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# No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando 1942–45

Britain's Secret Commando



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correspondence upon this matter.

## Editor's Note

The use of an initial capital for the word 'Commando'  
indicates a unit, of roughly battalion size; the lower-case  
'commandos' is used as the general term for this type of  
soldiers. To avoid confusion with its general meaning, in this  
text we depart from series style and use the term 'Troops'  
with an initial capital – meaning sub-units of commandos,  
with anything up to 100 men in the case of No.10 (IA)  
Commando.

## Illustration credits

The author is grateful for the courtesy of the trustees and  
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# No.10 (INTER-ALLIED) COMMANDO 1942-45

## INTRODUCTION

**W**ars always bring disruption to the essentially conservative nature  
of armies, as they are forced to accept non-conformists into  
their ranks. A feature of World War II was the appearance of  
irregular forces, some of which remained in orders of battle after  
hostilities came to an end in 1945. For the British armed forces, the  
development of the Army Commandos in 1940 led to a permanent place  
in the post-war forces for the Royal Marines Commandos, whose story has  
been repeated and analyzed frequently. However, the special character of  
No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, which led inevitably to its disbandment  
soon after the end of the war, has sometimes had the result of its being  
regarded as somehow 'outside' the World War II British order of battle.  
So far only one book – the excellent *10 Commando*, by Ian Dear (see  
Bibliography) – has examined the remarkable history of this unit, and  
the remarkable characters who served in its ranks, who faced even more

complex dangers than their comrades-in-  
arms in other Commando battalions.

The fact is that these men, recruited  
from among those exiled or escaped from  
Occupied Europe, were as much involved  
in fighting the Germans, Italians (and even  
on one occasion, the Japanese) as the  
conventional 'Free' forces that gathered in  
Great Britain from 1940. Many of these  
foreign volunteers had left families at home  
at the mercy of the Third Reich; and those  
who made up its No.3 Troop, in particular,  
necessarily served under false identities.  
No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando as a whole  
was not a secret unit in the true sense of  
the term; nevertheless, it has been far less  
publicized than the other Commandos, and  
thus its history has disappeared from  
popular consciousness more quickly and  
more completely. In the case of No.3 Troop,  
records were destroyed in 1945–46 to  
protect its former members from identifi-  
cation by Soviet agents, as the threat to the  
Western democracies changed.

It is hoped that this brief history of a  
remarkable Allied fighting unit will do  
something to revive its memory. To set it

**Amfréville, Normandy, 8 June  
1944: the battle-weary Sgt  
Louis Lanternier of No.1 (French)  
Troop, now detached to No.4  
Commando as its No.5 Troop.  
He wears on his green beret the  
distinctive French Commando  
cap badge, designed by Cpl  
Maurice Chauvet and adopted  
in May 1944. Over his  
battledress this former French  
Foreign Legion soldier wears  
a grey-green British sleeveless  
oversmock – the 'jacket,  
parachutist's, 1942 pattern'.  
(Imperial War Museum B 5282)**



LtCol Dudley Lister, commanding officer of No.10 (IA) Cdo from its formation until spring 1944, outside the Dutch Troop's Prins Willem Club at Portmadoc (Porthmadog) in Wales. Lister, awarded the MC in World War I, had commanded No.4 Cdo during the Lofoten Islands raids off Norway in March 1941; he was a suitably tough character to be entrusted with the formation of this potentially difficult multinational unit. He was often photographed wearing leather gauntlets; here, unusually, he also wears a Sam Browne belt with battledress. (National Army Museum 102143)



fully in context it should be read as a companion to Elite 64, *Army Commandos 1940-1945*, and Elite 57, *The Royal Marines 1939-1993*.

## FORMATION

At the beginning of 1942 the war was not going well for Great Britain. Her Army had recovered from the defeat in France in summer 1940, and the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force had saved her from subsequent invasion. However, Germany's U-boats were tearing into the transatlantic convoys upon which she depended for survival, and in North Africa the early victories over the Italians had been followed by defeats at the hands of the much more effective Afrika Korps. In the Far East, the sudden Japanese onslaught in December 1941 had brought a succession of disasters; Hong Kong and Singapore surrendered, and the British Army began its longest ever retreat from

Burma into India. Over Occupied Europe, RAF Bomber Command was suffering significant losses in aircraft and men. However, there were real grounds for hope. The recent entry into the war of the United States promised military support and political commitment; and after the first six months of catastrophic defeats the Soviet Red Army had checked the German invasion, at least temporarily, with great losses. At home, the exploits of the Army Commandos – in raiding Norway in 1941 and St Nazaire in France in March 1942 – were raising civilian and military morale by taking the war to the enemy. It seemed that every military organization in Britain – even the Home Guard – now wanted a slice of the commando concept.

This applied with some force to the exiles from the occupied European nations. Polish and Czech pilots had shown extraordinary commitment during the Battle of Britain; at sea, men from occupied nations were manning merchant ships and warships alike. However, for the soldiers there had been few opportunities to do anything except to train, and to defend Great Britain against a now-unlikely invasion. Some of those who had escaped from mainland Europe since June 1940 had experienced incredible hardships – bluffing their way past German checkpoints, crossing borders by night, climbing mountain ranges, and enduring captivity in Vichy and Spanish prisons as they made for Gibraltar. When they reached Great Britain they were screened, as security risks and for intelligence, at the New Scotland Yard interrogation centre and, for later arrivals, at Col Oreste Pinto's Allied Counter-Intelligence Centre at the Royal Victoria Patriotic School in London. They then faced the psychological problems of settling in a foreign land, at war and facing an uncertain future.

Many, unaware of the complex military and political pressures upon Great Britain, became frustrated by what they perceived as political inactivity by their governments-in-exile.

Serving on board the Free French Navy battleship *L'Amiral Courbet* tied up in Portsmouth Naval Dockyard in early 1942 was a burly junior officer named Philippe Kieffer. Inspired by the Lofoten raids in March 1941, Sub-Lieutenant Kieffer convinced first senior French officers and then Brig Haydon, who commanded the British Special Service Brigade, of the feasibility of raising a French Commando specifically to raid France. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, saw the value of such a Commando, but insisted that it should be widened to include exiles of other nationalities: all knew their countries, spoke the languages, had a yearning for liberation, and were a potentially valuable intelligence resource.

On 26 June 1942, after discussions at the War Office, Western Command instructed LtCol Lister, MC, who had recently led No.4 Commando, to raise No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. It was to consist of Commando HQ and four Troops, each of a headquarters and two Sections, and was initially to be based at Troon in Scotland. It was envisaged that the number of Troops would be increased to eight. (Although the newest Commando unit of the 14 so far raised, it took its vacant number from a 1940 proposal to establish a 10 Commando from Northern Command, which had failed to attract sufficient volunteers.)

Kieffer, promoted to lieutenant, received authorization to establish a French Commando and, recruiting an intake of 40 French sailors – including five from detention – in June 1942 he formed at Camberley in Surrey the 1re Compagnie de Fusiliers-Marins (1st Company of Naval Rifles). The little unit retained its links with the French Navy, wearing naval insignia and headgear – peaked caps for officers and petty officers, and the blue pompon cap or *bachi* for ratings (for further details, see commentary to Plate C). British battledress, weapons and equipment were issued; however, French drill was retained, for instance carrying the rifle at the slope on the right shoulder. The company was attached to No.2 Cdo in Ayr, Scotland, for training, before attending the Commando Basic Training Centre at Achnacarry.

The call for volunteers for the commandos was usually posted on daily routine orders, and was couched in terms of 'hazardous duty' without being specific about the actual requirement. Commando selection officers concentrated on physical ability and military knowledge. Those who joined No.10 (Inter-Allied) Cdo had a wide range of experience, from the politically aware who had fought in the Spanish Civil War, to former soldiers of the French Foreign Legion, to those who had lived in Dutch, Belgian and French colonies but had never been to the Netherlands, Belgium or France. Others were pre-war political refugees from Nazi Germany. No.10 (IA) Cdo was to grow into the largest Commando in the Special Forces Group.

**Commando HQ** was primarily established from British officers and other ranks. In addition to the commanding officer, there was a second-in-command, adjutant, intelligence officer and NCO, medical officer and his orderlies, signals officer and his section, training officer, quartermaster, administration officer, drivers and batmen.



Portmadoc, 1942: Capt P.J.Mulders (right), the first commander of No.2 (Dutch) Tp, with HM Prince Bernhard, who commanded the Free Netherlands forces. Mulders wears the same insignia as the officer reconstructed as Plate D1. (Author's collection)



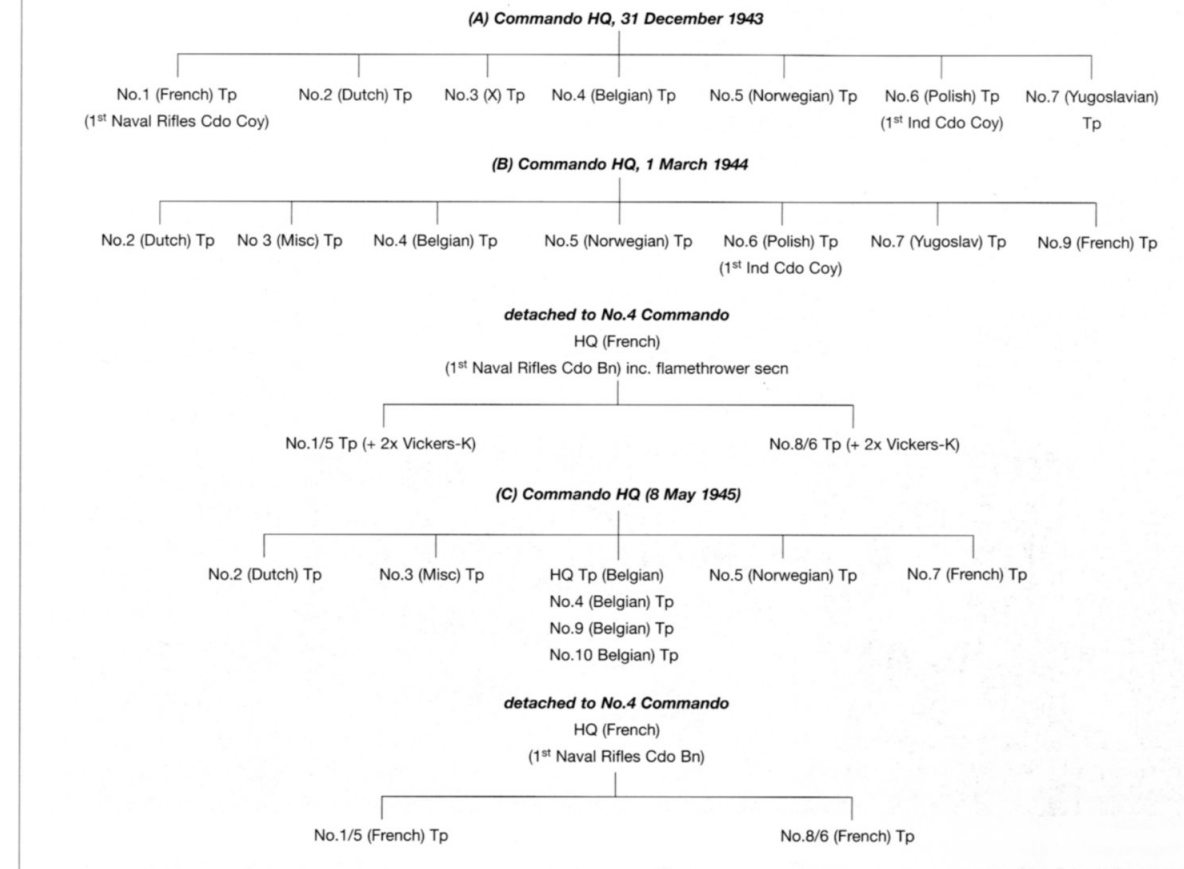
Officers of No.10 (IA) Cdo at Harlech, 1942. (Standing, left to right): Capt Lutyens, Coldstream Guards (liaison officer); Capt Clarke, Gordon Highlanders (adjutant); LtCol Lister, The Buffs (CO); Maj Peter Laycock, Nottinghamshire Yeomanry (2ic); Capt Hilton-Jones, RA (OC No.3 Tp); and Capt Hodges, RAMC (MO). (Sitting, left to right): Lt Woloszowski (2ic Polish Tp - KIA, Italy); Capt Mulders (OC Dutch Tp); Capt Danloy (OC Belgian Tp); Capt Hauge (OC Norwegian Tp); and Capt Kieffer (OC French Tp). At this date Kieffer wears on his beret the diamond-shaped enamelled Free French Navy badge shown worn on the breast in Plate C2. (IWM B 31039)

The first Troop to arrive, on 29 June 1942, was **No.2 (Dutch) Troop**, consisting of two officers and 40 men selected from the Free Dutch 'Princess Irene' Brigade Group. Initially led by Capt Mulders, those who passed the course joined the Commando on 16 July. As with all the Dutch armed forces in exile, the difficulties of escaping from the Netherlands meant that the Troop was always below establishment, and it never deployed as a complete separate unit. (One officer was a South African Boer who could hardly speak Dutch.) The officers wore their Dutch collar insignia of rank and arm of service, the other ranks British warrant officers' and NCOs' sleeve badges and chevrons (for further details, see commentary to Plate D.) On 3 August the Troop moved to Portmadoc in Wales, with its HQ at Blaenau Ffestiniog Toy Railway Station.

On 12 July the Commando itself moved to Harlech, where it was joined by the French company on 16 July, after the latter had paraded before Gen de Gaulle in London on Bastille Day. The company was established as **No.1 (French) Troop**, and moved to Criccieth, with the HQ in the George Hotel.

On 24 July 1942, Capt Hilton-Jones arrived with eight Czechs as the leading elements of **No.3 Troop**. Sometimes known as the Jewish, British or English Troop, it was officially titled No.3 (X) Tp until, in 1944, it became Miscellaneous (Misc) Tp, which reflected its multi-national establishment. Most of the volunteers were Austrian, German and Eastern European refugees of Jewish background, who had escaped

Table 1: No.10 (Inter-Allied Commando, 1942-45)



Nazi persecution before or during the war. For instance, Pte 'Turner' (O.Pollaschek) had been imprisoned in Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps as a political prisoner. After release in 1939 he reached the USA, and was arranging for his family to follow him when war broke out. He later learned that his wife and two children were murdered in Auschwitz.

Some of these men were already in the Army, most with the Auxiliary Pioneer Corps, and had served in France in 1940. During the inevitable nervous round-ups of 'enemy aliens' in 1939 others had been interned under Defence Regulation 18B and shipped to the Isle of Man, Canada or even Australia. Given the opportunity to enlist in late 1941, most were posted to 77 & 87 (Alien) Coys, Pioneer Corps, on labour duties such as unloading coal at power stations and clearing bomb damage; wryly, they called themselves the 'King's Own Aliens'. In mid August 1942 No.10 (IA) Cdo held discussions with Combined Operations Operational Security and the War Office about hastening recruitment into the Troop of these obviously valuable personnel. After discreet interviews by the Commando's officers the successful applicants were assembled at No.10 Pioneer Corps Training Centre at Bradford, and then taken to Troop HQ at Aberdovey. Since the personal details of some of these volunteers were known to the Gestapo, the men selected British *noms de guerre*,

Eastbourne, 1943: a Polish commando, dressed in denims, cleans his 'boots, Commando'. Note the thickness of the sole and the demarcated pattern. (Polish Museum 851)



developed false personal histories capable of surviving interrogation, and were badged in British infantry regiments. At the War Office only one official knew their real identities. (In this book their true names are given in brackets, where known.) The Troop numbered 130 men; like the Dutch, it never fought as a deployed unit, but provided interrogators, translators, interpreters and experts on the German Army to the other Commandos at need.

When Belgium surrendered on 28 May 1940 no orders had been issued to her armed forces to escape to Great Britain. Nevertheless, enough chose to escape through France and Gibraltar, or arrived via Belgian colonies in Africa, to form the 1st Independent Belgian Brigade Group at Tenby; in doing so they actually risked charges of treason, that were eventually annulled only in 1948. On 7 August 1942, seven officers and 100 men from the Belgian 1st Rifle Bn under the command of Capt Danloy arrived as **No.4 (Belgian) Troop**, which raised its flag at the Abersoch Yacht Club; A Section were predominantly Flemish, and B Section were French-speaking Walloons. Danloy would remain in command of the Troop throughout the war. On 24 April 1941, orders had been issued to the Belgian armed forces in the UK to wear British rank badges (for further details, see commentary to Plates F & G). Attached to the Independent Bde Gp was a Luxemburg Battery; at least five Luxemburgers served in the Commandos, three – two of whom were brothers – with the French Troops of No.10 (IA), and two with No.4 Commando.

The Norwegians were keen resisters, and when their government declared in June 1940 that it was going to continue the fight in exile LtGen Bourne, a Royal Marine who commanded Combined Operations, suggested the formation of two Independent Companies from the Norwegian Bde for Special Service operations against occupied Norway. From this initiative emerged Linge Company under the command of Capt Linge, a 47-year-old Norwegian Army officer. An approach from the War Office to the Norwegian High Command in August 1942 resulted in Capt Hauge raising **No.5 (Norwegian) Troop** from the brigade; this joined No.10 (IA) Cdo at Nevin on 3 October. The men differed widely in age and background, some being refugees brought back from commando raids, while others were merchant seamen and whalers stranded by the outbreak of war.

On the capitulation of Poland in September 1939 over 80,000 Polish soldiers escaped to France through Eastern Europe, Italy and the Baltic countries, and were formed into a Polish army in exile. When the Germans overran France the 1st and 2nd Rifle Divs were driven into Swiss internment, while the 3rd and 4th Rifle Divs were assembled in Scotland and became the 1<sup>st</sup> (Polish) Armoured Division. The Poles had two aims – first, overwhelmingly, to defeat the Germans; and then to deal with the Soviets who had collaborated in the occupation of their country under the Nazi-Soviet Pact. They played a large and fearless part in the Allies' achievement of the first; but in the second they became the pawns of political power struggles, and many never saw their homeland again.

On 28 August 1942, Gen Sikorski, the Polish C-in-C in Britain, authorized the establishment of the 1st Independent Commando Company, and agreed that it should be integrated into No.10 (IA) Cdo



as part of the Polish Armed Forces. On 8 October, seven officers and 84 other ranks – mainly from the 2nd Grenadier Bn at Cupar – arrived at Fairbourne as **No.6 (Polish) Troop**. Commanded by Capt Smrokowski, the Poles retained all their national insignia (see commentary to Plate H). A rank that caused considerable confusion was 'aspirant' or cadet. Used only in France and Great Britain, this title indicated that the holder had been selected for officer training; for example, Cadet Officer/Sergeant-Major Krol commanded the Bren gun squad. The Poles were noted for their good manners, lavish hospitality with plum brandy and vodka, and boisterous entertainment, which included hurling a visitor into the air and then catching him before he hit the ground. Captain Clarke, a Gordon Highlander and the first adjutant, had great difficulty in keeping his kilt around his knees.

