing an occasional burst over the heads of the apes whenever they approached too closely, I had left Tom Turton with a few of our boys in the camp and on hearing the firing Tom with two of the boys had jumped in a jeep and made towards the hills, as they came towards us Tom asked what it was all about, the apes had by then disappeared, Tom laughed and observed that it must be more than a hundred years since British troops had formed squares in front of the enemy, he also remarked that their Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty if they heard of our escapade would be somewhat surprised to learn that a party of R.N. Commando, fully armed had retreated from a party of unarmed monkeys!

We sailed from Oued Merse in LCI(L) 241 (Lt John Reid RNVR), leaving behind us in hospital , Able

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Seamen Dowle, Ramsker, Smith, Spencer, Stanton and Sykes, suspected malaria had taken its toll. LCI(L) 241 arrived in Grand Harbour Valetta on August 22nd 1943, and sailed the next day to Catania in Sicily. From Catania village on the slopes of Mount Etna near Misterbianca and joined up with Tactical H.Q. of British 5th Division, here we lived in an olive grove, some of the boys slinging hammocks between the trees, we learned that we were to spearhead the assault force across the Messina Straits, and so become part of the first landing of British in the mainland of Europe, while we were preparing for the operation General Montgomery called and gave us a pep-talk and promised us a larger barrage than had been arranged for Alamein, it would be a new experience for us to go in under an Army barrage, Operation BAYTOWN was on. For ten days we had a lazy time basking in the sun and generally resting, my bodyguard had organised a hammock for me, Tom had a stretcher propped up on ammunition boxes, life would have been wonderful but for the flies of which there were millions- worse than we had in Algeria, the coming operation was referred to by the troops as 'Operation Suicide', owing to the fact that our job was to bring the main enemy forces down onto us while a further landing was to be made further up the coast a few days later behind the enemy engaging us.

During the night of September 2nd-3rd 1943 we embarked in an LCA at a village called Milli Marina, my bodyguard and myself embarked in a motor launch which was to lead the assault and show the LCA's towards the right beach, our target was Gallico Marina just north of Reggio di Calabria, the Straits were about four miles just there and a strong current played havoc with our navigation, in addition to Montgomery's barrage our gunners were firing tracers on fixed lines over our heads for us to steer by, also in Sicily two searchlights were pointing skywards to assist us to make a fair course, both ideas were very good, but we found that all was soon obscured by smoke from the guns, we learned later that the opposition was light but, judging from the amount of stuff falling in the water around us quite a few of our guns must have been firing short. "H" Hour was 0430 September 3rd 1943 and we landed at that time on How Green Beach and settled down to controlling our end of the ferry service carrying the follow-up troops.

The enemy had already started to withdraw northwards, so it was decided to bring the main body across to Gallico Marina, we set up our H.Q. at the back of the beach, Tom and I shared a two-storied cottage there: cattle downstairs, Tom and I upstairs, the cottage was painted white, so I obtained a pot of black paint and wrote the sign 'BLACK BULL' on the front wall together the appropriate Whetstone telephone number, it must have been re-assuring to some of the troops landing on the days that followed. Our ferry service was so good that we received a signal from Montgomery congratulating us and saying that it was one of the major factors which enabled the Army to advance so rapidly, and resulted in the linking up of the 5th and 8th Armies.

We had a number of callers at our cottage on the beach including George Formby and Beryl, the Western Brothers also called, they had used the 'Black Bull' at Whetstone and knew Tom. We had the occasional air-raid and during one of these Able Seaman Thomas was wounded and evacuated to Messina, also while we were there one of our Able Seamen went mad, chasing a woman through the streets of Gallico with an axe, we disarmed him and placed him under close arrest, apparently it was difficult to have him certified so a very kind doctor with 5th Division at the local Casualty Clearing Station made out a report to the effect that the seaman was possibly suffering from some obscure disease, I passed him on to the Navy sick bay in Reggio and we never saw him again.

Able Seaman Gilbert, who had been wounded in Sicily, re-joined us on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1943 as did Able Seamen Dowle and Ramsker. On September 28th 1943 we joined LST 9 with N 3 and sailed for Malta arriving on September 30th 1943, the following day transferred to the transport DEVONSHIRE in company with H.M.S. GLENGYLE and the Polish transport SOBIESKI for Port Tewfik leaving DEVONSHIRE on October 19th 1943 we went ashore to H.M.S. Saunders at Kabrit. On September 25th 1943, Tom and I were given seven days leave and made our way to Kantara, where a Naval party gave us a lift to Tel Aviv via Beersheeba.

