

**NAN 'N' RN BEACH PARTY
LATER NAN 'N' RN COMMANDO
FEBRUARY 1943 - NOVEMBER 1945**

NOTES:

7. HMS Armadillo, Ardentinny, Argyllshire, Scotland. The assistant training Officer was Lieutenant Roger Wake, who eventually took over the Command and training in full of the establishment known as HMS Armadillo.

8. Bill Redshaw and Tom Turton were the only two already at HMS Armadillo prior to the formation of NAN 'N' Naval Beach Party. They had arrived mid January 1943. ALL members of NAN 'N' Naval Beach Party were sent up to HMS Quebec in Scotland using a Special Railway Warrant and a troop train, single troop train if one could be spared. They all arrived at HMS Quebec in mid January 1943, and it was at HMS Quebec that they had to hand in their Blue Jackets and were issued with Khaki. As HMS Armadillo, was a new training establishment it was not easily accessed by metalled roads, in those days and the tracks had to wind around the Loch and through the Forests (Woods) it took some time to travel their so ALL were moved together rather than singly. The transport, which was limited had to be organised by a Transport Officer (a duty shared at that time Redshaw/Turton). Once the new intake had arrived NAN 'N' Naval Beach Party was formed in February 1943 at HMS Armadillo, Ardentinny, Argyllshire, Scotland, and could commence training. The Command was as follows:

Commanding Officers (CO):

Acting Commander PWF Stubbs DSC RN April 1943 - September 1943.

Lieutenant J Russell DSC RN September 1943 - February 1944.

Lieutenant Commander T J Turton RNVR February 1944 - June 1945.

Lieutenant A Varley RNVR June 1945 - November 1945.

At the time of formation:

Principal Beach Masters:

'N1' - Lieutenant J Russell DSC RN.

'N2' - Lieutenant Commander M V (Bill) Redshaw RNVR

'N3' - Lieutenant T J Turton RNVR

Assistant Beach Masters:

'N1' ?

'N1' ?

'N2' - Sub Lieutenant A Varley RNVR.

'N2' - Sub Lieutenant Jarvis RNVR.

'N2' - Midshipman B Wallace RNVR.

On completion of his Officer training Midshipman B Wallace became a Sub Lieutenant and replaced Sub Lieutenant Jarvis.

'N3' ?

'N3' ?

The training was carried out at HMS Armadillo, Carrick in Lochgoil, Kilfinan in Loch Fyne and the Commando School at Achnacarry, where training was given to become Commandos. NAN 'N' Naval Beach Party, were then presented with their Green Berets and Fighting Knives by the Commanding Officer at Achnacarry Colonel Charles Vaughan (known as the Rommel of the north). It was also said that 'N' did some training of their own at the 'Whistlefield Inn' but we never know about those encounters?

9. The new NAN 'N' RN Commando was sent down to HMS Foliot III, Bickleigh in Devon to carry out an assault course. They were not told, they had to build it first. Once built the assault course was used, then handed over to the Royal Marine Commandos, who took it over as their permanent training and base camp (during the war and post war it was still in use). By now it was April/May 1943 and trained Commandos could not be left to sit around.
[SEE PHOTOGRAPH A](#) and [SEE PHOTOGRAPH 4](#).
10. NAN 'N' RN Commando returned to HMS Armadillo and prepared for operation 'Husky' the invasion of Sicily. NAN 'N' RN Commando were embarked on the Clyde onboard the Marnix Van St Aldegonda for the sea journey to Sicily. They had a reunion with old pals (Martin Vanheems) was to be one of those in command of a Landing Craft. This was now June/July 1943.
[SEE PHOTOGRAPH 5](#).
11. NAN 'N' RN Commando arrived off Sicily, carried out a successful landing at Pachino and secured the beach, or the push inland and all according to the book. This was July 1943. It was recorded that by time and place NAN 'N' RN Commando were the very first Allied Soldiers in an invasion force to land in occupied Europe, in strength and with intention to stay. However, this was nearly not the case, as in the original plans for the invasion of Sicily it was spotted that all the landing forces were to spread out, and instead all forces were to be concentrated on the south-east corner of the Island where the strategically important airfields were located.
[SEE PHOTOGRAPH 6](#) and [SEE FOOTNOTE 2](#).
12. NAN 'N' RN Commando were then sent to Malta. 'N2' had a trip to Bougie in Algeria, but then returned to Malta by July 1943.
13. From Malta, NAN 'N' RN Commando crossed to Sicily and up to Messina in August 1943.
14. NAN 'N' RN Commando crossed the Straits of Messina in Landing Craft (once again they met up with Martin Vanheems for the last time. Operation 'Baytown' would put NAN 'N' Commando at Reggio di Calabria on the toe of Italy. They landed at Gallico Marina, and again completed a successful mission. This was September 1943.
[SEE PHOTOGRAPH 7](#).
15. NAN 'N' RN Commando moved north towards Villa San Giovanni on the mainland of southern Italy, then round to the south west coast of Italy to Marina di Belvedere, then up to Scalea and finally up to Sapri, which turned out to be a mistaken landing. This was September 1943.
16. After operation 'Baytown' the invasion of southern Italy, NAN 'N' RN Commando were sent first to Corsica (Ajaccio) which the Germans had only just evacuated, then to Bougie, Algeria. This was about September/October 1943.
17. NAN 'N' RN Commando then went back to sea, they were sent through the Suez Canal and this was about October 1943.



2 N2 - somewhere..

HMS Foliot III, Bickleigh, Devon, April/May? 1943. The Assault Course was built by NAN 'N' Commando. It was later taken over by the Royal Marine Commandos as their base and training depot.

Alec Varley is in the centre, as an exercise observer. THE MARSHALL WAS TOM TURTON - SEE PHOTOGRAPH 4.

NAN 'N' Commando were sent from HMS Armadillo to Bickleigh, Devon, to participate in an Assault Course (they were not told they had to build it first), and from Bickleigh, Devon, they were sent back to HMS Armadillo just pre the invasion of Sicily.

PHOTOGRAPH A



PHOTOGRAPH 4.

Tom Turton at HMS Foliot III, Bickleigh, Devon, April/May? 1943.

Alec Varley as an Observer of the exercise, Tom Turton was the Marshall of the exercise, and somewhere Bill Redshaw was the Overseer with the big Chiefs.



PHOTOGRAPH 5.

Tom Turton, on the Clyde, embarked, and on his way to Sicily.

The photograph was taken onboard the Dutch ship Marnix Van St Aldegonde which had been converted to a troopship with facilities to carry Landing Craft. It was on this ship that Bill Redshaw and Tom Turton met up again with Martin Vanheems, who the year before had been with Bill and Tom at the landing in Algeria (See photograph 1).



PHOTOGRAPH 6.

Tom Turton, on the beach in Sicily, following the successful landing which was part of operation 'Husky'.

Photograph taken July 1943.



PHOTOGRAPH 7.

Left to Right - Captain Williams, Tom Turton and Lieutenant Gibbs.

Tom was always for a lark about, in a dry way. Here Tom has joined the Army?

Photograph taken at Reggio di Calabria following the successful landing which was part of operation 'Baytown'

Photograph taken September 1943.