### Training

Each Troop carried out 'beat up' training with a British Commando before attending the five-week commando course at the Commando Basic Training Centre. Apart from a small No.3 (X) Tp detachment in March 1943, and several battle-hardened Poles recruited in Italy in 1944, all No.10 (IA) Cdo personnel attended the course; the No.3 (X) Tp detachment was trained in Wales under the direction of Capt Hilton-Jones.

Commando training produced a different soldier from the conventional infantryman. Capable of carrying out a variety of tasks, he was expected to operate either as an individual or in small patrols, or as part of a large battle group in which Troop tactics were vital. Initiative, mental and physical agility, tactical astuteness, military skills and independence were key factors. A deep sense of comradeship was vital, with an unspoken

**Autumn 1942: a Bren gun team from the Polish Troop train on a beach near Fairbourne in Wales. Both have 37 Ptn pistol equipment, and toggle ropes wound around their waists. The transverse bar or bars on the gunner's shoulder strap would indicate that he is a junior NCO, yet he inexplicably has a band of lace around the top and rear of his blouse cuffs. This photograph was passed for publication on 3 December 1942. (Polish Museum 844)**

Physical training (PT) naturally played a particularly important part, both during and after the commando course at Achnacarry. This photo was in fact taken at Eastbourne in 1945, and shows men of No.9 (Belgian) Tp, one of the new Troops recruited after the liberation of much of the Low Countries. However, Belgian and Dutch recruiters found that after the hardships of four years' occupation many applicants were not physically or mentally fit for commando training, and over half the volunteers failed the course. (IWM B 11806)



mutual reliance and an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of comrades. The Commando units were originally assembled into the Special Service Bde, each with its different culture, uniform accoutrements and insignia; however, the introduction of the green beret for qualified commandos in 1942 gave them a much-needed collective identity. From this emerged the 'bash on' philosophy, and the importance of success even if the odds were stacked in favour of failure. Virtually all the exiles selected for No.10 (IA) Cdo had one overriding drive – deep anger over the occupation of their countries, and a yearning to liberate them.

No.10 (IA) Cdo was accommodated, as were all Commandos, in billets – i.e. they were found living space in British homes. This was an enlightening experience for the exiles, since it exposed them to ordinary British people and the attitudes which prompted Great Britain to lead the continuing fight against Nazism. Billeting also developed personal responsibility and self-reliance, e.g. the need to be on parade in the morning, in the correct dress and with a clean weapon, all without the traditional badgering from NCOs. Living in billets also spared Commandos the need for a long administrative 'tail'. The Poles proved particularly popular with the locals.

The Melting Pot Club was opened in Harlech on 20 October 1942; it was described as a democracy where officers and other ranks socialized and drank together, and where language was no barrier. In early December the Poles first published their newspaper, and on New Year's Eve No.10 (IA) Cdo defeated the Free Dutch brigade at soccer, three goals to two.

On 31 May 1943 the Commando moved south-east to Eastbourne on the Sussex coast, and established its HQ in a requisitioned house in Upper Avenue, with Troop HQs at Roborough School. On 2 June the Commando paraded as a unit for the first (and only) time, with the British words of command being translated for the national contingents. The Troops rotated weekly as Duty Troop; during their week each national flag flew beneath the Union Flag, and there was intense competition to be the best – the Poles were noted for their turnout and smartness.

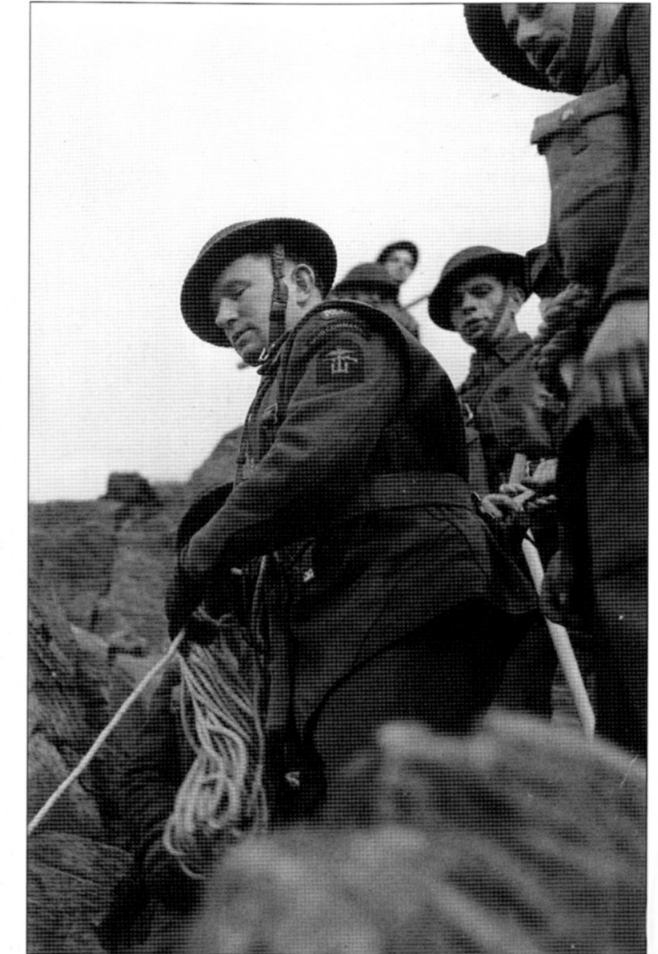
Special-to-arm training included dory (small boat) courses at Warwash and assault landing craft courses at Plymouth. Parachute training at the Central Landing School at Ringway earned the commandos British parachute wings. Over 80 per cent of the Poles were parachute-qualified. Cliff assault training was carried out at the Cliff Climbing School of the Commando Snow & Arctic Warfare Training Camp at St Ives in Cornwall. In December 1942, Capt Coates, No.10 (IA) Cdo intelligence officer, ran a two-week course enabling each Troop to form an intelligence section. In June 1943, the School of Military Intelligence at Cambridge ran a course for the Commando, and then organized a course for No.3 (X) Tp in July on advanced intelligence techniques. Trade training included courses for commando signallers, 3in mortar men, medical orderlies, drivers and despatch riders, and commando demolition. NCO cadres were held in Eastbourne; and in April 1944 five men from No.3 (X) Tp attended the shortened 165 Officer Cadet Training Unit course, while one went on the long version. No.2 (Dutch) Tp exercised against the Home Guard defending a pillbox near Harlech in October 1942, and then opposed a landing by No.1 (French) Tp later the same month. The Commando exercised against the Guards Arm'd Bde near Oxford in mid-February 1943.

### Expansion

Formed in 1943 from 45 men of the disbanded 2nd Naval Inf Bn from the Lebanon, and from Frenchmen repatriated from Spanish internment camps, **No.8 (French) Troop** joined No.1 Tp; this enabled Lt Kieffer to form the small 1er Bn de Fusiliers-Marins Commandos (1st Naval Rifles Cdo Bn) and to establish a battalion HQ.

The requirement for Italian-speakers in the Mediterranean led, in May 1943, to Capt Coates being instructed to raise **No.7 (Mediterranean) Troop**. When the British Army proved a poor source of Italian-speaking recruits, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) offered Italian-speaking Slovenes drawn from the Royal Yugoslavian Army contingent in Egypt. Italy surrendered in September 1943 and subsequently formed Co-Belligerent Forces to fight alongside the Allies, thus removing any urgent need for Italian-speaking commandos. When a need for Yugoslavians emerged, from those who answered a circular requesting 'parachute packers' Capt Coates selected two officers and 20 men for **No.7 (Yugoslavian) Troop**. (Attempts were even made to raise a Japanese Troop, but these were unsuccessful.)

The *News Chronicle* dated 7 January 1943 suggested that the establishment of No.10 (IA) Cdo was an 'experiment, embarked on with some trepidation, for it involved the creation of an unknown quantity,



Polish commandos train in cliff assault; such courses were usually held in Cornwall. All wear battledress with full insignia, helmets, and leather jerkins. (Polish Museum 851)

Achnacarry, 1943: wearing 'cap comforters', denims and 37 Ptn webbing equipment Battle Order, trainees for No.8 (French) Tp land from assault boats during an exercise. Achnacarry, between Lochs Arkaig and Lochy in the Scottish Highlands, took over from its predecessor Special Training Centre at Lochailort in early 1942. The intensive six-week course covered fitness and speed marches, weapons training and fieldcraft, map reading, night operations, climbing, small boat work and demolitions. (IWM H 31412)



bringing together men of all nationalities with, in some cases, conflicting points of view'. While this judgement was correct, the Inter-Allied Commando would soon prove its worth in battle.

## OPERATIONS

London, Bastille Day, 14 July 1942: Gen de Gaulle inspects the 1st Naval Rifles Commando Company. The men wear British battledress and equipment and carry British weapons, but retain French Navy caps and insignia. The company was part of the *Forces Navales Francaises Libres* (FNFL), the collective name for the 7,000 seamen who served in warships, 2,000 in merchant vessels, and several hundreds in roles ashore. Two days after the photo was taken the company joined No.10 (IA) Commando. (Author's collection)



### DIEPPE, 19 August 1942

Originally conceived in April 1942 by Combined Operations HQ, the plan foresaw a division seizing a German-held Channel port for one day. Two dominating chalk cliffs cradled the port of Dieppe and its mile of shingle beach; there were also beaches at Puits to the north and Pourville to the south. Defending the area was the German 302. Infanterie Division, which was not highly regarded, and included numbers of foreign conscripts. The aims of Operation 'Rutter' were as follows:

To destroy enemy defences in the vicinity of Dieppe, the aerodrome facilities at St Aubin, the Luftwaffe radar stations, dock and rail facilities and petrol dumps.

To capture invasion barges, secret documents from the divisional HQ at Arques-la-Bataille, and prisoners for interrogation.

The strategy was for the 2nd Canadian Inf Div to land at Puits, Dieppe and Pourville on 8 July, while airborne forces neutralized the Goebbels and Hess coastal batteries flanking Dieppe. Assigned to the operation were five Czechs from No.3 (X) Tp with a mission to seize documents from the town hall; and prior to the operation the SOE passed the Czechs a parcel of thousands of francs for the French Resistance. When Operation 'Rutter' was approved on 13 May training began on the Isle of Wight, but weather conditions forced the cancellation of the landings. However, Russian and American political pressure for progress towards a 'Second Front' prevailed, and a

week later the operation re-emerged as Operation 'Jubilee', with the Airborne Forces element replaced by Commandos for the new plan:

No.3 Cdo was to land on Yellow Beaches One and Two at Belleville on the left flank, and silence the Goebbels Battery.

2nd Canadian Inf Div was to land on Blue Beach at Puits, Red and White Beaches in a frontal assault on Dieppe, and on Green Beach at Pourville.

Royal Marines Commando A was to cut out assault shipping in the harbour.

No.4 Cdo was to land on Orange Beaches One and Two on the right flank and neutralize the Hess Battery near Varengville.

In addition to the five Czechs from No.3 (X) Tp, No.10 (IA) Cdo provided 15 men from No.1 (French) Tp: of these five were attached to No.3 Cdo, seven to RM Cdo A, and four men to No.4 Commando. Their role was to act as interpreters, gathering information and encouraging suitable Frenchmen to return to England.

As the assault force neared the French coast early on 19 August a clash between an enemy convoy and Allied vessels, including the No.3 Cdo landing craft, compromised the operation; the landing craft split up, and most of the men of No.3 Cdo who landed were captured. Of the five Frenchmen, SgtMaj Montailleur was executed under Hitler's notorious 'Commando Order'; Cpl César avoided this fate by pretending to be French-Canadian, and later escaped from a train to return to England. Meanwhile, No.4 Cdo seized the Hess Battery in a classic attack. Corporal Balloche, interpreting for Maj Derek Mills-Roberts, No.4 Cdo second-in-command, played an active part in C Tp's assault, and was awarded the Military Medal for carrying a wounded commando to a landing craft. Of the No.3 (X) Tp Czechs, one was killed, and two were captured and never seen again. (Interestingly, they appear not to be recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as other No.3 Tp members would later be.) The 2nd Canadian Inf Div advanced from Green Beach but was terribly mauled by a determined defence. Valuable lessons were learned at Dieppe, though at great cost.

### RAIDING - Norway

With the Norwegian government-in-exile managing operations against occupied Norway, in early 1943 No.5 (Norwegian) Tp took over from Linge Co and worked closely with Nos.12 & 14 Cdos raiding German installations (see Table 3, page 23). Operating from Lerwick with the 30th (Norwegian) MTB Flotilla (later designated 54th Flotilla), the Troop provided boarding parties while the Navy provided fire support; the Brens of the commandos gave the vessels increased firepower. In February 1944 the Troop operated from Lerwick with the Norwegian MTB Flotilla as 'Timberforce'. The concept was for the MTBs to anchor in fjords and wait, camouflaged, for



Dieppe, 19 August 1942: a Landing Craft (Assault) approaches Orange Beach Two to collect No.4 Cdo, the only unit to achieve complete success during the operation. Note the steepness of the cliff. (IWM HU 1833)

Newhaven, Sussex, 19 August 1942: in the centre of this group a petty officer from No.1 (French) Tp waits to disembark after returning from the Dieppe raid. Comparison of features suggests that this may be Cpl Balloche (see page 25), who fought with C Tp of No.4 Cdo in the assault on the Hess Battery, and would be awarded the Military Medal for carrying a wounded commando back to the beach for evacuation. Balloche's MM was the first of many British decorations won by members of 10 Commando. (IWM H 22632)



Two Norwegian commandos in conversation with a British brigadier at a formal function. Evident are the 'No 10 COMMANDO' shoulder titles and Combined Operations patches; and between them, the small Norwegian national flag worn on the right sleeve by No.5 Tp, and the white-on-khaki 'NORGE' title worn opposite it on the left sleeve. In winter 1942-43, and again in February-March 1944, the Norwegian Troop provided commandos for long missions across the North Sea from the Shetland Isles to their occupied homeland. (Norway's Resistance Museum 025009)



opportunities to ambush enemy shipping; the commandos provided the landward defence for the anchorages. By March 1944 the Germans were alert to the threat and operations ceased; the Norwegians rejoined No.10 (IA) Cdo on 17 June.

## THE MEDITERRANEAN

### Sicily

Lieutenant-Colonel Lister had decided that No.3 (X) Tp were best deployed individually or in small detachments wherever their special skills were needed. In preparation for the landings in Sicily in July 1943, L/Sgt 'Miles' (Hubertus Levin) and Pte 'Anson' (Claus Ascher) joined No.40 (RM) Cdo, while L/Cpl 'Streeten' (Paul Hornig) and Pte 'Franklyn' (Gunther Frank) joined No.41 (RM) Commando. 'Miles' had just returned after six months with No.62 Cdo, which was the cover name for the SOE's Small Scale Raiding Force (SSRF). 'Anson' had selected his *nom de guerre* when an Avro Anson aircraft flew overhead.

The two RM Commandos protected the flanks of the 1st Canadian Inf Div landing on 10 July on beaches west of Cape Passero. Although the sea was rough, the landings were largely unopposed. 'Streeten', who had been promoted to sergeant, was later seriously wounded by a shell while dealing with some prisoners when No.41 (RM) Cdo landed to disrupt the German withdrawal from Catania to Messina. Not expected to live, he survived, although troubled afterwards by shell splinters in his neck, head and arm.

### Italy - The Gustav Line

No.3 (X) Tp remained with the Royal Marines for the invasion of Italy, but Pte 'Anson' was severely wounded when his ship was bombed.

By mid-1943 No.10 (IA) Cdo had been in existence for a year, but apart from a few from No.1 (French) Tp, some of No.3 (X) Tp and most of No.5 (Norwegian) Tp, few of its men had seen any action. The



La Vaglia, Italy, January 1944: a group from No.4 (Belgian) Tp are issued a substantial cooked meal with white bread, while out of the line in a billeted rest area. The commando in the foreground wears full insignia: brass lion cap badge on black backing on his green beret; on his left shoulder the bordered crimson-on-khaki national title, above the 10 Cdo title, above the Combined Operations patch (for all these, see Plate A); and on his forearm, the pin-on metal crossed flags of a qualified signaller. The lance-corporal at right shows only his badge of rank; but note the commando-issue Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife in its leather sheath, fixed to his left thigh by buttoned tabs. The men in the left background wear a general service light khaki V-neck sweater, and a much darker 'jersey, heavy wool'. (IWM NA 11806)

commandos were restless, as were their national army commanders, and frustrated that they were not being given the opportunity to get to grips with the enemy.

In the summer both French Troops trained for a proposed invasion of Corsica, which never happened. Then, in August, No.2 (Dutch) Tp, No.6 (Polish) Tp and No.7 (Yugoslavian) Tp were warned for deployment to the Mediterranean. However, when Lord Mountbatten departed for India to lead South-East Asia Command, he envisaged a role in the Far East for the Dutch (because of the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies), and they were replaced for the Mediterranean by No.4 (Belgian) Troop. On 13 September 1943, Capt Lutyens, the Commando liaison officer, seven officers and 77 other ranks of No.4 (Belgian) Tp, and nine officers and 86 other ranks of No.6 (Polish) Tp arrived in Algiers. They were followed a month later by 11 men from No.3 (X) Tp, who joined the others sent earlier to make up a Half-Troop; and by 15 men of No.7 (Yugoslavian) Tp, who had recently completed the Achnacarry course. The commandos languished in a transit camp near Algiers for several weeks, until Brig Tom Churchill took over command of 2nd Special Service Bde in Italy in November 1943. In place of No.3 Cdo, which returned to the UK to replace casualties suffered in Sicily, he received No.9 Cdo, No.43 (RM) Cdo, and the contingent from No.10 (IA) Commando.

The Belgian and Polish Troops joined British XIII Corps units to gain battle experience in the mountains overlooking the River Sangro. On 13 December they joined 56th Inf Div and were placed under command of its 56th Reconnaissance Regt, whose tactical frontage extended from Villa Santa Maria to Castel di Sangro, facing the centre of the German defences known as the Gustav Line. Both Troops were



Another photo from the same La Vaglia sequence shows Troop Sergeant Major Joneers of the Belgian Troop collecting his meal in his paired mess tins; his knife and spoon are carried in his field dressing pocket. The TSM is clean-shaven, and his freshly-issued austerity-pattern BD has no sewn-on insignia; but he displays on his forearm the pin-on brass wreathed-crown badge of adjutant, above crossed sabres – these insignia are of Belgian rather than British design. The colour of the pale plaited lanyard on his left shoulder is unidentified; the sergeant in the left background wears a similar but smooth, spliced lanyard. (IWM NA 11803)

supported by men of No.3 (X) Troop. The Belgians were on the left flank, in the battered mountain village of San Pietro Avellano; below was the shallow but swift-running and freezing Sangro. Thick snow often meant that supplies arrived by mule, weather permitting.

On 14 December, Capt Danloy despatched the first of several patrols across the Sangro, and lost two men killed. On 30 December the Troop joined 2nd Bn London Irish in attacking Montenero on the extreme left flank of 8th Army; on 9 January 1944 it was withdrawn into a divisional rest area.