While in Tel Aviv we made a journey out to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, it was of course very interesting,

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but we were both a little overcome by the commercialisation at the various shrines, at least it gave plenty of food for thought. back in Tel Aviv we met up with an E.N.S.A. party who took us up the coast in their bus, the party was the Globetrotters: Avril Angers being the star. We went to Haifa where Tom and I stayed at the Mount Carmel Hotel, and then on to Beirut, we then took a train back to Suez and on to H.M.S. Saunders where we spent Christmas. One of the highlights of Kabrit was Shafto's open air cinema, one sat beneath the stars on wicker-work chairs which were, unknown to us at first, full of bed-bugs, after occupying a seat for a few minutes the warmth of one's body made the bugs come out for a feed, I was informed that the only way to enjoy a full length film was to get full of gin before going, the bugs would then become intoxicated and fall off. The cinema operator was an Arab and with his knowledge of English apparently limited to a serviceman's swearing it was quite impossible for him to select the reels in numerical order, which of course made a nonsense of the film and induced the troops to throw their empty bottles at the screen, with disastrous results.

Once a week we all paraded in front of the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. Saunders and marched past unit by unit, after each parade a list was posted on the wardroom notice board giving comments, I feel I had a record there, it seemed that either I had given the order to salute on the wrong foot, or had forgotten to salute at all. All in all I retain a few happy memories of Saunders, we even had a few misunderstandings with the Combined Operations School at Kabrit, especially when they organised some night landings with the Mahratta Light Infantry across the Bitter Lakes, we found it difficult to accept or understand ideas on opposed landings worked by people who had apparently gained their experience in the Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, however, we learned a little more about Combined Operations.

One day in desperation, Tom and I went to Cairo to see our Senior Naval Officer Landing, Captain Black, to enquire if we could do anything to prevent us all going completely round the bend, he told us that nothing was being planned for the near future and that we were to return to Kabrit and behave ourselves and keep the boys happy and under control. After a quick sample of Shepherd's we each hired a camel to help us find the Sphinx and Pyramids, neither of the camels appeared to show us any respect judging from the highly objectionable noises they kept making, mine even tried to bite me, I feel I would not have survived for very long had the beast succeeded. As dusk was coming an Arab appeared from nowhere and offered to tell our fortunes, I told him to 'imshi', he persisted and Tom was kind-hearted enough to let him carry on, he asked no questions but looked at us and drew signs in the sand, Tom asked if we would survive the war, he said, I would come through without hurt, but that Tom would be wounded and that his wound would eventually cause his death, he also told Tom how long after the war he would survive, and how long I would survive Tom before I eventually 'bought it' at sea, the Arab told us we had been together a long time but very soon we would part, Tom would soon go into battle without me, and that there would be many casualties, I would shortly go home, he hesitated regarding my means of transport, he could see an aeroplane, but could also see a big ship, he also told that on my arrival in the Old Country I would find my first son awaiting me, but for an unexpected delay to my ship I would have been back for his birthday, he also said, my son would have fair hair and blue eyes. We paid our 'ackers', said a few uncomplimentary things and departed for Kabrit. We arrived back at H.M.S. Saunders just in time for the evening meal and went into the bar for a drink, the Captain's secretary came up to me and congratulated me on my luck, not expecting this, I was surprised when he showed me a signal received that day from Combined Operations H.Q. requesting Saunders to arrange a passage for me to the U.K. forthwith. I turned over N2 to Lieutenant A. Varley, wished the boy's good luck, and the next day to Alexandria to pick up my flight, only to be told the aircraft had already taken off, and that it would be some time before another would be available. I was accommodated in H.M.S. Canopus for some days during which time I had a most drunken day with my brother-in-law who was at Mustapha barracks with the Royal Signals, I also met a Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, he was a doctor and asked to a party at the local hospital, I had only my khaki battledress with me, in a very bad state, so he lent me one of his uniforms, at the party I found it a trifle embarrassing when doctors and nurses tried to discuss technicalities of their trade with me, however, I tried to appear a little less than sober while my Canadian friend told them I was shell-shocked and a little sand-happy.