No.6 (Polish) Tp moved into the picturesque ski resort of Pescopennataro on the right flank of 56th Recce Regiment. Determined to stir up the enemy, a fighting patrol led by Capt Smrokowski crossed the Sangro and collided with a German patrol

near a farm, losing one man killed. On 20 December the Poles learnt that two mountain-trained Jäger companies were planning to attack a British 25-pounder battery near Capracotta during the night of 21/22 December. Although the gunners fired on the San Angelo river crossing, within the hour the Poles were surrounded. They held their position and fought a nine-hour battle in the village, suffering just three lightly wounded.

It was an irritation to the Poles that the Jägers were ski-borne and wore white clothing. After Pte 'Kendal' (Gunther Knobloch) had negotiated with the mayor for several pairs of cross-country skis, two days later a patrol, dressed in the white flowing robes worn by local men at funerals (and trained by Officer-Cadet Bachleda, who was an international skier), skied to a plateau in the Luperian Mountains. There they encountered an Austrian light mortar detachment; under fire, the Poles were forced to retreat, complete with several spectacular falls. This is thought to have been 8th Army's only ski patrol.

On New Year's Eve, No.4 (Belgian) Tp left San Pietro Avellano to join 2nd London Irish, and were replaced there by No.6 (Polish) Troop. Next day heavy snowfalls trapped the Poles in the village, and it was only after Bachleda had skied to Capracotta on 5 January 1944 that supplies were dropped by parachute. Five days later the Troop withdrew to a rest area.

No.3 (X) Tp and the Yugoslavians were divided between units of 2nd Special Service Brigade. When No.9 Cdo mounted Operation 'Partridge' – a diversionary landing behind German lines, to cover the withdrawal of X Corps in preparation for its proposed assault across the River Garigliano – Acting SgtMaj 'Grant' (Konrad Goldschmidt) was assigned to it. Supported by 201st Guards Bde, the Commando landed north of the estuary during the night of 29/30 December, and attacked several German positions before withdrawing across the river in DUKWs and towed dinghies. Of the nine killed, five were left behind; 26 prisoners were brought back, however. When the CO of No.9 Cdo,



Italy, 30 December 1943: a German prisoner taken the previous night by No.9 Cdo enjoys a warm blanket, a biscuit and a mug of hot tea while chatting in his own language to Acting SgtMaj 'Grant' of No.3 (X) Tp (left) – a technique much more likely to lure him into useful indiscretions than a roughing-up would achieve. Note the sergeant's blackened face, rolled-up balaclava and toggle rope. Soon after this episode, 'Grant' lost a leg to a landmine during an attempt to recover dead commandos. He had previously served in The Buffs and the RAOC; after the war he settled in England, changed his name to 'Groves', and studied law. He finally retired as a county court judge in Lewes, Sussex, and was instrumental in arranging for the 3 Troop memorial to be erected at Aberdovey. (NAM 102145)

LtCol Tod, decided on 3 January 1944 to recover two bodies seen by the Guards, he asked 'Grant' to accompany the patrol. No bodies were recovered, and 'Grant' lost a leg when he stepped on a mine; there was some criticism that this operation did not justify the casualty.

On 17 January, No.4 (Belgian) Tp was placed under command of 201st Guards Bde and took part in the attack across the Garigliano on the right flank of the Gustav Line. During the crossing by No.40 (RM) Cdo, L/Cpl 'Wells' (Werner Auerhahn) became the first No.3 (X) Tp fatality when he stepped on a mine on 19 January. After a short rest the Belgians moved up to Minturno on 20 January and, over the following week, had several patrol clashes before rejoining 2nd Special Service Brigade.

No.6 (Polish) Tp crossed the Garigliano with 169th Inf Bde from 56th Inf Div, with orders to pass through the forward troops and disrupt the German rear with ambushes near Coreno. At 6pm on 27 January the Troop, under the cover of heavy shelling, crossed the river under intense enemy fire; they then followed a white tape laid by the leading battalion, 2/6th Queen's Royal Regiment, through minefields until it stopped near an orange grove. Lance-Corporal Rozen, who spoke good English, accompanied the Queen's during the crossing, and when mines wounded both leading platoon commanders he encouraged the infantrymen to keep going irrespective of the casualties. Rozen was with the leading platoon when they reached the enemy defences and assaulted a German position; he was awarded the Military Medal.

Continuing their advance, four Poles were wounded by mines when they entered the orange grove; nevertheless, by 3.30am the Troop had reached the proposed rendezvous with the Queen's for an attack on the ridge above Sujo. When the infantry did not arrive the Poles were ordered to seize the village alone. The Troop clambered towards the summit; when challenged, they charged into the German position and, by 4.30am, were in possession of the ridge. As dawn broke No.40 (RM) Cdo and 2/6th Queen's arrived.



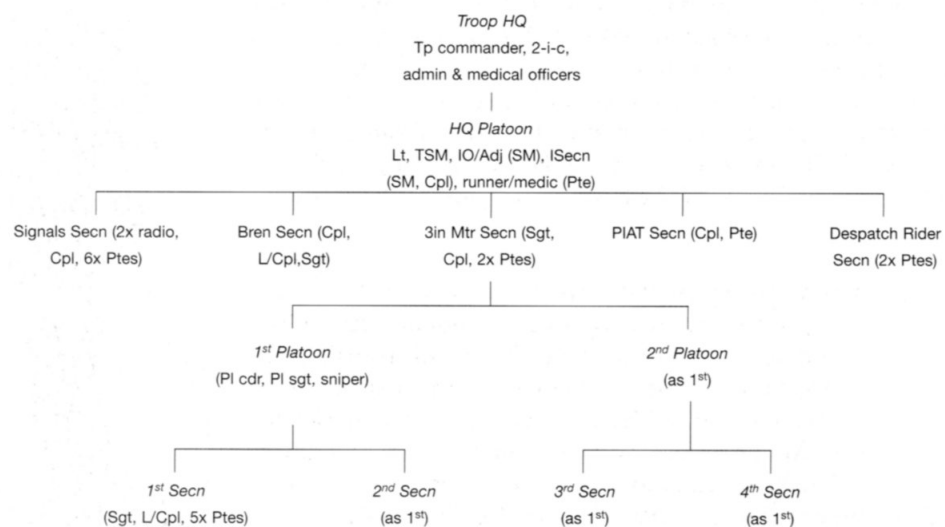
Italy, January 1944: a Belgian commando sergeant watches a column of No.4 Tp leaving the La Vaglia billets. They wear a mixture of berets and cap comforters, leather jerkins over unbadged BD, 37 Ptn Battle Order, and in most cases FS fighting knives buttoned to the left thigh. The Bren gun No.1 (second left, foreground) seems to have a 'Smatchett' or Fairbairn-Sykes No.2 fighting knife on the left of his belt. (IWM NA 11809)

Later on the same day, No.6 (Polish) Tp was ordered to seize Monte Valle Martina to the north-east of Sujo, and to patrol down the Valle Zintoni. Captain Woloszowki, the second-in-command, led the Monte Valle Martina patrol and captured a small German patrol. However, the firing alerted a large group of Germans higher up the mountain, and the patrol found itself in serious trouble and taking casualties, including Capt Woloszowki killed. Even though L/Cpl Braulinski's Thompson had jammed, he charged a group of Germans and convinced them to surrender.

Meanwhile, Lt Czynski and the Valle Zintoni patrol had captured a six-man mortar team and a forward artillery observation post in a ravine, and were resting when they heard

firing break out. Captain Smrokowski and his Tactical Troop HQ then arrived, and both groups hurried through some trees; when they reached open ground they saw that Woloszowki's patrol had taken several prisoners but had suffered casualties. When Smrokowski instructed Czynski that the high ground must be held at all costs, Czynski seized the summit shortly before the Germans arrived. The enemy were determined, and hand-to-hand fighting developed in which at least one Pole drew his commando knife. However, the Poles were outnumbered, and it was only when Smrokowski committed his reserve of Lt Zalewski's section that the fighting swung in their favour. By 10.15am the Poles had cleared Monte Valle Martina, at a cost of four killed and 22 wounded; the Germans left 30 dead.

**Table 2: No.6 (Polish) Troop, Italy, 1944**  
(Standard orbat – differed according to strength and role)



## The Adriatic

With the invasion of North-West Europe imminent, Lt Taymans, a No.4 (Belgian) Tp liaison officer, returned to England with requests from Capt Danloy and Smrokowski that their Troops return to Great Britain. The Belgians were keen to help liberate Belgium, and the Poles still had their one ambition – to defeat the Germans in order to get to the Soviets. Their national army commanders supported the suggestion, but Prime Minister Churchill had instructed that no Commando units were to be withdrawn from the Far East or the Mediterranean without his express permission. HQ 21st Army Group had asked for the 1st and 4th Special Service Bdes with their eight integral Commandos to protect the flanks of the British and Canadian beaches in Normandy. No.10 (IA) Cdo was not required for the invasion.

When Italy had surrendered in autumn 1943, the Yugoslavian Communist Partisan leader Tito seized several Adriatic islands, but was unable to prevent the Germans from occupying Dalmatia. Suddenly, the islands became strategically important – as a protective cushion for the Allied right flank in Italy, or as a springboard from which the Germans could threaten the Allies. At the Teheran Conference the Allies withdrew their support from Yugoslavian Royalists and agreed to back Tito. When the German 118. Jäger Div re-occupied some Dalmatian islands, Force 133 – which was organized around No.2 Cdo, under SOE command – was sent to the Adriatic island of Vis to help Tito in January 1944. The Germans then threatened Vis, and Force 226 – which was built around 2nd Special Service Bde – arrived on 5 March; included in this force were Nos.4 (Belgian) and 7 (Yugoslavian) Troops. However, factional political hostilities within the Yugoslavian Troop, and active opposition from the Partisans, led to its disbandment.

The Belgians were assigned to the Vis MTB flotilla, as boarding parties to support runs to Partisan groups and raids on German supply routes. On one occasion an intercepted schooner was found to carry a consignment of Danish butter and other luxuries not seen by Allied servicemen for years. On another operation during the night of 14/15 April, the commandos were aboard MTB 99 when it and MTB 95 intercepted a tug and sank two barges; a third contained hay, which was taken to Vis to feed mules.

Meanwhile, the Belgian government-in-exile had convinced the British to permit the Troop to return to Great Britain, but it arrived on 3 June, too late to take part in the Normandy landings. From 9 August it attended the Cliff Climbing School at St Ives and then, on 25/26 August, it raided the Isle de Yeu off Brittany in Operation 'Romford'.

## Monte Cassino

In April 1944, No.6 (Polish) Tp in Italy was transferred to the battle-hardened II Polish Corps commanded by LtGen Anders. The Polish commandos were not immediately enthusiastic about their transfer, but they soon settled down. Several suitable men were transferred in to replace the Troop's casualties; considering their combat experience, they were not required to undertake the commando course. When the Troop reverted to Polish command they shortened their 'No.10 COMMANDO' shoulder titles to 'COMMANDO' (see Plate H).

On 16 May, under command of 5th Polish (Kressowa) Inf Div, the Troop joined the Polish assault on Monte Cassino monastery. The

With the Belgians of No.4 Tp, the Poles joined 2nd Special Service Bde in Italy in November 1943. This commando of No.6 Tp, photographed in the UK, carries a No.46 wireless set. This was the first improvement on the unwieldy standard issue No.18 manpack radio, and when it appeared in 1942 special forces had priority for its issue. It offered three alternative channels for speech or Morse transmission/reception, was issued with earphones and throat microphones, was supposedly waterproofed for up to a minute's immersion, and – depending upon many variables – had a range of anything between 2 miles and 50 miles. With complete ancillary equipment and two batteries the kit weighed between 24lb and 33lb – little lighter than the No.18, but it was far easier to operate. A Commando officer recalled that it was unsuitable for use behind or very close to enemy lines, as it could give off 'the most dreadful squealing noise'. The greatest of several limitations on the efficiency of wartime man-portable radios was the weight and short storage life of the dry batteries. (Polish Museum N 677)





At Eastbourne, early 1943, the Polish Troop is inspected by Gen Sikorski, C-in-C Polish Forces. The Poles were known for their high standard of turn-out, which extended to exactly arranged and 'squared away' webbing equipment. Each man wears the 37 Ptn small pack with a neatly rolled groundsheet under the straps, and has his light respirator stowed sideways below the pack in the small of the back. (Polish Museum N 1784)

division was tasked with capturing Phantom Ridge, Colle San Angelo and Hill 575, and advancing west until it met the British 78th Division. The Troop were to protect the right flank of the 17th Bn in its attack on Colle San Angelo. The route was to climb Monte Castellone, cross Phantom Ridge, and attack the north-west sector of the German positions. The division crossed the start line at 7.22am; the Shermans of 13th Tank Sqn struggled up the southern slopes of Phantom Ridge, and 'shot in' 17th Bn as it assaulted Colle San Angelo. No.6 (Polish) Tp was forced to withdraw with two killed and several wounded. Later that morning the Troop and a squadron from 16th Posnan Lancers joined 17th Bn on Colle San Angelo but, short of ammunition, they were unable to stop the Germans gaining ground; nevertheless, during that evening 16th and 18th Bns and the Polish

Troop seized Colle San Angelo. Troop casualties were high, with one killed and 11 wounded, including three officers; the Troop now numbered seven officers and 45 other ranks.

As XIII British and I Canadian Corps advanced up the Liri Valley a gaping hole developed in the German defences; and when the British 4th Inf Div crossed Highway 6 to Rome and 78th Inf Div was near Colle d'Anguano station, the Cassino monastery was isolated. The defending German 10th Army withdrew; at 8pm on 17 May a patrol led by Cadet-Officer Bartosiewicz reported that Hill 575 was clear, and by 10am next day the 12th Podolski Lancers had raised the Polish flag over the shattered monastery.

After a rest, II Polish Corps was moved east to the Adriatic coast. For a short period No.6 (Polish) Tp had the Co-Belligerent Italian 111th Company under command; and on 15 July the Troop joined the Polish 2nd Armd Bde on the II Polish Corps left flank, for the advance to



Italy, August 1944: these commandos aboard a Royal Navy Motor Launch in preparation for a run across the Adriatic are not members of No.10 (IA), but of No.9 Commando. However, their clothing and equipment are probably more or less identical to those used for such missions by No.4 (Belgian) Tp between March and June that year.



Italy, April 1944: a decorated Polish major (note medal ribbon, and the silver star and two bars on his shoulder strap) greets a comrade. In that month No.6 Tp came under the command of II Polish Corps, and the 10 Commando shoulder title was cut down to 'COMMANDO' and re-centred on the sleeve. In the centre background another commando wears the Polish silver diving eagle badge of a qualified parachutist; a gold wreath was added to its talons to mark an operational jump. The Polish Troop would face bitter fighting at Monte Cassino the following month. (Polish Museum L11.14/4/4)

Ancona. For the attack on Case Nuove the Troop was ferried on tanks to the next objective, the town of Castelferretti; when the column was shelled and mortared the Poles found it an uncomfortable experience, until room was found inside some tanks. Castelferretti was occupied without loss.

On 3 August, the Poles left No.10 (IA) Cdo and formed the embryonic 2nd Motorized Cdo Bn within II Polish Corps. Almost the entire Troop were promoted in appreciation of their service. During the campaign, they had lost 18 killed and 70 wounded – 80 per cent of their strength.

With the Belgians in England and the Poles detached to II Polish Corps, the Half-Troop of No.3 (X) Tp were the only representatives of No.10 (IA) Cdo left in the Mediterranean theatre. This unit, too, had been depleted by casualties. In July, Lts 'Bartlett' (Karl Billman), 'Shelley' (Alfred Samson) and 'Stewart' (David Strauss), who had all received battlefield commissions in Normandy, arrived in theatre and recruited a Half-Troop for 2nd Special Service Brigade. After commando training in Italy, this saw action south of Lake Commachio in April 1945. By 8 May they were in Ravenna, and on the 28th joined No.10 (IA) Cdo in Germany.

\* \* \*

### Far East interlude

After Lord Mountbatten had suggested that No.2 (Dutch) Tp would be required for the proposed liberation of Japanese-occupied Sumatra, the Dutch spent several months of frustrating inaction in the United Kingdom. HM Prince Bernhard, who was in command of all Dutch troops, then agreed that 58 volunteers commanded by Capt Linzel, who had taken over from Capt Mulders, should join 3rd Special Service Bde in the Far East. In January 1944 the Troop arrived at Kedgaon



Italy, c.25 April 1945: these commandos showing off captured weapons – including a Panzerfaust and a Beretta SMG – are from the Half-Troop raised in Italy by Normandy veterans of No.3 Tp and attached to 2nd Cdo Bde at Lake Commachio. Kneeling on the right is Pte 'Allan White' (Adolf Weiss). Born in Berlin to Jewish Polish parents who moved to England in 1939, he enlisted into the Pioneer Corps in 1944 and transferred to 5th Bn The Buffs, serving in Italy before volunteering for the Half-Troop in April 1945. (Dr Michael Arton)



At the Bastille Day parade in London on 14 July 1943, Sgt Nassau de Warigny of the French Troop contingent carries the *fanion*. In its final form (see detail), as preserved today in the Musée de No.4 Commando in Ouistreham, Normandy, it bears gold-embroidered battle honours. The blue stripe lists all the raids the French commandos took part in, from Dieppe to Scheveningen; the red, all their battles from D-Day to Walcheren ('Flessingue'). In the parade, Capt Kieffer is left marker, visible just to the right of the reviewing admiral. (NAM 102311)



camp in India; and when Mountbatten then told them that Sumatra was not to be invaded after all, Linzel went to Ceylon to examine the feasibility of the Troop being seconded to the Dutch Korps Insulinde, but he returned empty-handed. (The Korps Insulinde was formed in 1942 from the 'Princess Irene' Bde as an advance guard for Dutch operations in the Far East; however, Japanese successes meant that it was limited to guerrilla operations on Sumatra, conducted from Ceylon.)

Meanwhile the Troop second-in-command, Lt Knottenbelt, and four others had joined No.5 and No.44 (RM) Cdos at Cox's Bazaar for 3rd Special Service Bde operations in the Arakan (Cpl Ubels contracted malaria and missed the first actions). On 10 March 1944, No.44 (RM) Cdo landed at Maungdaw on the west coast of Burma and attacked Japanese lines of communications from Rangoon. The Dutch were frequently used to pass important radio messages between headquarters, since their language baffled Japanese listeners. Two days later, when No.5 Cdo took over the Royal Marines positions, Pte Blatt was badly wounded by grenade fragments during a patrol encounter. When it became clear that there was actually no role for the Troop in the Far East their morale plunged, particularly when news came of the Allied landings in France on 6 June. Arrangements were therefore made for them to leave the Far East, and on 15 August the Dutch arrived back in England. Several men wondered if joining the commandos had been worthwhile, particularly as the 'Princess Irene' Bde was now ashore and in action, about to break out of the Normandy beachhead.

### RAIDING - France

By early 1943 the Germans were sufficiently concerned about the poor state of their Atlantic Wall defences that they evacuated most of the population from within 15 miles of the coast, and established a militarized zone of coastal and anti-aircraft batteries and defended positions from Belgium almost to the Spanish border.

In April 1943, the French and No.3 (X) Tps trained with No.12 Cdo on small-scale raiding tactics for Operation 'Forfar'. These raids were part of the preparations for the proposed invasion of Europe, and were designed to convince the Germans to concentrate their forces in the Pas-de-Calais. They also had an intelligence value. The method of

**Table 3: No 10 (IA) Commando Raiding Activity**

Date	Op &/or port	Target	Personnel, and remarks
<b>Norway:</b>			
22 Nov 1942	ex Lerwick	Bergen area	4x No.5 (N) Tp on 3x MTBs. Aborted - spotted by German aircraft
27-29 Nov 42	(ditto)	(ditto)	4x No.5 (N) Tp on MTB. Anchored in fjord, gathered info from fishermen.
27 Dec 42	(ditto)	(ditto)	5x No.5 (N) Tp on MTB. Aborted - bad weather.
23/24 Jan 43	'Cartoon', ex Lerwick	Stord island	10 x No.5 (N) Tp joined 53x No.12 Cdo, attacked pyrite mine.
23 Feb- 3 Mar 43	'Crackers', ex Lerwick	Stokkevaag/ Gjeteroy	3x No.5 (N) Tp + dets Nos.12 & 30 Cdos. Bad weather prevented setting up of shore OP, but much info gathered.
14-16 Mar 43	'Brand', ex Lerwick	Floe harbour	7x No.5 (N) Tp + det No.12 Cdo on 2x MTBs. Attacked 2x German ships & laid mines. 1 x MBT grounded & abandoned.
18-21 Mar 43	ex Lerwick	Stadt	2x No.5 (N) Tp + det No.12 Cdo. Aborted after clash with German patrol.
9 Apr 43	(ditto)	(ditto)	9x No.5 (N) Tp + 70x No.12 Cdo attack on anchorage and coast battery abandoned. Locals report increased German reprisals after raids.
10 Feb 44	(ditto)	Norway coast	6x No.5 (N) Tp; Timberforce duties.
11 Feb 44	(ditto)	(ditto)	7x No.5 (N) Tp; Timberforce duties.
14 Feb 44	(ditto)	(ditto)	7x No.5 (N) Tp; MTBs torpedo 2x ships off Kristiansand.
17 Feb 44	(ditto)	(ditto)	2x No.5 (N) Tp; Timberforce duties.
23 Feb 1944	(ditto)	(ditto)	10x No.5 (N) Tp; Timberforce duties.
19 Mar 44	(ditto)	(ditto)	6x No.5 (N) Tp
<b>France, Channel Islands &amp; Low Countries:</b>			
1-4 Sept 43	'Forfar Beer' 'Forfar Item'	Eletot St Valery-en-Caux	No.12 Cdo det + 1x No.1 (F) Tp. Beach recce. 6x No.3 (X) Tp + 2x No.12 Cdo parachuted to gather info re searchlight; extracted by MTB.
24/25 Dec 43	'Hardtack 11', ex Dover	Gravelines	Beach recce by 6x No.1 (F) Tp. No.1 (F) Tp; MTBs diverted to attack convoy. Dory swamped; 1x lost, 5x join Resistance
25/26 Dec 43 (ditto)	'Hardtack 7', ex Dartmouth 'Hardtack 28', ex Dartmouth	Sark Jersey	4x No.8 (F) Tp + 1x No.12; recce. 5x No.8 (F) Tp + 1 Brit officer, No.12 Cdo (killed); recce.
26/27 Dec 43 (ditto) (ditto)	'Hardtack 4', ex Newhaven 'Hardtack 13', ex Newhaven 'Hardtack 21', ex Newhaven	Biville Benouville Quineville	8x No.12 Cdo + 1x No.8 (F) Tp; cliff recce. German patrol forces withdrawal. 8x No.1 (F) +2x SBS; cliff recce. 6x No.1 (F) Tp; area recce, Utah Beach. Gained info on Element C defensive obstacle
27/28 Dec 43	'Hardtack 23', ex Dover	Bray/ Ostend	6x No.1 (F) Tp; area recce. Aborted - MTB ran aground.
24/25 Feb 44	'Hardtack 36/ Premium', ex Dover	Wassenaar/ Scheveningen	6x No.8 (F) Tp; area recce. All died.
14/15 May 44 (ditto)	'Tarbrush 3' (all 'Tarbrush' ops ex Dover)	Bray Dunes Les Hemmes	Sea too rough to land. German naval activity prevents landing.
15/16 May 44 (ditto)	'Tarbrush 8' 'Tarbrush 10'	Quend Plage Onival	AT Tellermine 42 brought back. MTB navigation error - landed in wrong place.
16/17 May 44 (ditto)	'Tarbrush 3' 'Tarbrush 8'	Bray Dunes Quend Plage	German sentry seen. REs identify Tellermines. Firefight after patrol ashore for 20 mins. Reported no mines attached to beach stakes.
(ditto)	'Tarbrush 10'	Onival	Bad weather prevents landing.
17/18 May 44	(ditto)	(ditto)	IR camera taken, to photograph Element C obstacle. Capt Wooldridge RE & Lt 'Lane', 3Tp, captured, interviewed by GFM Rommel
25/26 Aug 44	'Romford'	Isle de Yeu	5 x No.4 (B) Tp. Brought back Frenchman for debriefing.



Lt Charles Trepel, his shoulder boards indicating his naval rank of *enseigne de vaisseau de 2me classe*. He was born in Odessa, Ukraine, to Czech parents, who moved to Germany in about 1917 and then to Paris in the mid-1930s. Trepel was commissioned into the artillery. Demobilized in 1940, he was interned in Spain while en route to England, but escaped and, signing up as a ship's stoker in Barcelona, reached England via Gibraltar in September 1941. He formed No. 8 (French) Tp in July 1943; but on 27 February 1944 he and five of his Troop disappeared under uncertain circumstances on Operation 'Premium', a reconnaissance of the Dutch coastline north of Scheveningen. Their graves were discovered after the Liberation, but how they died remained a mystery. (IWM B 31428)

operation was for a MTB sailing from Dover, Newhaven or Dartmouth to deliver raiding parties of about ten commandos across the Channel. About two miles short of the target beach the commandos transferred to a dory manned by a commando and a signaller. A short distance from the beach the raiders transferred to a Landing Craft Rubber (Landing) for the last stage. Since outboard engines were noisy the inflatables were generally paddled, with a speed of about 2mph, although up to twice that could be achieved by an experienced crew.

Of the 13 'Forfar' operations planned, six were launched, although one was aborted twice because of bad weather. Of the remaining five, three involved beach landings from a MTB, one was a parachute drop, and the fifth was by canoe. In Operation 'Forfar Beer 4', L/Cpl Casalunga of No.1 (French) Tp provided vital linguistic support when some fishermen were encountered at the patrol base below cliffs. In September 1943, 10 Cdo took over small scale airborne raiding from 4 (Para) Tp, 12

Cdo, and No.3 (X) Tp formed E (Para) Section. In 'Forfar Item', Cpl 'Wilmsers' (Hans Wilmsersdörffer), with five others from E Secn and two from 12 Cdo, dropped from a Whitley near Le Tot to capture a prisoner and investigate a searchlight. The recovery by dory did not go quite to plan, since it was swamped by the surf and all the equipment was ditched.

As the invasion drew nearer the Chiefs-of-Staff instructed that all cross-Channel recces were to be co-ordinated with the staff of the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC). No.10 (IA) Cdo was instructed to make both French Troops and No.3 (X) Tp available for Operation 'Hardtack', to be mounted during the lunar dark period in late 1943/early 1944. While the Small Scale Raiding Committee at Combined Operations HQ identified objectives and co-ordinated supporting elements, No.10 (IA) Cdo's second-in-command Maj Laycock exercised operational command. Of the 12 recces planned, five landed and three were aborted. Four more were planned, but COSSAC vetoed two because they targeted proposed Operation 'Overlord' beaches. A patrol from No.8 (French) Tp in 'Hardtack 36/ Premium' disappeared under mysterious circumstances. The raids cost the French 12 missing, of whom five later turned up. In March 1944, **No. 9 (French) Troop** was formed to provide battle casualty replacements. (This later took the number of the defunct Yugoslavian 7 Troop, the number 9 later passed to a new Belgian Troop – see page 51.)

During an air raid to soften up German defences in Normandy, a bomb that detonated on a beach near Houlgate caused several secondary explosions. When Combined Operations HQ suggested that

the Germans might have developed a new mine, No.10 (IA) Cdo was tasked to investigate, in Operation 'Tarbrush'. The method was as for Operation 'Hardtack', except that two Royal Engineers from 21st Army Group were to carry out the technical inspection.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lister handed over command of the Commando to Laycock on 15 May 1944, and Capt Hilton-Jones was promoted to major and second-in-command. Hilton-Jones was tasked to manage 'Tarbrush', assigning men from No.3 (X) Tp to escort the sappers ashore. With D-Day barely three weeks away, secrecy was vital. Between 14 and 17 May, of the eight proposed landings, five were successful, although in 'Tarbrush 10' Capt Wooldridge RE and Lt 'Lane' were both captured (and later questioned in person by Field-Marshal Rommel). This success is reflected in the fact that six Military Crosses and two bars, five Military Medals and four Mentions in Despatches were awarded.

## NORMANDY

### D-Day

In February 1944, LtCol Dawson, commanding No.4 Cdo, was offered the two French Troops by Brig Lord Lovat at a briefing on the role of Lovat's 1st Special Service Bde during Operation 'Overlord'. On 16 April, Nos.1 & 8 (French) Tps joined No.4 Cdo as its Nos.5 & 6 Troops respectively. (Hereafter in this text they are referred to as No.1/5 and No.8/6 Tps respectively.) They assumed British Army rank titles but retained their French naval insignia, with No.4 Cdo shoulder flashes; Kieffer was promoted to major. Calling themselves the 'Commando Franco-Britannique', from 10 May they adopted a distinctive cap badge designed by Cpl Chauvet (see Plate A14). Dawson's RSM Morris adapted British drill to suit the more complicated French system. Kieffer formed a Heavy Weapons Troop with four Vickers-K machine guns given to him by Dawson; and the French were also re-equipped with the Lee Enfield No.4 rifle and 'spike' bayonet.

Also mobilized for the landings were 43 other ranks from No.3 (Miscellaneous) Tp, as (X) Tp was now known. Major Hilton-Jones dispersed the Troop in sections of five to six among the eight Commandos assigned to the landings, with instructions to 'Make yourselves useful. If a CO won't use you, keeping nagging until he does.' Most RM Commandos were still unblooded, and the arrival of the Troop was welcomed; the experienced Army Commandos initially viewed with some suspicion the appearance of foreign-speaking soldiers with German-accented English.

For D-Day, 1st Special Service Bde was under command of 6th Airborne Division. The objective of No.4 Cdo was a six-gun coastal battery at Ouistreham on the east bank of the mouths of the River Orne and Caen Canal, on the extreme left of Sword Beach; the French were to attack the Riva Bella Casino strongpoint to the south of the battery.

### Sword Beach

At 7.32am on D-Day, 177 men of the French Troops, six Royal Signals rear link radio operators and two RAMC orderlies landed from LCI(S) 523 and 527 on Queen Red beach at La Breche on the left flank of Sword



Sgt Balloche of No.1 (French) Tp, photographed at some date between the changes of cap badge in October 1942 and May 1944. This highly decorated NCO displays the Croix de Guerre with Palm (marking a citation in Army orders), the prized Médaille Militaire, and the British MM that he won on Orange Beach at Dieppe. The central motif of the tricolour shield cap badge, the Cross of Lorraine, was selected by ViceAdm Muselier as a rallying symbol for all Free French forces. An ancient device of the dukes of Anjou, it had figured in the regimental badge of the 507e RCC, the tank regiment commanded by Col Charles de Gaulle. (Author's collection)



**D-Day: HQ 1st Special Service Bde land on Sword Beach at Ouistreham. The single wading figure at left centre is believed to be the brigade commander, Brig Lord Lovat. In his group was Maj Hilton-Jones, 2ic 10 Commando, with a small detachment from No.3 (Misc) Troop. Kieffer's French commandos landed immediately to the left of Lovat's landing craft.**

**Ouistreham, D-Day: a blurred but interesting photo showing one of the two French Vickers-K machine gun sections, probably that of No.8 Tp (now serving as No.6 Tp, No.4 Commando). The men in the foreground have been identified by various different names in at least three sources. All six men, including the gun No.1 at second left, wear the rare circular pouches for the heavy 96-round drum magazines – see commentary to Plate C3. (Author's collection)**



Beach, in the second wave following the 2nd East Yorks of 3rd Infantry Division. Lieutenant-Colonel Dawson had signalled to Kieffer a modification of the legendary courtesy offered by a French officer to British infantry at the battle of Fontenoy in 1745: 'Messieurs les Francais, tirez les premiers' ('Gentlemen of France, you may open fire first'). Charging through the carnage of the 2nd East Yorks and under fire from the WN-20 strongpoint covering the beach, 114 men reached the No.4 Cdo assembly place at an abandoned holiday camp about half-a-mile inland.

Although wounded in the thigh, Kieffer re-organized and, with No.8/6 (French) Tp leading, his unit led No.4 Cdo to the southern outskirts of Ouistreham, where they wheeled left to attack the Casino from the south. No.1/5 (French) Tp then led until they reached a small railway station; then they too wheeled left to attack the Casino from inland, leaving No.4 Cdo to advance through Ouistreham and attack the six-gun battery near the port. The French Vickers-K sections found positions to give fire support to both Troops.

No.1/5 (French) Tp were joined by a local veteran of World War I, Monsieur Lefevre, who indicated German positions and later showed WO Faure the telephone lines linking the Casino to the German command post in a tall tower; these were cut with an explosive charge. A concrete anti-tank wall across the road blocked Kieffer's advance towards the Casino, and in severe fighting the French found that they were too lightly armed to break into the fortified Casino building with their own resources. In a scene depicted in the film of Cornelius Ryan's book *The Longest Day*, Kieffer later wrote that he and his batman, L/Cpl Devager, persuaded a tank (it was a Centaur of 5th Bty, RM Armoured Support Group) to suppress the defences, and the French then took the Casino.

Landing with Brigade HQ at 7.40am, No.6 Cdo was instructed to reinforce the 6th Abn Div units that had seized the Orne river and canal bridges during the night. Lance-Corporal 'Masters' (Peter Arany) landed with the Commando's No.1 (Bicycle) Troop. As No.6 Cdo approached Benouville it came under fire, and 'Masters' was instructed by Capt Robinson, the Troop officer, to walk into the village. As far as 'Masters' was concerned

he was to draw fire; in fact he invited the Germans to surrender. There was no response until a German shot at him with an MP40, but missed. 'Masters' then found that his Thompson had jammed. Meanwhile, Cycle Tp had seen his predicament and charged into the village.

Leaving a Royal Suffolks company to secure Benouville, the Commando reached the Airborne enclave and crossed Pegasus Bridge at 12.32pm – just two and a half minutes behind schedule, having advanced nine miles and fought their way through several German positions. They then pressed on to Le Plein to reinforce 6th Abn Div troops defending the left flank of the beachhead.

With Ouistreham liberated by noon, No.4 Cdo collected the French Troops and, joining 1st Special Service Bde during the afternoon, took over from the depleted 9th Para Bn at Le Plein and Amfréville.

Of the 4th Special Service Bde, No.41 (RM) Cdo suffered heavy casualties when it landed near Lion-sur-Mer at the western end of Sword Beach. Most of its accompanying No.3 (Misc) Tp personnel were killed or wounded within days of landing.

### Gold Beach

No.47 (RM) Cdo landed at 9.50am in Jig sector, with orders to swing west along the coast about 8 miles and seize Port-en-Bessin as a supply harbour. The Commando had a difficult day, and among their accompanying No.3 (Misc) Tp team Cpl 'Webster' (Ernst Weinberger) drowned when his landing craft sank. Once ashore, Cpl 'Fuller' (Eugen von Kagerer-Stein) persuaded a German strongpoint to surrender, and the Royal Marines took over some of its weapons. Cpl 'Terry' (Peter Tischler) captured about 20 disenchanted Poles conscripted into the Wehrmacht, who were willing to help carry equipment. The pair then captured a German sergeant-major, who surrendered apparently in the hope of being allowed to settle in Canada.

The Commando failed to take Port-en-Bessin, but as 7 June dawned they were on Point 72 immediately behind it. The CO, LtCol Phillips, turned up riding on an ammunition sled towed by a self-propelled gun,



**Amfréville, 8 June 1944: a group of French commandos fraternize with civilians. (Left to right): Ptes Poli, Guyard and Zivohlava, the latter wearing the 1942 parachutist's sleeveless over-smock; Mme Nicole, M Potel, Mme Lefevre; Ptes Floch and Gabriel, and (right rear) Sgt Lanternier (see also page 3). Unlike many British commandos on D-Day, who removed their unit insignia, all wear 'FRANCE' and 'No 4 COMMANDO' titles and the Combined Operations patch on their sleeves, and their distinctive cap badge. By now the unit had received No.4 rifles and spike bayonets – though Pte Guyard has somehow picked up a Russian Mosin-Nagant carbine – perhaps from a member of one of the German *Ost-Batalillonen*? (IWM B 5280)**

having been missing since D-Day. At La Rosiere, 'Terry' composed a message in German that was taken to the garrison commander by a captured medical captain, suggesting that he surrender. The corporal then joined a patrol of medical orderlies to rescue a wounded Spitfire pilot hidden at Commes. The patrol captured several prisoners and entered the village as liberators, until there was firing from one house; 'Terry' ran upstairs and captured four more prisoners. The pilot was later evacuated by ambulance.

The situation changed dramatically when No.47 (RM) Cdo was attacked by a German parachute unit and 'Fuller' was captured. 'Terry' was then wounded and became separated from the Commando. Lieutenant-Colonel Phillips re-organized his men and captured Port-en-Bessin. In pain, 'Terry' found refuge with a French family; on the morning of 8 June they were wheeling him in a cart toward Port-en-Bessin when they encountered several German naval personnel wishing to surrender. As 'Terry' marshalled them into the town, his arrival was greeted not only with considerable amusement by the Royal Marines but also by the ever-cheerful 'Fuller'.

After being captured on Point 72, 'Fuller' had escaped and was running down the road into Port-en-Bessin when a company of German cyclists recaptured him. They took him to a château, where they searched him and found one of the spring-loaded London Underground overhead handgrips issued to commandos as coshes; telling him that coshes were against the Geneva Conventions, they proceeded to hit him with it – not too hard – and then locked him a cell, with the promise of a court martial. He escaped once more in the confusion of the No.47 (RM) Cdo attack on the town. (On his advice, 'Terry' disposed of his own cosh.)

'Terry' refused evacuation until he collapsed and was taken to the beach. While awaiting evacuation to England he met again the hopeful Canadian immigrant, who was already complaining about the lack of food and poor sanitation.