One day Tom turned up at Canopus in battle order to tell me he was going with the rest of "N" to join H.M.S. Phoebe for an operation, destination unknown. The next day I received orders to proceed to Sidi Bish to take up the duties of O.C. Train from there to Port Tewfik, the train turned out to be full of all sorts, including a hundred Greek sailors and one British Able Seaman handcuffed, under close arrest, a compartment at the rear of the train had been reserved for me and I invited two RNVR officers to share it, which they did. We proceeded across the desert for some hours at a leisurely pace and during the night came to a long halt, we had been stopped for what seemed a long time when one of my fellow passengers suggested we should alight and see what was holding us up, we walked to the front of the train (no corridor) and found the train's front end was in a small station with the driver and fireman missing from the locomotive, the Arabs were in the station engaged in conversation with the Arab in charge of the station, we asked what was happening and were told that the driver and fireman were too tired to go any further, my companion suggested that I threatened to shoot the driver and his mate, so I took my .45 out of its holster, cocked it, and told them what I intended to do, they did not look at all perturbed, but said a few words in Arabic which translated to us as 'You kill driver train no go at all', I then told them we had plenty of real engineers on the train that would drive their lousy train to Hell and back if need be, on being told this the two Arabs concerned rushed to the train so fast we nearly missed it!

Our troubles were not over yet, we eventually arrived in Port Tewfik to find that the place was out of bounds with plague, I had to get the passengers from the station to the docks, as usual the Army came to our rescue and organised transport with escort taking us alongside the trooper STRATHEDEN which was to take us home. It was January 11<sup>th</sup> 1944 when we embarked and I found I had been given the job O.C. Naval Draft, my boss was one Lieutenant Commander Widdecombe RN a most pleasant gentleman from Devon who gave me plenty to do on the run home. We went through the Canal and were delayed for some days at Port Said, (I thought of our fortune teller in the shade of the Sphinx!).

On our way westward through the Mediterranean the radio told us of the landing at Anzio, and I knew where Tom had taken the boys, (That Arab again!) I learned later of the casualties. We arrived at Liverpool on February 8th 1944, the following day I was at the nursing home at Beaconsfield to see my Wife and meet my son who had been born a few days before, just as the Arab had predicted, he, of course had blue eyes and fair hair, it is interesting that nearly all of the Arab's prophesy came true, Tom was wounded in Italy, and after the war became the licensee at the Duke of York in Tunbridge Wells, he died there at the prophesied time, according to the Arab I still have a little time to go before I die at sea, to give him a fair crack of the whip I still go to sea whenever the opportunity arises.

I re-joined H.M.S. Armadillo on February 18th 1944 and was sent to Ayr race-course to take command of 'Q' Commando who were accommodated on Ayr race-course with Petty Officers slinging their hammocks in the Tote, we had the pleasure of joining forces with the 6th Border Regiment (Lt. Col. Cooper), they were a great crowd and we all got on extremely well. With them we moved to Aberlady in East Lothian, where we did a long exercise on the beach at Gullane, the snow had fallen heavily and we constructed dug-outs under the snow in most uncomfortable conditions, living there for over a week. We were confined to the exercise area, but under cover of darkness quite a few of us managed to get as far as the local pub. One of our Officers Sub/Lieutenant Gowans had an Aunt living in the village; so, occasionally we managed to get a bath and a shave in civilised conditions.

Shortly I was appointed to 'U' Commando in command, joining at Dundonald Camp, but after a short leave I was returned to 'Q' Commando in H.M.S. Attack at Portland, my 2I/C was one Ross Cramond, Lieutenant RNZVR who was one of the most reliable officers I met during the war, the idea was to bring 'Q' to standard for the next operation which, unknown to us was to be Normandy. Many exercises were carried out, one of which resulted in my falling into a slit trench on Studland Bay in Dorset tearing a cartilage in my knee and finishing up in Portland Hospital, as the time for the operation was drawing near I was replaced as C.O. of

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‘Q’ who landed in Normandy without me.