On 7 June, Nos.41, 46 & 48 (RM) Cdos were ordered to mask the strongly fortified radar complex at Douvres, bypassed by the assault troops, but by the 9th only No.41 (RM) Cdo was still in the area. When a fighting

patrol, which included TSM 'O'Neill' (Oswald or Oscar Henschel), failed to break into the complex, he marked a minefield. By 12 June part of the complex had been evacuated, and 'O'Neill' was one of a party that blew holes in the fence and then laid white tape for an AVRE to follow (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers – a converted Churchill tank mounting a large petard mortar for massive short-range demolition work). Five days later specialist armoured vehicles broke through the strong defences and the Royal Marines finally captured the complex.

#### Defence of the Orne bridgehead

Whoever held the high ground east of the River Orne dominated the beachhead, and a front line was established through this terrain, facing east and curving southwards from the sea. 1st Special Service Bde was posted to the left of 6th Abn Div with their left flank resting on the coast. By 3am on 7 June the brigade's right hand unit, No.6 Cdo, faced Breville, but there was a gap between it and 9th Para Bn, the left-most unit of the Airborne Division. In the centre was No.4 Cdo with the French Troops around Le Plein, and its HQ at Hauger; to the north were No.3 and No.45 (RM) Commandos, stretching to the coast. Strong German counter-attacks were expected from 711. Grenadier Div, which was defending the sector, and 346. Inf Div, which was moving south from Le Havre. The terrain was typical Norman countryside of hamlets, orchards and small fields criss-crossed by paths, lanes and minor roads lined with thick hedges growing out of earth banks. The French civilians refused to leave the area, and throughout the fighting tried to tend their cows, orchards and fields.

Early on 7 June, No.45 (RM) Commando was tasked to capture Franceville-la-Plage. Corporal 'Arlen' (R.Abrahamowicz), who was attached to the Royal Marines, tried to persuade a German machine gun position to surrender but was met with a hail of fire. Furious at this response, he charged the position, but was killed. The Royal Marines battered their way into Franceville, but then lost touch with Brigade HQ when the rear link radio operators became separated, and German attacks pushed them back to Merville.

The expected counter-attacks on the Orne bridgehead developed on early 8 June with harassing artillery fire, snipers and recce patrols, and tanks were also heard. With the Royal Marines absent, No.4 Cdo shuffled left. The French commandos suffered badly from sniper and mortar fire, and when two tanks were heard Kieffer moved all his PIATs to meet the threat. A patrol led by SgtMaj Lardennois gathered intelligence on enemy strengths and dispositions from the inhabitants of Sallenelles. From this village the patrol noted the WN-6 strongpoint in the middle of a marsh, which housed an 88mm gun and was commanded by a competent sergeant-major. Another patrol captured two Germans caring for a wounded comrade.

In Merville, two German ambulances were captured when they drove into the No.45 (RM) Cdo positions. This offered an ideal opportunity to evacuate several wounded, and L/Cpl 'Saunders' (George Saloschin) was put in charge of the German drivers; however, soon after leaving Merville the ambulances were recaptured. (At Gordonstoun School, 'Saunders' had been in the same class as Prince Philip, later to become HRH the Duke of Edinburgh as the husband of HM Queen Elizabeth II.)

D-Day, Gold Beach: at centre and right, two members of No.3 (Misc) Tp, L/Cpls 'Envers' (Hans Engel) and 'Moody' (Kurt Meyer), debrief civilians at St Aubin-sur-Mer; at left is Capt Wilmot, intelligence officer of No.48 (RM) Cdo, to which they were attached. 'Moody' was killed on 13 June during the defence of the Orne bridgehead, and 'Envers' was wounded on 19 August. Note that both wear the skeleton version of the brown canvas assault jerkin; the ball sticking out of 'Envers'' right chest pouch is the end of one of the London Underground spring-loaded handgrips which they carried as coshes. (IWM B 5223)



Orne bridgehead, June 1944: many prisoners were questioned for tactical information by the No.3 Tp teams before being passed back to Brigade HQ and beyond. Note, left, the unusual use of sergeant's chevrons roughly painted on the back of the helmet by the commando wearing a hooded windproof camouflage smock; others have Denison smocks. (NAM 102151)



Fortunately, the drivers did not mention that 'Saunders' spoke German; he soon escaped, and returned to No.45 (RM) Cdo the next day.

During the night a message reached the Royal Marines that they must wait in Merville for a relief force. Sergeant 'Stewart' (David Strauss) and Cpl 'Shelley' (Alfred Samson) were trapped with some Royal Marines in a farmyard when the Germans lobbed stick grenades over a wall. The two NCOs collected grenades from the Royal Marines, and whenever a stick grenade landed they threw a No.36 grenade back in the same direction. They then poked a Bren through a hole in a wall and sprayed the area while the Royal Marines moved to another position. Two days later 'Saunders' was captured while on patrol and sent to a prison camp.

Two German companies from Inf Regt 857 of 346. Inf Div launched an attack on the French Troops with the aim of breaking through to reach the Orne, and the bridgehead came under increasing pressure. Lance-Corporal Laot fought three Germans and killed two before he was bayoneted. German patrols sniffed and probed throughout the tense hours of 9 June. Major Kieffer was evacuated when his wounds became septic, and Lt Lofi took command. During the night, No.45 (RM) Cdo returned from Merville and, after a rest, moved into positions south of Amfréville.

At dawn on 10 June the Germans launched the first of several major attacks against 1st Special Service Bde, hitting No.6 Cdo near Bréville and then No.4 Cdo at Hauger. The next attack was on No.3 Cdo, followed by one on the French Troops in the centre. Intense fighting came to close quarters; but in spite of the French positions being infiltrated by PzKw IV tanks from 21. Pz Div, at the end of the day the bridgehead had been held. The French commandos had so far lost seven killed and 22 wounded, and had 70 men still on their feet. During the night a French patrol secured the Ecarde crossroads to prevent incursions by Inf Regt 744 from the west.

The night of 10/11 June passed quietly, and reports by 1st Special Service Bde patrols next day suggested that no further attacks were imminent. Among equipment captured was an SdKfz 251 half-track mounting a six-barrelled Nebelwerfer rocket projector that had been harassing British positions; this had been stalked by 'Stewart' and

'Shelley'. For this and other acts of leadership, both men were given immediate Royal Marine battlefield commissions. Meanwhile, 4th Special Service Bde moved to the left of 1st Special Service Bde, with No.48 (RM) Cdo taking over Hauger from 12th Para Bn and No.47 (RM) Cdo moving into reserve at Ecarde.

To the south, a fierce battle raged around Bréville. During the night of 11/12 June, on orders from HQ 6th Abn Div, Maj Hilton-Jones led a No.3 (Misc) Tp close recce on Bréville for a proposed attack by 12th Para Bn and 5th Devons the next night. Late on 12 June, Cpl 'Nichols' and L/Cpl 'Masters' were in Le Plein watching troops form up to attack when shells burst among a group of senior officers. Noting that Brig Lovat was badly wounded, 'Nichols' carried him to a barn for treatment. Lieutenant-Colonel Mills-Roberts, commanding No.6 Cdo, took command of 1st Special Service Brigade.

During the next two full months barely a night passed without men from No.3 (Misc) Tp going out on patrol. Casualties were relentless; and while other Commandos had battle casualty replacements, the language skills, intelligence training and special experience of No.3 Tp were obviously much more difficult to replace. During 13-14 June, No.3 (Misc) Tp was hit hard. On the 13th a joint 1st & 4th Special Service Bde patrol was shelled, losing two killed and one wounded. Corporal 'Fuller' was killed by an American bomb while providing tactical air control for a US B-25 bomber attack on the WN-6 strongpoint; then, during the night, Hilton-Jones was wounded and captured while leading an unsuccessful patrol to infiltrate three French Resistance men through German lines; one of the latter was killed in front of the French Troop sector when he forgot the password. Lieutenant 'Stewart' assumed command of No.3 (Misc) Troop. During the night of 19/20 June, L/Sgt 'Thompson' (Walter Zadik) was wounded and captured while on a two-man patrol with Lt Littlejohn of No.4 Commando. On 22 June, Sgt 'Lawrence' (Ernst Lenel), who was attached to No.3 Cdo, disappeared while on a solo patrol to identify German units.

By July, the French commandos were having difficulty in defending their sector with too few men. To keep the Germans off-balance and his men offensively minded, Lt Lofi organized a programme of nightly fighting patrols, penetrating between one and two miles behind German lines in the direction of Sallenelles. These developed an intersection rivalry, but attracted the displeasure of some British officers who



In the Orne bridgehead, Lt Senée of No.8 (French) Tp poses with a captured MG 34; familiarity with enemy weapons was a key element of commando training. On 1 November 1944, Senée distinguished himself at the head of the Troop's No.1 Secn during street fighting in Flushing; he would later be killed in Indochina. (Author's collection)

preferred their quieter sectors to remain that way. On 7 July, the French left Le Plein with some regret and took up positions in Lower Bréville, which had a reputation for ambushes and booby-traps. On the 13th, Maj Kieffer returned, and a few days later he was presented with the Military Cross by Gen Montgomery.

On 23 July, No.47 (RM) Cdo was instructed to send a patrol beyond Sallenelles, and Cpl 'Terry' was selected to guide it. A few hours before it left he had interrogated three Polish deserters, who said that mines had been laid on paths used by British patrols. The patrol encountered Germans and, after being wounded, 'Terry' was evacuated to England.

#### Advance to the Seine

After the German 7th Army had been trapped in the Falaise Pocket, 6th Abn Div was reinforced by the Free Belgian and Dutch brigades and, on 16 August, was ordered to advance to the River Seine. Under divisional command, 4th Special Service Bde moved to the right of 1st Special Service Brigade. The Germans were expected to use the Russian Front tactic of fighting hard immediately before withdrawing, and HQ 6th Abn Div decided to leapfrog formations around engagements so as to give the enemy no chance to regroup.

Corporal 'Harris' was wounded by a grenade while taking part in a bayonet charge by No.46 (RM) Cdo to seize a hill during the fighting for the town of Dozule on 19 August. Falling into a trench, he took the resident German prisoner; the German insisted on giving 'Harris' his watch in gratitude for not killing him. The following night, during an attack on the hamlet of L'Épine, the French Troops were with No.4 Cdo when, in pitch darkness, they literally stumbled into a German position. A quick attack with fixed bayonets unlocked the defences; in this close-quarter fight eight Frenchmen were wounded and several Germans killed, including an officer shot by SgtMaj Chausse with his .45in Colt. When Pont-L'Évêque was captured by 5th Para Bde after a tough battle, No.3 (Misc) Tp were overjoyed to be told that Maj Hilton-Jones, although still severely wounded, had been found in hospital. By now, 2nd Lt 'Griffith' (Kurt Glaser) was commanding the Troop.

On 26 August the Special Service Brigades halted on the southern banks of the River Seine. Of the 46 men of No.3 (Misc) Tp who had landed on D-Day, 24 had been killed or wounded and three were missing (two of whom turned up later in prison camps). The No.4 Cdo detachment had been wiped out, and of those with No.47 (RM) Cdo only one survived unscathed. Three men had received battlefield commissions, two into the Royal Marines and one into the Army – which was a rare event in Montgomery's army.

By 9 September the two French Troops were back in England at the Special Service Group's Petworth reception camp. Of the 177 who had landed on Sword Beach, just 40 were still unscathed after their three months of intense fighting. At least they – unlike the specialists of No.3 (Misc) Tp – had a source of casualty replacements, in No.7 (French) Tp; some of these had arrived during the defence of the Orne bridgehead.

#### INSIGNIA

See text commentaries for details



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FORMATION & TRAINING, 1942-43

- 1: Intelligence Officer, No 10 (IA) Cdo HQ, Eastbourne
- 2: Commando training, Achnacarry
- 3: Capt Hauge, No.5 (Norwegian) Tp, Harlech



THE FRENCH

- 1: Quartier maitre, No.1 (French) Tp; Dieppe, 19 Aug 1942
- 2: Enseigne de vaisseau de 1re classe, No.8 (French) Tp; Eastbourne, 1943
- 3: Vickers-K gunner, attached No.4 Cdo; Normandy, 6 June 1944



**THE DUTCH**

1: 2nd Lt, No.2 (Dutch) Tp; Portmadoc, 1943

2: Pte, No.2 (Dutch) Tp, attached No.5 Cdo; Arakan, Jan 1944

3: Sgt 1.klasse, No.2 (Dutch) Tp, attached 1st Abn Div; Arnhem, Sept 1944



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**No.3 TROOP**

1: Sgt, No.3 (X) Tp; Aberdovey, 1943

2: Pte, No.3 (X) Tp, attached No.41 Cdo RM; Sicily, July 1943

3: L/Cpl, No.3 (Misc) Tp, attached No.6 Cdo; Normandy, 6 June 1944



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**THE BELGIANS**

- 1: Capt Danloy, No.4 (Belgian) Tp; Harlech, 1942
- 2: Bren-gunner, No.4 (Belgian) Tp; Italy, Dec 1943
- 3: NCO, No.4 (Belgian) Tp; patrol dress, Italy, Dec 1943



**THE BELGIANS & NORWEGIANS**

- 1: SgtMaj 1re classe, Belgian HQ Tp; Germany, June 1945
- 2: Pte, No.5 (Norwegian) Tp; Walcheren, Nov 1944
- 3: Sniper, No.5 (Norwegian) Tp; Walcheren, Nov 1944



## THE POLES

- 1: *Porucznik*, No.6 (Polish) Tp; Eastbourne, 1943  
2: Bren gun No.2, 1st (Polish) Independent Cdo Coy; Italy, winter 1943/44  
3: *Sierżant*, 2nd Motorized Cdo Bn; Italy, summer 1944



## HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

### Arnhem

The story of the attempt by Gen Montgomery to shorten the war by laying an 'airborne carpet' to the River Rhine, over which the armour of XXX Corps would storm into Germany, has frequently been told. Not so well known is the fact that 34 men from No.2 (Dutch) Tp of No.10 (IA) Cdo landed with the Airborne during Operation 'Market Garden'.

After its return from the Far East the Dutch Troop was broken into three elements. Five men were assigned to HM Prince Bernhard's personal staff, and four were selected to be parachuted into Holland as part of operations by the Bureau voor Byzondere Opdrachten (BBO) – the Dutch equivalent of the SOE. Thirty-four Troop members were assigned to the 1st Allied Airborne Army, for their language skills. Although most had parachute training, none had worked with Airborne Forces. Retaining their green berets, this Dutch Liaison Mission (DLM) was deployed as follows:

HQ 1st Allied Airborne Army – two men

52nd (Lowland) Inf Div – five men commanded by Capt Linzel (this division was expected to reinforce 1st Abn Div)

101st (US) Abn Div – five men led by Sgt van der Waal

82nd (US) Abn Div – nine men led by Sgt van Dulleman

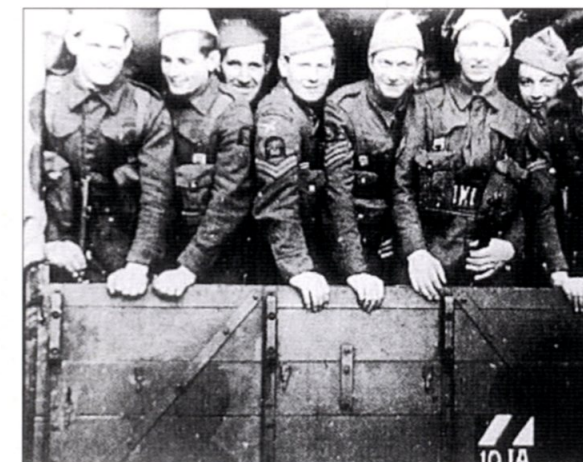
1st (British) Abn Div – 11 men led by Lt Knottenbelt.

Compared to the detailed recces available to 6th Abn Div for the D-Day landings, information on the local population and the effectiveness of the Dutch Resistance was unknown, particularly since the German security services had completely penetrated SOE operations in Holland during 1942–43. To compensate for this information gap, several 'Jedburgh' teams were assigned to the 1st Allied Airborne Army. (These were small multinational military teams, each with a British, a US and a local member and excellent communications equipment, which were dropped behind German lines after D-Day to liaise with the Resistance. There were 86 teams in all.)

Landing astride the Eindhoven to Nijmegen road, 101st (US) Abn Div encountered stiff resistance. The 506th Parachute Inf Regt was unable to prevent the demolition of the Son road bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal, but Dutch civilians and US Army engineers constructed a wooden footbridge. Trying to seize a bridge over the canal at Best, the 502nd PIR fought hard battles against the German 59. Infanterie Division. Since these operations took up most of the division's attention, the accompanying Jedburgh Team and the three DLM commandos were left to their own devices to manage the Eindhoven Resistance; but they were hampered by strict divisional security orders regarding the dissemination of information collected from the Resistance.

The use of the Nijmegen Resistance by the 82nd (US) Abn Div was an example of prompt

A rare photograph of 10 Commando using transport: men of No.2 (Dutch) Tp in a lorry displaying the insignia '10 IA', in March 1943. All wear British Army uniforms displaying 'No 10 COMMANDO' titles, British chevrons and tombstone-shaped Combined Operations patches; no national insignia or title are worn on the right sleeve. Second from left is Pt Westerling; at the end of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, four men under the command of the then Lt Westerling joined the Korps Insulinde and trained it for commando operations for the proposed recapture of Sumatra. In 1949, Capt Westerling would lead an attempted coup d'état by young Dutch officers against the granting of Indonesian independence. (Author's collection)



On the way from Ostend to Walcheren, 31 October 1944: officers of No.10 (IA) Cdo on board a tank landing craft. (Left) Maj Godfrey Franks, second-in-command; (centre) the CO, LtCol Peter Laycock. The officer right of Laycock wears the Royal Armoured Corps' mailed fist badge on his black beret. The soldier (right) wears the flimsy inflatable lifebelt issued to embarked troops. (Norway's Resistance Museum 025049)



execution, because Jedburgh Team Clarence and the Dutch commandos were trusted to co-ordinate Resistance patrols crossing German lines to collect information, to arrest collaborators, to screen locally employed civilians and to help with civil government. Terrain knowledge was invaluable for American patrols. The seizure of the massive River Waal bridge was vital, and when the Resistance reported that the firing points were in a post office, a platoon seized it and held it for three days. One DLM commando, Sgt Visser, who was attached to HQ 501st PIR, served as second pilot in a glider.

1st (British) Abn Div had had about a week to plan the seizure of the Rhine bridges at Arnhem. However, Resistance reports that there had been increased German activity near the town since 5 September, as units withdrew across the Rhine, was rejected as unreliable. The presence of strong elements of the 9. SS-Pz Div 'Hohenstaufen', 10. SS-Pz Div 'Fruntsberg' and 16th SS Training & Replacement Div in the area was inadequately analyzed.