On May 5th 1944 I arrived at H.M.S. Westcliff medically unfit for Combined Operations, just managing to walk with the aid of a stick, I soon arranged some leave, and spent my time pestering Combined Operations H.Q. for another job, they eventually told me that as soon as the Medical Officer at WESTCLIFF had cleared me there would be a job for me. I told them I would like to go back to the Mediterranean, it took more than a few gins in the bar at Westcliff to obtain the necessary clearance, but on May 25th 1944 with my leg heavily bandaged but without a stick I again presented myself at C.O.H.Q. from whence I was sent on leave with orders to report to H.M.S. Armadillo on June 6th 1944.

On June 8th 1944 I joined the trooper ORONTES in Glasgow bound for Italy with my appointment for Commanding Officer of ‘K’ Commando. ORONTES arrived in Naples on June 23rd 1944, one of Tom’s officers met me and drove me out to the H.Q. of ‘K’ Commando on the Isle of Nisida in the Bay of Naples, Tom called on me the next day, he had come across from the Adriatic to welcome me back to Italy. The current C.O. of ‘K’ Commando, Commander Havers RN was up the coast at Piombino with some of ‘K’, so I went there on June 28th 1944 to make my number with him, I stopped for three days in Rome where I was fortunate enough to meet one Archbishop Tonne who became my local guide. One day he asked me if I would like to meet the Pope, so I picked him up in my Jeep and drove into Vatican City where we parked outside the Pope’s front door, I was wearing khaki battledress, and carried a pistol and Tommy gun, these I left in the jeep while the Archbishop called a Swiss Guard who drew his sword and mounted guard over the jeep and my armaments while we were inside for the audience! So I was blessed by His Holiness, afterwards the Archbishop took me through St. Peters where I happened to meet Lieutenant Commander Trevor Blore RNVR a Naval War Correspondent, we took the Archbishop back to his quarters and so on to Trevor Blore’s hotel where I met more war correspondents.

On July 2nd 1944 I was back in Nisida, re-enforcements came out to us and we supplied reliefs for port parties up the west coast of Italy in support of the 5th Army as they advanced northwards. There was time too for a little socialising, British 72nd General Hospital at Canello already had a connection with Nisida and their Anglican Padre Captain Jewkes came over as often as possible to give us divine service, we made friends with a Mobile Laundry Unit at Concello, also with the Canadian Re-enforcements Depot at Avellino whose C.O. Major Ed. George was very helpful and arranged courses in driving and vehicle maintenance for us and supplied certain articles of equipment. When we eventually returned to the U.K. most of us were wearing Canadian battle dress and boots!

The Canadians were always most helpful, and it seemed impossible for me to return the compliment, until one day Ed. George asked if I could obtain some paint for him, he needed a large quantity of it, and we were able to supply this in Admiralty grey which seemed to satisfy his requirements, it is interesting to note that the British Columbia Dragoons of 5th Canadian Armoured Division that took part in the Gothic Line Battle went into action with their Sherman tanks painted grey, unfortunately it brought them little luck in the battle.

Nisida Island was good; we worked hard and played hard. The Navy had assigned to us some Italian civilian labour, among them an officer’s steward by the name of Polito. Polito had served in the Alpine Regiment of the Italian Army in the 1914-1918 war, and always ready to tell me how they had fought alongside the British against the hated Austrians, we also had an Italian driver, one day he had driven me into Naples and we were on the way back to Nisida and were stopped in traffic jam, our vehicle was right hand drive and I was on the off-side sitting comfortably smoking my pipe, cap on the back of my head reading the ‘Union Jack’, when my driver nudged me pointing to the left, there, right alongside us going in the opposite direction was a big car, sitting in the back, cigar in mouth, smiling, was Winston Churchill, my driver was so excited at seeing the great man a few feet away from him that he stalled the engine, my worry was how to salute Churchill, but I could not re-call anything in the drill-book to cover it, I dropped my paper, took the pipe out of my mouth, put

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my cap on straight, and did my best to salute, in return, he removed his cigar from his mouth, smiled broadly as if he understood my embarrassment and removed his hat for a moment, his vehicle soon moved on, but my driver was so overcome that it took him some minutes to get the vehicle started again.

On November 10th 1944 I was called to Palace de Caserte, housing amongst other things the H.Q. of 5th Army, All good things must come to an end and we received orders to return to the U/K.

Polito organised a good feed for us the day we left, a big iced cake was made for us, but unfortunately it had a strong taste of garlic, so as not to hurt anyone's feelings we consumed the lot! We embarked in the trooper ALCANTARA at Naples on November 17th 1944 and sailed that day for Gibraltar, where we spent a couple of days before sailing, we arrived off the Bar Light at the entrance to the Mersey on November 29th 1944 and had to wait there a couple of days before going alongside the Landing stage on November 1st 1944, where we were greeted by an Army band. Early in the morning of the next day we were back in Scotland at Armadillo, home for a few days at Christmas, then back to Armadillo. Towards the end of January 1945 Joan brought our Son up north, I met them at the Central station, Glasgow and we stayed at St. Enoch hotel, Peter using the open drawer of a chest of drawers as his bed. On February 2nd 1945, Peter was christened in H.M.S. Armadillo, we lacked a church so we used the Wren's recreation space with the ship's bell upturned as the font, our Padre, The Rev. Shorland-Bell conducting the ceremony, even at that age Peter must have formed his opinion of the Royal Navy from Armadillo, he eventually joined the Royal Air Force! We stayed at a cottage across the Glenfinnart from Armadillo, it snowed heavily for most of our stay, for five days the only communication between Ardentinnny and the outside world was by drifter across to Gourock, all of the roads were blocked. We returned to Buckinghamshire on February 19th 1945, one night there and I was back at Armadillo, two days later with half a dozen officers we left for H.M.S. Volcano in Cumberland, we stayed there until March 3rd 1945 learning all about the latest explosives, and indulging in mine clearance and sundry other lethal games in preparation for our assault on the Japanese mainland.

Back to Armadillo on March 4th 1945, stopping one night in Carlisle just long enough to sample Government beer! Soon after arriving at Armadillo I was sent on an Aircraft recognition course at Largs, where I contracted chicken pox and spent a fortnight in Isolation Hospital in Glasgow.

Back in Armadillo again, I was sent on a short course with the R.A.F. at Middle Wallop, the course was in Tropical Hygiene, we were getting ready for our assault on the Japanese mainland. While in Middle Wallop I was able to get down to see my brother near Dorchester and to sample once again some of the local brew before returning to Armadillo. Next it was onto Dundonald Camp in Ayrshire, where we prepared for our journey to the Far East, having a good idea what would happen to most of us when we made the assault landing in Japan we were somewhat relieved when we heard of the dropping of the Atom Bomb, it seemed quite obvious that had we made that assault landing we should have sustained far more casualties than were caused by the dropping of the Atom Bomb.

Instructions were received by me to report to H.M.S. Rosenheath for demobilisation, I said goodbye to the Commando and arrived at Rosenheath Castle on October 30th 1945, formalities over I proceeded to London, collected my civvy clothing at Olympia and went home, it was all over, almost all over, the Netherlands Government asked me over there to attend the ceremony at the Naval College at Den Helder when my Dutch ensign was handed over for safe keeping, the Netherlands Navy had arranged a passage for me in the sloop FLORES from London to Amsterdam, at the ceremony I again stood alongside Captain Hetteime of the MARNIX VAN SINT ALDEGONDE while our flag was hoisted at the masthead, I spent a further ten days there, during which, enjoying very much the Dutch hospitality! Later in London, the Netherlands Ambassador invested me with the Order of Orange Nassau, Military Division Officer, for, as the London Gazette said, Gallant and Distinguished Services in the first landing in Sicily from the MARNIX VAN SINT ALDEGONDE.



[Royal Naval Beach Commandos](#)

Tom Turton died soon after the war, just as the Arab at the Pyramids had said, Ed. George of the Canadian Re-Enforcements Depot became a Member of Parliament in Canada and died a few years ago. Martin Vanheems is back in the Family business and we still keep in touch. MacArthur is on the staff of St. Andrews University and we still meet every two or three years. Captain Hetteime died five years ago and is still missed by his many friends. The RNVR was reformed after the war and I was given a permanent commission therein, later we were incorporated into the RNR. I still go on exercises with them and sometimes have the good luck to meet again someone who shared the good old days with me. It is interesting to note that all our fortune-telling Arab told us way back in 1943 has come true so far. The uncompleted part of it is my demise, which, should he be correct, is not far away. However, I still go to sea as often as possible and enjoy it, it has been traditional in my family that the youngest Son always dies at sea so I must remember Captain Ken Shannon of the Fighting Fifth, who decreed that “we will go there in battle order, with smiles on our faces”. Now it is all over it does one good to remember the things that were good and bad, the great comradeship, and the sheer guts of the soldiers, sailors and airmen and others of many nationalities with whom I had the honour to serve. Perhaps there will never be another war, we all hope so. I’m glad I went through the last one, I’m proud of the fact that I met some real people, the troops from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and other parts of the British Empire, The Dutch, our friends of the 5th U.S. Army, the French and Italians who fought alongside us. Yes, it was a great honour to serve with them all.