Tasked to co-ordinate civil affairs were LtCol Barlow and LtCdr Wolters, Royal Netherlands Navy, the latter designated as the 'official representative of Dutch government'. They were assisted by Capt Killick, Intelligence Corps, who commanded 89 Field Security Section; the four-man Jedburgh Team Claude, and the 11-man DLM. These groups were expected to work together to screen the Resistance and exploit its capabilities for intelligence gathering, low-level sabotage and combat. The Dutch commandos were deployed as follows: four men with 1st & 4th Para Bdes; four with 1st Abn Div Signals; one each with 1st Airlanding Bde, 1st Polish Para Bde and 1st Abn Recce Sqn; and one attached to Commander, RE to recruit local labourers.

Within hours of the Arnhem landing on 17 September, Jedburgh Team Claude ran into trouble when US T/Sgt Scott became separated from his radio, and the Dutch officer Capt Groenewoud was killed – as was LtCol Barlow. When Arnhem Resistance leader Pieter Kruijk told Wolters at 1st Abn Div HQ, at the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek, that the local telephone switchboard was in Resistance hands, the British, correctly, felt that it was insecure. It is ironic that even as the British struggled with poor communications, and paratroopers occupied their homes, Dutch residents were telephoning friends and relatives about

the situation. Dutch operators in the Arnhem exchange were also tapping the German use of the civil telephone network.

With Groenewoud dead, Lt Knottenbelt took over his role, and recruited 50 Dutchmen who provided tactical intelligence, served as guides and stretcher-bearers and guarded prisoners. A group led by a Dutch naval officer arrested collaborators and gathered information on German dispositions.

Sergeant de Waard landed in the same glider as Gen Urquhart, commanding 1st Abn Div, and was soon interrogating prisoners at the Hartenstein Hotel. With the collapse in radio communications, he then acted as the liaison between the HQ and an Oosterbeek dentist, who then telephoned a friend in Arnhem for situation reports from the main bridge. On 19 September Pte Bakhuis-Roozeboom was killed in an attempt by two paras and two Resistance members to reach 2nd Para Bn at the bridge with supplies; he was the only No.2 (Dutch) Tp member to be killed in the battle. Private Beekmeyer landed with the Intelligence Section of 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers, and was soon gathering information from civilians and prisoners. While helping to protect a 4th Para Bde drop zone he took part in a bayonet charge. On 19 September he became separated from a patrol and, after joining a para company crossing the Arnhem–Ede railway, was captured.

As the Germans forced 1st Abn Div into an ever tightening perimeter, Lt Heap – a Canadian seconded to the transport platoon of 1st Para Bn, who had become separated and attached himself to Division HQ – was tasked to take much-needed supplies to the 2nd Para Bn at the bridge. He knew Lt Knottenbelt from his work with the Dutch Resistance, and persuaded him to join him. He also took Lt Johnson, the 8th US Air Force liaison officer, and two glider pilots. When their attempt to cross the Rhine using the Heveadorp ferry failed, Heap returned to the Hartenstein Hotel, where he was then ordered to cross the Rhine and find XXX Corps. Leaving during the evening of 21 September, Heap and Johnson invited Pte Gobetz of the DLM to join them as an interpreter. When they reached the Rhine, with Gobetz providing cover, Heap and Johnson were about to cross when, out of the mist, there appeared several dinghies paddled by men from the 1st Polish Para Brigade. After several days' delay due to rain and fog, the brigade had landed near Driel earlier that day. Heap told the senior officer to contact Gobetz, who would then guide them to Oosterbeek, but the Poles never linked up with him. Gobetz was wounded and captured soon afterwards. Treated as a partisan, he was threatened with execution before joining Ptes Beekmeyer and Gubbels, who had also been captured at Arnhem, in a German prison camp. In April 1945 they escaped, and reached American lines near Chemnitz.

At HQ 1st Polish Para Bde, Lt Brzeg, the brigade field security officer, had been told not to trust the Resistance; however, he and his DLM commando weeded out the collaborators and German agents, and the town became a magnet for Resistance cells.

Operation 'Infatuate Two', 1 November 1944: the LCT carrying 10 Commando's Nos.4 (Belgian) and 5. (Norwegian) Tps approaches White Beach on Walcheren.





Walcheren, 1 November 1944: HQ 10 Commando ashore on White Beach – at Walcheren the beaches were not the long, sandy strands of Italy and Normandy, but short stretches of muddy sand topped by high dykes. Kneeling (centre) holding a cigarette and a swagger stick is LtCol Laycock, talking to a Norwegian commando; the radio operator is carrying a No.46 set. (Norway's Resistance Museum 024082)

By 25 September, 10.SS-Pz Div had stopped XXX Corps, and there was no alternative but to try to rescue 1st Abn Div (Operation 'Berlin'). Sergeant de Waard was in a trench at the Hartenstein Hotel with a glider pilot and two paras, and was left behind when Division HQ pulled out. Heading for the Rhine, the four men ran into a German patrol and de Waard was captured after being wounded in the foot. Lieutenant Knottenbelt swam to safety but was wounded by shelling. Although No.2 (Dutch) Tp had suffered only one fatality during the battle, on 5 October Pte Hagelaars, who was attached to an armoured car unit, was shot while trying to visit his parents in occupied Den Bosch.

Two members of the DLM had failed to reach Arnhem. Sergeant Luitweiler was in a glider that made an emergency landing near Biezenmortel, and eventually linked up with 82nd (US) Abn Div six weeks later. Private de Leeuw's glider also made an emergency landing on Schouwen Island, and he made his way to Amsterdam; although betrayed to the Gestapo, he survived the war.

The division's after-battle intelligence assessment noted that 'Information from friendly civilians was generally found to be reliable after allowance had been made for

the personality of the bearer, and after the Dutch liaison party had vetted him. The population was co-operative. Several rendered excellent service, and the highest praise is due to those few who helped our wounded throughout and stayed with us to the last.' In his report, LtCdr Wolters rated the DLM as 'first class', and credited them with recruiting and vetting Dutch recruits and co-ordinating their actions. 1st Allied Airborne Army credited the Nijmegen and Arnhem Resistance with maintaining telephone communications, helping military engineers keep the roads open for XXX Corps, and – probably of greater significance – smuggling significant numbers of 1st Abn Div fugitives to safety over the following months.

### BBO operations

On 25 September – the same night as the evacuation of 1st Abn Div from Arnhem – Pte Blatt of No.2 (Dutch) Tp, now recovered from his Japanese grenade wounds, was parachuted near Westerberg with a Belgian SAS patrol, with orders to contact his fellow Troop member Sgt Talazar and gather intelligence on German deployments. The Germans were alert to parachute drops, and Blatt and the Belgians were nearly captured. Their operation compromised, they moved south, removing their insignia and pretending to be German parachute troops on special duty. After six days they contacted the Resistance, and the Belgians were

guided to Allied lines; Blatt stayed behind to work with the Nederlands Binnenlandse Strijdrachten (NBS, Netherlands Forces of the Interior) in Twente province.

On 11 October, SgtMaj van der Veer and Sgts de Koning and Michels parachuted near Veenhuizen to join Resistance groups in the north. A female courier who was the mistress of a Gestapo man betrayed van der Veer; however, a Dutch police officer helped by accommodating him with the civil police inside the German HQ at Westerbourg. Eventually he was able to move around disguised as a police officer, and trained Resistance groups. In April 1945 he and several Resistance members linked up with a company from 3rd French Para Bn which had dropped in Operation 'Amherst'. This was an operation to help the Canadian and Polish advance in north-east Holland by preventing the Germans from adopting fixed defensive positions and by causing alarm and confusion in their rear; the plan was to seize three German airfields and 18 canal and river bridges. The French drop was hampered by poor weather, some sticks landing too far from their targets and hiding in woods. Sergeant van der Veer persuaded his policeman friend to guide the French to Westerbourg, where they then attacked the German HQ.

When Sgt de Koning, disguised as farmer 'Harry Prinz', was compromised in February 1945, he changed his occupation to a vet, which gave more freedom of movement. In early April he organized the capture of three bridges when he learned that the Canadians were about to seize them, but not before the Germans had made a thorough search of Swichum to capture him. He was rescued by a member of the Resistance dressed as a police officer, who 'arrested' de Koning as a black marketeer.

On 3 April 1945, after several delays and having recovered from wounds received at Arnhem, Lt Knottenbelt parachuted near Barneveld to support NBS forces.

### Walcheren

The man-made, saucer-shaped island of Walcheren sitting in the middle of the River Scheldt estuary has historically guarded the approaches to the great port of Antwerp. In 1944 it was defended by 70. Inf Div, and had been converted into a formidable fortress with 20 coastal and field artillery emplacements and many flak and machine gun positions. By September 1944 the Allied supply line from the Normandy beaches was stretched over 300 miles to reach the front in Belgium and Holland, and had become a major factor in restricting 21st Army Group operations. After nearly three months of heavy fighting 1st Canadian Army had seized most of the Scheldt estuary; but Gen Montgomery missed an opportunity to trap the retreating German forces, and Walcheren soon became a symbol of German resistance.

Its seizure was entrusted to II Canadian Corps, and by 31 October the corps staff had developed Operation 'Infatuate'. The

Walcheren: Capt Danloy (centre), OC No.4 (Belgian) Tp, discussing a move with one of his officers. In the foreground is a Royal Marine, probably from No.41 (RM) Cdo, with a No.4 rifle with fixed spike bayonet. (Norway's Resistance Museum 025012)



2nd Canadian Inf Div would attack the causeway from South Beveland and develop a bridgehead, which 157th Inf Bde from the British 52nd (Lowland) Div would then exploit. The associated Commando operations were planned as follows:

'Infatuate One' – No.4 Cdo would assault Flushing, and be reinforced by 155th Inf Bde

'Infatuate Two' – 4th Special Service Bde would assault Westkapelle.

Operation 'Infatuate' saw the largest assembly of No.10 (IA) Cdo elements since the parade in June 1943. Under the command of LtCol Laycock, the Commando was deployed as follows:

*With No.4 Commando* – Nos. 1 & 8 (French) Tps; 11-man section from No.2 (Dutch) Tp

*With 4th Special Service Bde* – HQ No.10 (IA) Cdo; five men from No.3 (Misc) Tp; 14-man section from No.2 (Dutch) Tp attached to No.47 (RM) Cdo; No.4 (Belgian) Tp, 90 all ranks; No.5 (Norwegian) Tp, 97 all ranks. The Dutch were to act as guides and interpreters and liaise with the Resistance.

The operation opened with the RAF bombing and breaching the dykes in four places and flooding the interior. On 15/16 October 1944, men from the Commando Mountain Warfare Training School assembled into 'Keepforce' had mixed success reconnoitring the Westkapelle beaches. Difficulty was also experienced in finding a suitable place for No.4 Cdo to land at Flushing, until Police Capt van Nahuijs of the Resistance suggested a promontory of rubble and rubbish; this became known as Uncle Beach, and a distinctive windmill was selected as a navigation marker. No.4 Cdo planned a six-phase landing:

Phase One – Keepforce, part of No.1/5 (French) Tp and a No.2 (Dutch) Tp sub-section to mark Uncle Beach

Phase Two – Rest of No.1/5 Troop, No.2 Troop and Commando HQ to secure the beachhead, with J & L (Royal Navy) Cdos

Phase Three – RN Landing Craft Obstructions Clearance Unit and REs to clear obstacles

Phase Four – Remainder of No.4 Cdo under Maj Kieffer to wait offshore and, when summoned, to land and secure the barracks, harbour entrance, town park, and the open space designated 'Dover'

Phase Five – 4th & 5th Bns KOSB to reinforce No.4 Cdo

Phase Six – 241st Field Coy RE to land with two bulldozers, a Vickers MG platoon from 7th Manchesters, and 425th Mortar Bty RA.

Any hope of surprise disappeared during the afternoon of 30 October, when the German coastal guns shelled a smokescreen covering Weasel amphibians making their way from Terneuzen to Breskens. The next day 2nd Canadian Inf Div opened the assault on Walcheren by attacking the causeway, and quickly ran into stiff opposition.

Early on 1 November, No.4 Cdo headed for Flushing in landing craft. With the Allied artillery pounding the town, Keepforce landed without undue

Walcheren: at right, armed with a Colt .45 semi-automatic, Cpl 'Latimer' of No.3 Tp, attached to No.41 (RM) Cdo, rounds up German PoWs. 'Latimer' (Moritz Levy) was a Jewish Czech from the Sudetenland; one of the first members of the Troop, he had already seen action at Dieppe and in Normandy. (IWM B 11637)



Walcheren, c.8 November 1944, after the surrender of the German garrison: a sergeant of No.5 (Norwegian) Tp flanked by two corporals. The right sleeves show complete insignia: 'No 10 COMMANDO' title, Norwegian flag flash, round Combined Operations patch, and on the forearms British parachute wings.

difficulty and, with the help of the Dutch Troop's Cpl de Liefde, persuaded the occupants of a 75mm gun pillbox to surrender. Phase Two landed and developed the beachhead. By 6.30am the Germans were fully alert to the landings, and the two LCAs carrying the French Troops were raked with heavy fire, which wounded several Frenchmen and two of No.2 (Dutch) Troop. After regrouping, the Troops (No.1/5 under Lt Lofi, and No.8/6 under Lt Vourc'h) became involved in fierce street fighting in Flushing as they tackled machine gun positions and snipers. When a section stormed one building a small party led by a determined German officer on the first floor was overrun only when five Frenchmen climbed on to the roof and tossed grenades down through windows. The arrival of the No.4 Cdo Heavy Weapons Troop with their Vickers guns helped the French Troops to dominate their objectives, until they were reinforced by 4th King's Own Scottish Borderers. By about 9am, Old Flushing was generally in Allied hands, and two sergeants from No.2 (Dutch) Tp were co-ordinating the deployment of the police and Resistance.

During the night, 2nd Lt Ruyter led a patrol to rescue several Dutch engineers and technicians trapped in the shipyard. No.1/5 (French) Tp overran quadruple 20mm Flakvierling AA cannon in a concrete bunker after 'mouseholing' a route through several buildings under covering fire from their PIAT on a rooftop.

At Westkapelle, in preparation for the landings, the Support Squadron Eastern Flank suffered very heavy casualties when its landing craft moved inshore to suppress enemy fire with guns, rockets and mortars, followed by No.10 (IA) Commando. Nos.48 & 47 (RM) Cdos landed on White Beach and advanced south to Zoutelande to link up with No.4 Commando. No.41 (RM) Cdo landed with No.10 (IA) on Red Beach under intense fire. An LCT carrying Shermans from the 1st Lothians & Border Horse was hit, knocking out all the tanks and wounding two Belgians. The ramp of the LCT carrying the Commando HQ jammed on stake obstacles and became a target for machine-gunners. One member of No.3 (Misc) Tp was killed when a Buffalo amtrac caught fire. When Commando HQ eventually landed, the medical officer established his regimental aid post near some captured pillboxes.

Walcheren, c.8 November 1944: a column of French commandos from No.8 Tp files through Flushing, where they had shown great skill in house-to-house fighting. (Oddly, some wear lifebelts - perhaps they are about to embark for withdrawal?) In the left foreground is Lt Comte Guy de Montlaur, who led a section of the Troop; he carries a captured map showing the German defences of Walcheren. (NAM 102146)



No.41 (RM) Cdo, with No.4 (Belgian) Tp, used a Churchill AVRE to blast sniper positions in Westkapelle, and then advanced through the sand dunes toward Domburg. Sergeant-Major 'Gray' and Cpl 'Latimer' (Moritz Levy) convinced an artillery observation party located in Westkapelle Tower to surrender. No.5 (Norwegian) Tp landed unharmed, cleared the northern part of the town and helped overrun coastal battery W-15. At mid-morning 4th Special Service Bde HQ came under pressure from II Canadian Corps to help silence the batteries commanding the Scheldt, and to link up with 155th Inf Bde at Flushing. At about noon No.41 (RM) Cdo, less two Troops, was ordered to join Nos.47 & 48 (RM) Commandos; Capt Linzel and No.2 (Dutch) Tp were attached to No.41's B Troop.

When the Royal Marines left, LtCol Laycock took command of operations north of the Westkapelle gap with the Belgian and Norwegian Troops and two RM Troops. During the evening they were joined by several British forward observation and liaison officers left stranded when their Weasel amtracs were sunk, two 1st Lothians & Border Horse Shermans and two AVREs. Among the coastal batteries and defended positions that littered the north coast of Walcheren, the 200 men of No.10 (IA) Cdo defeated the toughest German troops on the island in several lonely battles, which are largely unrecognized but which were critical to the opening of the Scheldt. During the night of 4 November, No.41 (RM) Cdo and two heavy weapons Troops from the other two RM Commandos rejoined. When Nos.47 & 48 (RM) Cdos linked up with No.4 Cdo at Zoutelande, enemy resistance was concentrated north-west of Domburg. No.4 and No.48 (RM) Cdos then arrived with No.10 (IA) as reinforcements; and by the 7th, all German resistance had ceased.

With supplies soon being shipped up river to Antwerp, Nos.4 (Belgian) and 5 (Norwegian) Tps were pulled back for rest and refit while Commando Tactical HQ, under the command of Maj Franks, and

Nos.2 (Dutch) and 3 (Misc) Tps remained at Walcheren with HQ 4th Special Service Brigade. Lieutenant-Colonel Laycock and Main HQ also returned to Eastbourne. At the end of November, the Norwegians were sent to Bergen-op-Zoom to prepare for an attack on North Beveland; however, when this did not materialize the Troop was sent to Breda.

On 6 December, the word 'Commando' replaced 'Special Service' in the titles of all the Commando brigades.

#### Defence of the River Maas

On 16 December 1944, the tanks of 5. & 6. Panzerarmee spearheaded a counter-offensive along a 70-mile front in the Ardennes, in what is known as the Battle of the Bulge. Their ultimate objective was the North Sea coast and the Allied supply ports.

After Walcheren, 4th Commando Bde helped defend the Scheldt from German intervention. No.4 Cdo, with Nos.1 & 8 (French) Tps, stayed in Walcheren until 12 November, and then moved to Goes near Breskens to rest and refit. The Ardennes offensive saw them deployed to protect the Scheldt estuary from possible German airborne assault. It was during this period that No.7 (French) Tp arrived under the command of Capt Williers.

The French Troops each raided the island of Schouwen to prevent enemy infiltration and sabotage against Antwerp by its 5,000-strong German garrison. On 17 January 1945, No.7 (French) Tp attacked a coastal artillery bunker, and withdrew taking six Dutchmen back to the landing craft. Lieutenant Lofi and No.1/5 (French) Tp landed on 14 February but, again, the French had little success apart from returning with ten civilians for questioning. The final raid on Schouwen was a month later, when Capt Vourc'h and No.8/6 (French) Tp landed to attack an enemy position. However, the Germans had flooded the island, and on a still, clear night the commandos were forced to wade through freezing, water-soaked bulrushes and reeds. The patrol encountered barbed wire entanglements, were spotted, and withdrew with four casualties.