THANET December 1975.

R.N. COMMANDO ‘N’ (NAN)



Lt Cdr M V Redshaw April/May 1944

## Royal Naval Beach Commandos

1943

<u>February 12<sup>th</sup></u>	HMS ARMADILLO.
<u>February 16<sup>th</sup></u>	Embarked in HMS KEREN for exercises.
<u>February 20<sup>th</sup></u>	Disembarked from HMS KEREN.
<u>February 21<sup>st</sup></u>	HMS ARMADILLO.
<u>March 1<sup>st</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup></u>	Leave.
<u>March 12<sup>th</sup></u>	HMS Foliot 111.
<u>March 30<sup>th</sup></u>	0731 Left Bickleigh Station. 1400 Arrived Paddington Station. 1900 Departed Kings Cross Station.
March 31 <sup>st</sup>	0600 Arrived Glasgow Central. 1048 Arrived Spean Bridge. Arrived Achnacarry C.B.T.C.
April 13 <sup>th</sup>	Lt. Redshaw left Achnacarry for Mearnskirck Hospital
April 29 <sup>th</sup>	Discharged Mearnskirck Hospital.
April 30 <sup>th</sup>	Arrived HMS Rosenheath.
May 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup>	Leave.
May 9 <sup>th</sup>	Returned HMS Rosenheath.
May 25 <sup>th</sup>	Left HMS Rosenheath.
May 26 <sup>th</sup>	Arrived HMS Armadillo.
June 1 <sup>st</sup>	Left HMS Armadillo for exercise.
June 10 <sup>th</sup>	Joined Netherlands ship Marina Van Sint Aldeghonde + Cdr. Stubbs PBM
June 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Exercises off Arran Island.
June 28 <sup>th</sup>	Sailed from Clyde. N1 Lt. Russell RN HMS Glengyle. N2 Lt. Redshaw RNVR HMT Marnix Van Sint ALD. N3 Lt. Turton RNVR MMT Derbyshire.
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	D Day Operation HUSKY. Roger Sector, Nr. Pachino. N1 Red Beach, N2 Green Beach N3 Amber Beach.
July 16 <sup>th</sup>	Shifted to 56 Beach, Portopalo.
July 25 <sup>th</sup>	Withdrawn, Sailed from Sicily in LCI 241. A.B. Gilbert in C.C.S. near Syracuse
July 2 <sup>th</sup>	Arrived Malta.
July 26 <sup>th</sup>	Sailed from Malta. A.B. Worracker remaining in Hospital.
July 28 <sup>th</sup>	Arrived Oued Marsa, near Bougie Algeria. With British 4 <sup>th</sup> Division
August 19 <sup>th</sup>	Sailed from Bougie in LCI 241. A.B.'s Spencer, Smith, Dowle. Ramsker, Stanton & Sykes remaining in Hospital

## Royal Naval Beach Commandos

August 20<sup>th</sup> Arrived La Goulette (Tunis). PO Grainger discharged to Hospital.

August 22<sup>nd</sup> Arrived Malta, Sailed for Sicily.

August 23<sup>rd</sup> Arrived Catania. Encamped near Misterbianchi with British 5<sup>th</sup> Division.

September 2<sup>nd</sup> Joined ML 1128 plus LCA's. A.B.'s Spencer & Smith rejoined.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> D Day Operation BAYTOWN. Landed Gallico Marina (How Green Beach)  
O.D. Thomas wounded in leg. Evacuated.

September 4<sup>th</sup> How Green Beach closed. N2 move to How Amber.

September 6<sup>th</sup> A.B.'s Gilbert, Dowle & Ramsker rejoin Party.

September 10<sup>th</sup> PO Grainger rejoins Party.

September 12<sup>th</sup> Lt. Varley, with Party "RINGWOOD" moves off.

September 16<sup>th</sup> Lt. Varley reported in Hospital.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Varley and A.B. Worracker rejoin Party.

September 24<sup>th</sup> Party "RINGWOOD" returns.

September 26<sup>th</sup> Cdr. Stubbs (A.S.N.O.L.) in Reggio Hospital.

September 28<sup>th</sup> Sailed from Gallico in LST 9, in company with N3 for Messina  
Joined LCI 272 in Messina. Cdr. Stubbs with A.B. Jones left in Messina.

September 29<sup>th</sup> Sailed in LCI 272.

September 30<sup>th</sup> Arrived Valetta.

October 1<sup>st</sup> Joined HMT DEVONSHIRE. Sailed in company with HMS GLENGYLE  
with N1 & N3 and HMT SOBIESKI.

October 5<sup>th</sup> Arrived Port Said.

October 6<sup>th</sup> Arrived Port Tewfik.

October 7<sup>th</sup> Transferred to SOBIESKI. N1 to GLENGYLE. N3 remaining in  
DEVONSHIRE.

October 15<sup>th</sup> A.B. Couch transferred to GLENGYLE to carryout 14 days No. 11

October 19<sup>th</sup> Left SOBIESKI arrived HMS SAUNDERS with N1 and N3  
A.B. Couch rejoins

October 25<sup>th</sup> Seven days leave granted. A.B.'s Gilbert & Brooks in cells (warrant).

November 7<sup>th</sup> Exercise BANGALORE 11.

November 12<sup>th</sup> Exercise DUCHESS.

November 15<sup>th</sup> Lt. Jarvis & Lt. Brown (N1) on draft to U.K.

November 25<sup>th</sup> Exercise SHALLUFA.

December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944 A.B. Bradbury discharged to Hospital with yellow Jaundice.

January 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Redshaw on draft to U.K. Lt. Varley Beachmaster N2. (Up to Anzio N1 would be on the same Journey.)

ADMIRALTY

Whitehall, S.W.1  
15th June, 1948.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following award:—

*Albert Medal in Bronze.*

Chief Petty Officer Joseph LYNCH, B.E.M., D/JX 133231, for gallantry in saving life at sea.

While H.M.S. NIGERIA was lying at anchor at Port Stanley, Falkland Islands on the night of 26th February, 1948, a Rating missed his footing on the Jacob's ladder while disembarking from the motor cutter at the port boom and fell into the sea. It was after dark and the sea was rough and at a temperature of 42° Fahrenheit with the wind blowing a fresh gale.

The Rating, Leading Seaman Hughes, managed to retain his hold on the Jacob's ladder but, as he was dressed in heavy oilskins, was unable to pull himself up, nor could he make for the cutter owing to the cold state of the sea and the fear of sinking in his heavy clothes.

C.P.O. Lynch heard the pipe for the life-boat while sitting in his mess. Dressed only in a singlet and trousers he immediately went on deck and, on seeing the situation, made his way out along the boom, down the ladder and into the water alongside Hughes. He persuaded Hughes to let go of the ladder and supported him to the motor cutter. To keep out of the way Lynch then swam back to the ladder to wait until Hughes had been hauled into the boat. When Hughes was safe Lynch swam back to the motor cutter and was himself hauled to safety.

For bravery, skill and devotion to duty whilst serving in H.M. Ships ILLUSTRIOUS and VICTORIOUS in attacks on enemy oil installations at Palembang, Sumatra:

*Mention in Despatches (Posthumous).*

Acting Lieutenant-Commander William James MAINPRICE, D.F.C., Royal Navy.

Temporary Lieutenant (A) Leslie Duncan DURNO, R.N.V.R.

Sub-Lieutenant (A) Roland Scott ARMSTRONG, R.N.V.R.

Temporary Sub-Lieutenant (A) Stanley Tyrell COUSINS, R.N.V.R.

Chief Petty Officer Airman Henry George Christie STOLLERY, FAA/FX.79439.

Acting Leading Seaman Sydney AUSTWICK, D/J.82648.

The KING has been graciously pleased to give unrestricted permission for the wearing of the following decoration bestowed by the Queen of the Netherlands:

For gallant and distinguished services in the first landing on Sicily from the Netherlands Motor Ship MARNIX VAN SINT ALDEGONDE:

*Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau, with Swords;*

Temporary Acting Lieutenant-Commander Maurice Vernon REDSHAW, R.N.V.R.