Eastbourne, 1945: commandos of the new No.9 (Belgian) Tp on the range, zeroing the sights of their Lee Enfield No.4 rifles from tripods. They wear Denison smocks. (IWM D 23712)

22 April 1945: Maj Wall of No.48 (RM) Cdo and Lt 'Kingsley' of 10 Commando's No.3 Tp after being rescued from a reconnaissance patrol that went wrong during Operation 'Bograt' in the Biesbosch marshes on the River Waal. Like most members of 3 Troop, 'Kingsley' retained the cap badge of the British regiment on whose strength he had originally been listed for cover purposes – in his case, the Royal Fusiliers. (IWM A 28398)



The Dutch attached to No.4 Cdo played a valuable role in debriefing civilians and interrogating prisoners. No.4 Cdo remained in the area until 30 March, when they moved to Bergen-op-Zoom. On 1 May 1945, with the Allies dropping food to starving Dutch communities in Operation 'Manna', both sides abandoned offensive operations except for battery and counter-battery fire on specific targets. On 3 May the German garrison on Schouwen surrendered to Maj Kieffer.

After sending elements to guard the River Maas during the German Ardennes offensive, No.48 (RM) Cdo passed under command of 116th Inf Bde RM (Nos.27, 28 & 30 (RM) Cdos), to support operations by the 1st Belgian Fusilier Bn and 600 Dutch irregulars defending the Biesbosch complex of marshy islands at the confluence of the Maas and Merwede rivers; No.2 (Dutch) Tp was attached to help train the irregulars. Following a report that the Germans were withdrawing, No.48 (RM) Cdo mounted Operation 'Bograt' to check its accuracy.

Lieutenant 'Kingsley' (Otto Löwenstein) of No.3 (Misc) Tp was with a patrol that went missing for several hours.

Meanwhile, No.4 (Belgian) Tp in England had formed two new Troops from 300 former Resistance fighters: **Nos.9 & 10 (Belgian) Troops** were respectively Flemish-speaking and primarily French-speaking. Captain Danloy was promoted to major and formed the equivalent of a battalion headquarters. No.2 (Dutch) Tp was weak after casualties at Arnhem and Walcheren; recruiting drives in liberated Holland brought in 80 recruits. With three French Troops, four Belgian Troops, and the strengthened No.2 (Dutch) Tp, No.10 (IA) Cdo was now the strongest unit in the Commando Group.

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Among the forces that strengthened I British Corps defences around Antwerp was 1st Cdo Bde, which was again placed under 6th Abn Div; the brigade was still commanded by Brig Mills-Roberts, but No.46 (RM) Cdo had now replaced No.4 Commando. The brigade deployed to Asten on the Maas and was reinforced by No.47 (RM) Cdo, with 23 men of No.3 (Misc) Tp commanded by Capt 'Griffith' – some of them returning after recovering from wounds suffered in Normandy – and No.5 (Norwegian) Troop. The Norwegians took up positions at Oosterhout on 23 December; they were still led by Capt Hauge, who had recovered from wounds sustained at Walcheren. Battle casualty replacements commanded by Lt Smith arrived from the Free Norwegian brigade.

The Germans had cut the dykes so that the area was flooded with freezing water. North-east of Breda is Kapelsche Veer island, which was defended by a composite parachute unit of Gen Student's Army Group H. On two occasions the Fallschirmjäger had defeated attacks by 1st Polish Armoured Division. Placed under Polish command, No.47 (RM) Cdo and No.5 (Norwegian) Tp were tasked to attack the island during the night of 13/14 January. The plan for this Operation 'House' was for the Poles to secure a bridgehead through which the Royal Marines would attack, while Q (RM) Tp and the Norwegians – led by Lt Gausland – provided a diversion.

On a bitterly cold night, Kapelsche Veer was shelled by Canadian gunners, which alerted the defenders. After driving the Royal Marines back across the Maas, the Germans concentrated on the diversion. The RM and Norwegian Troops had crossed the Maas on an infantry bridge laid by Polish engineers, but were channelled into a narrow front by the terrain. Lieutenant Gudmundseth and No.2 Secn fought their way to within 100 yards of the Germans but were then pinned down; Lt Gausland and No.1 Secn got even closer, to within 25 yards of the enemy, and gave covering fire to Q Troop. Although both sections were so close to German positions as to be relatively safe from enemy mortars, Lt Smith was killed when Troop HQ was mortared. When it became clear that the main attack had failed the Norwegians withdrew. Although they had suffered over 50 per cent casualties – with four killed and at least 30 wounded, seven of them seriously – No.47 (RM) Cdo ordered another attack. Gudmundseth was about to advance again with the 24 surviving Norwegians when Capt Hauge countermanded the order. This was the last action fought by No.5 (Norwegian) Tp during the war. Kapelsche

Two Norwegian commandos of No.5 Tp; the silver Norwegian 'H/7' cap badge on the green beret is clearly evident at left. Both wear Denison smocks and carry Thompson SMGs – on the left the later M1 variant, with one of the unreliable 30-round magazines, and on the right the original M1928 with forward pistol grip and the usual 20-round magazine. Both slings appear to be leather. The Norwegian Troop did not see combat again after their costly action at Kappelsche Veer on 13/14 January 1945. (Norway's Resistance Museum 024098)



Veer was eventually seized a fortnight later by the 10th Canadian Inf Bde, after five days of unpleasant fighting which cost them 350 casualties.

As 1st Cdo Bde settled down along the Maas, a three-man patrol across the river from No.3 (Misc) Tp led by TSM 'Howarth' (Eli Nathan) noted enemy in several Dutch barges moored to the eastern towpath. Corporal 'Mason' (K.Weinberg) was sent back with this report, but became involved in a mistaken clash between a Dutch Home Guard patrol and one from No.6 Commando.

After five days 1st Cdo Bde was placed under command of 7th Armd Div in positions near the Belgian border, where stubborn defence was holding up the Allies massing to breach the Siegfried Line and cross into Germany. It was very cold, and snow covered the ground. On 22/23 January, in a limited operation to clear the area between the Maas and the Roer, No.6 Cdo crossed the frozen Juliana Canal and seized Maasbracht. No.45 (RM) Cdo passed through, only to come under fire from parachute troops lining the Montefortebeck Canal; L/Cpl Harden of the RAMC was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for rescuing wounded. No.6 Cdo swept the enemy aside by driving from north to south and, aided by the Shermans and Cromwells of the 8th Hussars, 1st Cdo Bde captured Linne. No.3 (Misc) Tp were involved in the fighting, but most remained with their respective Commando HQs searching the dead, interrogating prisoners, translating captured documents and taking part in intelligence-gathering patrols.

When HQ 7th Armd Div required information about the enemy in the area of Merum the task was given to the Royal Marines. A diversion was to cross the Maas to Belle Island and keep the defenders occupied, while the main assault force crossed to Belle Island, dragged assault boats across it, relaunched them and attacked Merum. Snowsuits were issued; but during the moonlight night of 27 January the diversion was spotted after it had crossed to Belle Island, and the main assault was aborted while the diversion struggled to withdraw across the river with their wounded. Once the evacuation was complete a patrol, which

included Capt 'Griffith', crossed to Belle Island, where he found a map on a dead German captain showing that the enemy were from the Hübner Battle Group and so-called Müller Regiment.

Next day, when the Germans used a loudspeaker to announce the names of the British casualties, TSM 'Howarth' negotiated a ceasefire with the enemy in order to recover the dead. A few days later 'Griffith' learned that the German unit had been punished for agreeing to this truce; it was replaced by 22 men commanded by a sergeant – who had all promptly surrendered. Soon after this 'Howarth' was posted to the Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU).

Just behind Montfort, which was the next objective, lay the formidable Siegfried Switch Line between the Maas and Rhine. Working on intelligence received by 7th Armd Div, the area was cleared by 8th Hussars tanks carrying commandos to protect them in close country, while they protected the commandos in open country. No.3 (Misc) Tp did not relish these chilly patrols, although they were surprised how undamaged the Germans villages were, and frequently returned with requisitioned fresh food. (Complaints by German farmers, apparently oblivious to their own country's looting of the whole of Europe, were rejected.)

On 10 February, Nos.6 and 45 (RM) Cdos passed under command of 52nd (Lowland) Inf Div to protect the rear of 2nd Canadian Army as it assaulted the Siegfried Line. In stiff fighting, these units fought south along the eastern bank of the Maas from Gennep.

## ACROSS THE RHINE

On 6 March, 1st Cdo Bde concentrated at Venray to train for crossing the Rhine, its task being the capture of Wesel. With No.3 (Misc) Tp depleted by casualties and several men at OCTU, Capt 'Griffith' reorganized, sending Sgt 'Masters' and Cpl 'Harris' to No.45 (RM) Cdo and Sgt 'Villiers' (Egon Vogel) and Cpl 'Seymour' (Herbert Sachs) to No.46 (RM) Commando. The brigade travelled by train to its assembly areas on 23 March, and watched as RAF Lancasters bombed Wesel. Six artillery regiments then opened fire, before switching targets at 8pm to concentrate on Grav Island, a swampy triangular area two miles west of Wesel. The moon was bright as No.46 (RM) Cdo and Brigade HQ crossed the great river in Buffalos. No.45 (RM) Cdo also crossed, and took several casualties. Sergeant 'Masters', who was escorting an RA forward observation officer, described the crossing:

'The banks turned out to be precipitous, and everybody in our craft fell forward, almost suffocating those standing in front of us by pushing them against the trapdoor at the bow. Suddenly, the craft plunged hippo-like into the water, and everybody fell backward. At last, we settled down and churned across the 300-yard-wide river, riding deep, the spray flying into our faces... On either side of us, Bofors guns were firing tracer, presumably to keep the Lancasters from including us in their target area... The noise made it impossible to determine how heavily we were fired upon, but peering over the side, I could see a Buffalo burning in midriver... When we touched down on the other side, our Royal

Searching and questioning of German PoWs. Most of the interrogation was done by 3 Troop, whose skills became especially important in the last weeks before VE-Day and in the immediate aftermath of the German capitulation. Understandably, the men of 10 Commando were not always gentle when rounding up concentration camp guards and other suspected war criminals.



Engineer drivers, wearing little triangular buffalo emblems on their upper sleeves, informed us the bank was too steep to use the trapdoor, so we would have to get out by climbing over the high sidewalls of the vehicles.'

'Masters' and the artillery officer scrambled over the side and then manhandled the radio operator, who was heavily loaded down with the cumbersome No.22 set, and set off after No.45 (RM) Commando. 'Villiers' and 'Seymour' were both killed in the Buffalo that 'Masters' had seen burning.

No.6 Cdo landed from Stormboats up river and, by 3am on 24 March, the brigade was firmly established in Wesel, although frequently clashing with Volksturm and Army patrols, many equipped with Panzerfaust shoulder-fired anti-tank weapons. When the HQ of the local commander was overrun Capt 'Griffith' and No.3 (Misc) Tp searched it for items of intelligence interest. A captured German colonel made the mistake of asking Maj de Jonghe, now the brigade security officer, to help carry his bag; de Jonghe, in fluent German, reminded him that as a member of the Master Race he should be able to manage his own belongings. Also captured were three German specialist engineers reporting direct to Army level, who had been sent to see if the Wesel rail bridge had been demolished. After interrogating them 'Masters' arranged for their HQ to be shelled. German resistance in the town stiffened when, during three hours, 1st Cdo Bde was not allowed to call on artillery and mortar fire because 6th Airlanding Bde was landing. An attempt by 'Masters' and 'Harris' to persuade a German surrender by sending two prisoners as emissaries failed. Nevertheless, by 25 March, Wesel had been captured.

### Osnabruck

On 3 April 1945 the brigade, back under command of 6th Abn Div, was advancing toward Osnabruck when a small Brigade HQ convoy was ambushed and Maj de Jonghe was wounded. Accompanying the convoy

was Cpl 'Clarke' of No 3 (Misc) Troop. Grabbing the bicycle of a German civilian who had taken cover during the crossfire, he cycled back to a British position and arranged not only for a medical team to go up to the ambush, but also for an artillery battery to put down covering fire so that the convoy could be extracted. 'Clarke' then acquired some civilian clothes and cycled back past the ambush and on into Osnabruck, where he persuaded a contingent of Hungarians conscripted into the German Army to surrender, against the wishes of their officers – an event that was captured by an Abn Div film unit. For this, he was awarded only a rather miserly Mention in Despatches. On the same day, RSM 'Howarth' was killed while returning to his unit after attending OCTU, when a shell hit the lorry in which he was travelling. His body was recognized by the silver Buffs cap badge that he habitually wore.

When Osnabruck was captured, Maj de Jonghe arrested several SS and Gestapo men, and brought back the body of the Gestapo area commander, who had apparently been shot while attempting to escape.

### The Weser

The next obstacle tackled by 1st Cdo Bde was the River Weser. A fragile bridgehead had been established at Leese by 1st Bn Rifle Brigade; but when No.45 (RM) Cdo, under command of 11th Armd Div, crossed the river as reinforcements on 6 April they met fanatical opposition from the 12th Waffen-SS Training Battalion. Corporal 'Harris' was the sole survivor of the No.3 (Misc) Tp detachment attached to the Commando, and had become a valuable resource. The riverbank was flat and the only exit that the Commando could take was along the beach; however, Commando HQ found their advance blocked by German positions above them. 'Harris' clambered on to the towpath and sprayed the area with his Thompson. Running out of ammunition, he borrowed a Bren gun from a corporal and gave covering fire until a bullet hit its magazine, which peeled back and blinded him in the left eye. 'Harris' had already been wounded in Normandy; he was later awarded the Military Medal.

During the following night the remainder of the brigade crossed the Weser and, following white tape laid by No.6 Cdo, headed south along the riverbank through a marshy area. They crossed the railway and then attacked Leese from the east. The 23rd Hussars were then ferried across the river, and a squadron was attached to No.3 Cdo for its attack on a V2 rocket factory.

On 11 April, HQ No.10 (IA) Cdo received orders to depart England for the Low Countries. Major Franks, formerly second-in-command, was now commanding. In mid-April 1945 he landed in Ostend with 26 officers, 375 other ranks and 32 vehicles from Tactical HQ and Nos.2 (Dutch), 3 (Misc), and 4, 9 & 10 (Belgian) Troops. Meanwhile, the first liberated prisoners-of-war from the Commando were returning to the United Kingdom.

### The Aller

Still under command of 11th Armd Div, the 1st Cdo Bde faced their next obstacle: the River Aller. Although it was not wide, if the Germans blew the bridges it would take a major operation to cross. The brigade was ordered to seize a bridge in the town of Essel. Needing to know if the road bridge was wired for demolition, Brig Mills-Roberts sent Capt

'Griffith' and another commando floating down river to check it, but as they reached it German engineers detonated their charges. During the night of 10/11 April, No.3 Cdo captured the railway bridge, which involved them removing their boots for a silent charge across the bridge in their socks. Established on the eastern bank, the commandos created a bridgehead through which 11th Armd Div could pass.

Counter-attacks developed; shortly before dawn on 11 April an SdKfz 251 half-track strayed into British positions, and then at 8am a company from the German 2nd Naval Fusilier Bn launched several well-executed attacks against No.3 Cdo from Essler Forest. The wooded country lent itself to stealthy attacks; the naval infantry were able to get within about 50 yards of the bridgehead perimeter, and Capt 'Griffith' (Kurt Glaser) was shot dead by a sniper. The fighting raged all day and was so severe that, during a lull, the bodies of the German commanding officer, his adjutant, the regimental sergeant major and two company commanders were found close to Brigade HQ. By the evening 1st Cdo Bde had defeated the Marine Fusiliers and, moving north, seized the Aller road bridge. Later Brig Mills-Roberts wrote:

'After this, at dusk, we buried James Griffith. This German – who had allied himself to our cause – was a great favourite with everyone and we were very sad to lose him. We lifted James into his grave at the same time as the Medium Regiment fired for the last time – it was a real soldier's funeral.'

Captain Monahan replaced 'Griffith' in command of No.3 (Misc) Tp; this officer had been earmarked to lead the Yugoslavian Troop, and after D-Day had been detached to SOE for operations in France in August.

1st Commando Brigade advanced north-east through Germany against limited opposition; it fought its last engagement on the banks of the Elbe-Trave Canal, and then captured Lauenberg on 30 April. By the time the European war ended on 8 May it had reached Neustadt, in what became East Germany, and was joined there by the three Belgian Troops.

### The occupation of Germany

On the cessation of hostilities the French Troops spent a short time with No.4 Cdo guarding 91 Internment Camp at Recklinghausen, which contained Nazis without identification or who had seen service with the Waffen-SS or the concentration camp guard units. After the victory parade in Paris the three French Troops were absorbed into the French armed forces as Naval Commandos. (Several veterans would later be killed in Indo-China and Algeria, where the unit continued to wear their 1944 bronze cap badge on green berets pulled to the right in the British fashion.) The French Troops were not the only French 'commando' units; the 1st French Army formed the Bataillon d'Afrique, the Bataillon de Choc and the Bataillon de France, although none were trained at Achnacarry.

No.2 (Dutch) Tp also guarded the Recklinghausen camp, before returning to the United Kingdom on 7 August 1945. A month later the Troop returned to Holland and, with the Korps Insulinde, was absorbed into the Netherlands Army as the Commando Korps. Today the Dutch Marine Corps still has close links with Britain's 3rd Commando Brigade, and the Dutch Troop is not forgotten.

The Half-Troop from the Mediterranean joined No.3 (Misc) Tp in Germany on 28 May. Several of the Troop were formed into the Commando Interrogation Team, working with the Intelligence Corps to

screen 250,000 prisoners at Rheinburg and Wickrath. In August they were transferred into the Corps and divided between 346 and 348 Field Security Secns, subordinate to British I Corps with HQ in Hamburg and self-supporting detachments spread throughout Schleswig-Holstein. Private 'Jackson' was involved in the interrogation of Rudolf Hoess, the SS commandant of Auschwitz, captured near Flensburg by 92 Fld Sty Secn (Jackson's mother had died in the camps). Troop members were also involved in the de-Nazification of German industry, and counter-intelligence operations against Werewolf resistance groups. When the two sections formed 117 Intelligence Team in 1947 the 3 Tp veterans were offered commissions as Intelligence officers, but all except two preferred to take demobilisation. A few also joined the Allied Military Commissions in Germany and Austria, tracking down war criminals; others worked as interpreters and interrogators with Field Security sections. Nearly all the Troop were granted British citizenship using their *noms de guerre*, some settling in Great Britain while others emigrated to the United States and the Commonwealth. Twenty-one had been killed and were buried in Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries, most under their *noms de guerre* (and Christian crosses, until relatives requested Jewish Stars of David). At Ashton Wold House in Northamptonshire, the Hon Miriam Rothschild, who was married to the Hungarian Capt 'George Lane', planted a memorial grove of trees to the Troop. In 1999 a stone plinth was erected at Aberdovey as a memorial to these most lonely of the exile commandos.