The KING has been graciously pleased to give unrestricted permission for the wearing of the following decorations bestowed by the Prince Regent of Belgium:

For distinguished services rendered to Belgium during the War:

*Officer of the Order of Leopold;*

Captain John Hugh LEWES, C.B.E., D.S.C., Royal Navy.

Temporary Acting Lieutenant-Commander Frederick Edgar WYKES, O.B.E., R.N.R.

*Officer of the Order of Leopold II;*

Lts. to be Lt.-Cdrs. with seny. as stated:—

T. A. de V. HUNT, 10th May 1948.

A. FURNBULL, 14th May, 1948.

J. P. OGILVY-WEDDERBURN, A. G. McCRUM,

P. W. H. BOULNOIS, J. de V. G. WALLIS, J. G.

V. HOLT, 16th May 1948.

M. J. AMOS, 17th May 1948.

Lts. (E) to be Lt.-Cdrs. (E) with seny. as stated:—

J. P. KINGCOME, E. W. BURGIS, 1st June 1948.

Lts. (S) to be Lt.-Cdrs. (S) with seny. as stated:—

K. E. MOXON-BROWNE, S. P. McGUIRE, 1st

June 1948.

Lt. (A) D. A. POYNTER transferred to Executive Branch in the rank of Lt. with seny. 1st Sept. 1942.

Lt. (E) R. W. DAVIES, D.S.C., M.B.E., placed on Retd. List, 30th May 1948.

Wardmr. Lt. S. L. PECK, M.B.E., placed on Retd. List, 18th June 1948.

Actg. Lts. (E) to be Lts. (E) with seny. as stated:—

P. J. BING, 1st Oct. 1946.

D. V. RANDALL, 1st May 1947.

R. G. BAYER, 1st June 1947.

M. A. COMBE, 1st July 1947.

Sub-Lts. to be Lts. with seny. as stated:—

D. M. HAINSWORTH, 6th Feb. 1948.

J. I. SHEPHERD, 3rd Apr. 1948.

A. CARRUTHERS, 1st May 1948.

M. I. HOSEGOOD, P. S. DAVIS, 16th May 1948.

Sub-Lts. (A) to be Lts. (A) with seny. as stated:—

A. H. SKINNER, 17th Jan. 1948.

G. Y. TEMPLE, 2nd Mar. 1948.

R. F. WEST, 2nd Apr. 1948.

P. R. HARTLEY, 3rd Apr. 1948.

Sub-Lt. (A) (A/E) G. HUGHES to be Lt. (A) (A/E), 3rd May 1948.

Sub-Lt. (E) D. N. F. MEARES to be Lt. (E), 11th Mar. 1948.

Instr. Sub-Lt. W. L. PITT to be Instr. Lt. (s.s.), 3rd June 1948.

Tempy. Instr. Sub-Lt. E. S. INGLEDEW to be Tempy. Instr. Lt., 27th May 1948.

Mr. C. W. F. BASS, D.S.C., Cd. Engr., to be Lt. (E), 30th May 1948.

Wt. Wtr. Offrs. to be Lts. (S) with seny. as stated:—

H. DIXON, 17th Mar. 1945.

J. H. BREHAUT, 15th Nov. 1945.

F. A. SWEENEY, 18th Jan. 1946.

Wt. Stores Offrs. to be Lts. (S) with seny. as stated:—

G. A. SHARPLEY, 2nd May 1945.

D. F. DEEVEY, 30th Jan. 1946.

F. W. ADCOCK, 3rd Feb. 1946.

Admiralty, 27th May, 1948.

R.M.

Capt. (Actg. Maj.) R. D. CROMBIE to relinquish the rank of Actg. Maj., 27th May 1948.

Admiralty, 2nd June, 1948.

R.M.

Lt.-Col. (Actg. Col.) R. H. P. WEST, M.C., to relinquish the rank of Actg. Col. and to Retired List, 19th Aug. 1947.

Admiralty, 2nd June, 1948.

R.N.R.

Lt.-Cdr. W. HINE, R.D., placed on Retd. List, 16th May 1948.

Officer of the Order of Orange with Swords



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