The three Belgian Troops were placed under command of 80 Anti-Aircraft Bde, which had taken over military government in the British enclave of Neustadt in Kreis Oldenburg. The Troop was divided between the three batteries of 146 Heavy AA Regt to preserve law and order, assisting the British town majors and the locally appointed burgomeister; No.10 Tp at Ahrensbock liberated Neustadt concentration camp, which was almost as appalling as Belsen. They also found emaciated survivors and some dead who had been marched from Buchenwald concentration camp; after making their SS guards dig their own graves, the commandos shot them. (A patrol led by Maj de Jonghe, now recovered from his wounds, found a prison camp of Belgian and Serbian other ranks; unlike many others, the camp was spotlessly clean and even had a small band.) De Jonghe led the round-ups of Nazi sympathizers, some from information obtained by the Field Security sections, others denounced by local people anxious to ingratiate themselves with the Allied forces. Occupation duties continued until mid July, when the Troops returned to Belgium on leave, taking with them, under escort, members of 28. SS-Frw Gren Div 'Wallonien' being returned for trial. On 9 September 1945 the Belgian Troops reverted to the Belgian Army order of battle as the 2nd Para-Commando Battalion.

After the costly attack on Kapelsche Veer, No.5 (Norwegian) Tp was withdrawn first to Flushing, and then to Bergen-op-Zoom for training in preparation for the crossing of the Rhine. However, the Norwegian High Command requested that the Troop be assigned to the liberation of Norway, and it returned to England on 9 February. By 30 April the Troop had returned to the Norwegian Army and the next day they were flown, as 'civilians', to neutral Sweden, where they joined elements of



Germany, early 1945: Maj Vicomte Arthur de Jonghe was a charismatic Belgian cavalry officer, who had been a Resistance agent before escaping to England when the Gestapo discovered his identity. Joining No.10 (IA) Cdo as the Belgian Troop liaison officer on 25 November 1943, in January 1945 he was appointed field security officer at HQ 1st Commando Brigade. He was wounded in an ambush near Osnabruck on 3 April 1945. (NAM 102152)

the Free Norwegian Bde poised to cross the border should the Germans refuse to surrender. Captain Hauge refused to accept an order that they were not to wear their green berets and were to remove commando insignia. No.5 (Norwegian) Tp crossed the border into their homeland on 9 May; and four days later they provided the guard of honour in Oslo for the return of Crown Prince Olav. Of the four Western nationalities in No.10 (IA) Cdo, only the Norwegians did not develop the commando tradition post-war; the Troop was broken up and the men distributed to district commands throughout Norway.

No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando was disbanded shortly after its HQ moved to 19 Hatfield Square, Eastbourne, on 4 September 1945. It has faded into history; and the legacy of these patriots, who chose to fight on in lonely exile at a time when there seemed no early prospect of their countries' liberation, has been largely forgotten.

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## THE PLATES

### A: INSIGNIA

See commentaries on appropriate plates below for usage of these titles and badges.

- 1: Early 1942 shoulder title. The same but woven in red on dark blue was later worn by brigade troops - i.e. personnel serving with a Special Service Brigade/ Commando Brigade HQ but not with a specific Commando.
- 2: Unit title, late 1942-45
- 3: French national title, both sleeves
- 4: Norwegian national title, left sleeve
- 5: Belgian national title, left sleeve
- 6: Polish national title, both sleeves
- 7: Dutch national title & badge; beret, later left sleeve
- 8: French shield badge; originally right sleeve, from October 1942-May 1944 beret
- 9: Combined Operations patch, as issued, printed version. These were issued in 'handed' pairs, the Tommy gun always facing forwards.
- 10: Combined Operations patch, woven version, as cut down 1942-45
- 11: Polish national cap badge
- 12: Belgian national cap badge - brass for enlisted ranks
- 13: Dutch national cap badge - bright metal for officers
- 14: French cap badge, from May 1944 - all ranks dull bronze

### B: FORMATION & TRAINING

#### B1: Intelligence Officer, No.10 (IA) Commando HQ; Eastbourne, Sussex, 1943

The Commando's HQ consisted of British elements providing command, intelligence, signals, training and administrative support, together with the officers' batmen, and national liaison officers from the Troops. The intelligence officer was Capt John Coates; this is not an attempted portrait, but shows his formal uniform as officer-of-the-day, wearing pre-war 'battledress, serge' in officers' style, with the collar pressed open and faced with Khaki Drill cloth, over a collared shirt and tie. The insignia are a captain's three 'pips' on green I-Corps backing on the shoulder straps, red-on-dark blue shoulder titles 'No.10 COMMANDO', and the Combined Operations patches in their issued 'tombstone' shape. The green Commando beret bears the silver rose-and-laurel badge of the Intelligence Corps, and he wears the Corps' green lanyard round his left shoulder. Note the 'boots, Commando' with thick rubber soles. The Intelligence Corps was formed in July 1940, and members were responsible for providing operational intelligence, interrogation, psychological warfare and field security. Captain Coates was instrumental in forming the unsuccessful No.7 (Yugoslavian) Troop. He later passed parachute training and joined No.34 Section of No.30 Cdo, an intelligence-gathering unit.

#### B2: Commando training; CBTC, Achnacarry, Scotland, 1942

Virtually all members of No.10 (IA) Cdo attended the Commando Basic Training Centre for an intensive six-week course. Training dress consisted of the short khaki double-thickness woollen scarf which folded into a 'cap, comforter'; 'overalls, denim', cut like the battledress - which might come in almost any shade of drab light brown or grey-green; Commando boots (note the tread pattern); and 37 Pattern webbing equipment in Battle Order - belt, braces, two basic



LtCol Vaughan of The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regt), the Commandant of the Commando Basic Training Centre from February 1942 (left); and Brig Lord Lovat (Lovat Scouts), commander of 1st Special Service Brigade. The formidable Charles Vaughan had enlisted as a private in 1914, and graduated to drill sergeant in the Coldstream Guards and later RSM before being commissioned. He had two guiding principles: his instructors were hand-picked, and every man must have the desire to cover seven miles in an hour, whatever the load, conditions and terrain. Colonel Vaughan established a particularly respectful rapport with the Poles. When he visited 10 Cdo in Germany early in 1945, he went on patrol with No.3 Tp wearing his Service Dress. (NAM)

pouches, haversack ('small pack') on back, with bayonet, waterbottle and (though it is omitted in the original photo we copy here) entrenching tool.

#### B3: Captain Hauge, No.5 (Norwegian) Troop; Harlech, Wales, 1942

The typical insignia of foreign officers with No.10 (IA) Cdo was a national cap badge on the green Commando beret; and on the BD blouse, national rank insignia, and a national title in addition to that of the Commando. This portrait of the Troop commander is based on the group photo of officers at No.10 (IA) Cdo HQ. He wears a Norwegian national cap badge in silver - a crowned 'H' with '7' superimposed, for King Haakon VII, within a wreath. Norwegian officers kept their national rank insignia, and three stars are pinned to the opened collars of the battledress. The left sleeve insignia are the red-on-blue 'No.10 COMMANDO' title above a deeper white-on-khaki 'NORGE' title, above a round Combined Operations patch. On the right sleeve a small Norwegian national flag flash was worn instead of the 'NORGE' title. Rolf Hauge had reached Britain in September 1941 after an epic journey via Sweden, across Russia, to Cairo; in winter 1944/45 he would be decorated with the MC for his gallant leadership at Walcheren.

## C: THE FRENCH

### C1: Quartier maitre, No.1 (French) Troop, attached No.3 Commando; Dieppe, 19 August 1942

About a month after the 1re Compagnie de Fusiliers-Marins Commandos passed the Achnacarry course, 15 officers and men were attached to the Commandos that accompanied Canadian units on the disastrous Dieppe raid. Those attached to No.4 Cdo on the right flank obeyed LtCol Lord Lovat's order that his men should wear cap-comforters and denim battledress and display no insignia; but the five with No.3 Cdo on the left wore their French naval caps and fully badged BD blouses, with denim trousers. The *bachi* had a small brass anchor centred on the front above the cap tally 'F.N.F.L.' for Free French Naval Forces. At that date the sleeve insignia consisted of white-on-khaki 'FRANCE' above white-on-black 'COMMANDO' titles; on the right sleeve this yellow-bordered tricolour shield bearing the Cross of Lorraine, and on the left the two crossed red anchors of the French Navy on a navy-blue rectangle. Note that this leading seaman still wears his French naval rank – three red tapes – on a patch on the front edge of his blouse, although he has the British rank of corporal. One of the Frenchmen who landed with No.3 Cdo, Cpl César, managed to dump his blouse and cap before being captured; he heard Germans asking British prisoners if there were any Free French with them, but by pretending to be French-Canadian he survived, to escape and eventually return to England. His SgtMaj Montailleur, who had not made himself anonymous, was executed after capture.

### C2: Enseigne de vaisseau de 1re classe, No.8 (French) Troop; Eastbourne, Sussex, 1943

Parading for inspection by Adm d'Argenlieu, this first lieutenant wears pre-war battledress with an officer's shirt and tie. From October 1942 the Cross of Lorraine arm shield was moved to become the cap badge of the French Troops. The 'FRANCE' shoulder title was retained throughout the war, but from August 1942 the red-on-blue 'No 10 COMMANDO' title was worn below it; both woven and printed versions existed. The same was true of the Combined Operations patch, which during 1942–43 made a transition from the issued tombstone shape to a cut-and-folded circular format in most Army (though not always in Royal Marine) Commando units – both can be seen simultaneously in photos. The diamond-shaped enamelled Free French Navy breast badge was at first worn by officers only but later more generally, and in 1942 was occasionally seen worn as a beret badge. Rank was worn as in C1 by ratings up to *quartier maitre chef* (lance-sergeant), and on midnight-blue shoulder boards or slides looped over the BD shoulder straps by higher ranks – as gold braid chevrons by the three grades of *maitre*, and gold bars below a gold fouled anchor by officers. This officer wears partial 37 Ptn Battle Order for this parade (complete with a toggle rope, and helmet slung on a fastening strap of the small pack, like his men); the binocular and compass cases have been omitted.

### C3: Vickers K-gunner, 1er Bn de Fusiliers-Marins Commandos, attached No.4 Commando; Amfréville, Normandy, 6 June 1944

After the attachment of Capt Keiffer's Nos.1/5 & 8/6 Tps (officially, 1er Bataillon de Fusiliers-Marins Commandos) to



15 December 1942: the French Troop on parade for Adm d'Argenlieu, C-in-C Free French Naval Forces. In the centre is Lt Keiffer, and at far left LtCol Lister. See Plates A & C. (Author's collection)

No.4 Cdo in April 1944 for that unit's D-Day landing, the shoulder title was changed accordingly, although the French were still administratively part of No.10 (IA) Commando. To increase their firepower for the assault on German blockhouses at Ouistreham on the extreme left of Sword Beach/Queen Red, four .303in Vickers-K machine guns were issued, two to each Troop. Originally an aircraft defensive weapon, fed by 96-rd drum magazines and with a 950rpm rate of fire, these had been modified for infantry use with a bipod. The French Commandos took heavy casualties during their capture of the Riva Bella Casino stronghold, but the survivors crossed the Orne bridges successfully and dug in that evening at Amfréville. This gunner has swapped his helmet for his beret, bearing the bronze badge issued to the French Troops in May 1944; his sleeve insignia, and chest rank patch of *matelot 1re classe*, are conventional. Note the large magazine pouches issued to the Vickers-K sections; valuable research by Roger Dennis has confirmed that these were not, as sometimes claimed, Lewis pouches, and a photo taken on D-Day confirms their use by the French; each had a cushion pad behind the bottom edge. The usual 37 Ptn shoulder braces were worn over the broader pouch straps, through a retaining loop, passing down behind the pouches and emerging below the belt to support the usual items at the hips. We have assumed that gun No.1s carried pistols – for Commandos, often the Colt M1911A1, so here the holster is hooked beneath the British-made webbing double pouch for its magazines. He has dumped his small pack, which could be worn over the pouch rig, the buckles of its L-straps hooked to the usual four-bar buckles behind the tops of the pouches.

## D: THE DUTCH

### D1: Second lieutenant, No.2 (Dutch) Troop; Portmadoc, Wales, 1943

Initially the Dutch used as a beret badge the orange-on-khaki cloth national lion badge and 'NEDERLAND' title; but at some point in 1942/43 a new yellow metal lion cap badge was



La Vaglia, Italy, January 1944: Cpl Hermans of No.4 Tp provides a clear view of the Belgian rampant lion cap badge, here pinned to the green beret through a loose shield-shaped black backing – such details seem to have been individual choices. See Plates A & F. (IWM B 11804)

introduced. The former insignia became a left sleeve patch, worn between the 'No 10 COMMANDO' title and the Combined Operations patch; 1943 photos still show the tombstone shape, and no national insignia on the right sleeve. Like the other nationalities except for the Belgians, Dutch officers kept their collar ranking; for infantry these were in silver six-point stars (plus a gold bar for ranks from major to colonel). Photos show a spliced left shoulder lanyard, and written sources describe this as black-and-white; judging from the photos, the white element seems to have been minimal.

### D2: Private, No.2 (Dutch) Troop, attached HQ No.5 Commando; India/Burma border, January 1944

As described in the narrative text, Lt Knottenbelt and three men, chosen by lot, joined the HQs of Nos.5 & 44 (RM) Cdos in the Arakan, where they saw action on patrols. Privates Blatt and de Koning served with No.5 Cdo, and the former survived a serious wound in a patrol encounter near Maungdaw. A photo of the Dutchmen shows this combination of bush hat, KD bush shirt and contrasting OG-dyed KD trousers, with 37 Ptn webbing and Commando boots, a heavily loaded Bergen with a bedroll beneath, and SMLE rifles with breech covers; US-made machetes were general issue.

### D3: Sergeant 1.Klasse, No.2 (Dutch) Troop, attached 1st Airborne Division; Arnhem, September 1944

A few months after his adventures in the Far East, Martin Knottenbelt led a party from No.2 Tp who were attached to the 1st Abn Div for the Arnhem operation. This senior NCO wears the Netherlands lion beret badge, and a Denison

smock – issued individually for this operation, which involved a glider landing – over his BD, but not the Airborne pattern BD trousers; typically, an extra shell dressing is tied to one shoulder strap. Dutch rank badges were worn, here the white chevrons and bar of a senior sergeant on the right arm only. He has acquired a Mk V Sten gun from the parent division.

## E: 3 TROOP

### E1: Sergeant, No.3 (X) Troop; Aberdovey, Wales, 1943

While a party of recruits for the Troop were travelling to Aberdovey in North Wales by train, under the escort of a Royal Pioneer Corps sergeant, they were joined by 'a dozen men in green berets... They wore No.10 Commando shoulder flashes over round Combined Operations badges. Some had parachute wings on their sleeves, and white turtle-neck sweaters under their battledress jackets...' (recalled by Pte 'Peter Masters' of 3 Tp in his book *Striking Back*). This sergeant is shown enjoying himself off-duty. No.3 Tp members, all serving under false identities, displayed a variety of individual cap badges: the brown plastic General Service Corps insignia, or those of various Home Counties infantry regiments (and even 17/21st Lancers); this NCO is badged to the Royal West Kents.

### E2: Private, No.3 (X) Troop, attached No.41 (Royal Marines) Commando; Sicily, 9/10 July 1943

This man landing with No.41 (RM) Cdo is dressed like that unit in US-made 'War Aid' Khaki Drill bush shirt and trousers, and the Mk II helmet with a hessian cover and net. He wears a blue Royal Navy life preserver under his 37 Ptn webbing equipment, which is in Field Service Marching Order, and a disposable 50-round bandolier. (There is no evidence that the 3 Tp men wore the 1942 'battle jerkin' or assault vest used by some men of 41 Cdo's A and P Tps that night.) He is armed with the SMLE Mk III rifle and its 18in bayonet, and for the landing carries the triple linked fibreboard tubes holding six rounds for the 2in mortar of P Tp (which these men accompanied for the initial landing, before reporting to Cdo HQ to provide their special skills). A Commando 'toggle rope' completes his kit: a 4ft length with a small wooden toggle spliced to one end and an eye spliced into the other, it could be linked to others to serve a wide variety of purposes, from climbing and bridging obstacles to forming lifelines.

### E3: Lance-Corporal, No.3 (Misc) Troop, attached Bicycle Troop, No.6 Commando; Bénouville, Normandy, 6 June 1944

The five-man detachment from No.3 Tp attached to the Army's No.6 Cdo for D-Day were all junior NCOs. Troop members pleased themselves as regards cap badges, and some wore none, like many other commandos in Normandy. They served with the Cdo HQs or further dispersed to individual Troops as COs decided, and as 'brigade troops' they should have worn the red-on-blue 'COMMANDO' title; a group photo is unclear on that point, but shows British parachute qualification wings worn in non-regulation position on the right forearm – a veteran recalls that some even wore their wings on the left breast. The degree of use of the brown canvas 1942 assault vest or battle jerkin differed between Commando units on D-Day; for men already carrying Bergens this 'skeleton' type was more practical than that shown on

Plate G2. Some photos show Bergens rigged to special carriers on the front of bicycles, others lashed beside the rear wheel. The Thompson M1928 sub-machine gun, usually used with 20-round box magazines, was widely issued to all Commando units. The 30-round magazines issued for D-Day proved unreliable, however, dropping out of the gun or causing jams by double-feeding.

#### F: THE BELGIANS

##### F1: Captain G.M. Danloy, No.4 (Belgian) Troop; Harlech, Wales, 1942

Captain, later Maj Danloy (whose nickname was apparently 'Chesty George'), commanded the Belgian Troop throughout the war. This image from a group photo of No.10 (IA) Cdo officers shows his burly build, the Belgians' rampant lion cap badge, and – oddly – white facing cloth to the opened BD collar. The Belgians were the only contingent to adopt entirely British badges of rank. The sleeve titles and patch do not show clearly in the photo, and are assumed from later photos of this Troop. Other colours for the national title have been illustrated, but W.H. Carman states that this bordered crimson-on-khaki 'BELGIUM', worn on the left shoulder only, was introduced in 1942, and it is still seen in photos taken in Italy in winter 1943/44; a tricolour flash in the black, red and yellow national colours balanced it on the right sleeve.

##### F2: Bren gun No.1, No.4 (Belgian) Troop, attached 56th Reconnaissance Regiment; Sangro river, Italy, December 1943

Photos show most men wearing the green beret and carrying helmets; the lack of sleeve insignia suggests newly-issued battledress. Most buttoned the leather jerkin to the neck over the BD; many carried the toggle rope, and the brass-hilted Fairbairn-Sykes knife fixed to the left thigh with one or two buttoned cloth tabs. As a Bren No.1 he carries the gun's spares wallet slung.

##### F3: NCO, No.4 (Belgian) Troop; patrol dress, Italy, December 1943

Photos of the Belgians in Italy also show many men wearing the cap-comforter, and some this 'jersey, heavy wool'. For night patrol work he wears canvas and rubber PT shoes, and only skeleton Battle Order. Clipping grenades to the webbing by their lever was hazardous and usually forbidden – it put a dangerous strain on the safety pin – but photos show several Belgians in Italy carrying No.36 grenades in this way.



#### G: THE BELGIANS & NORWEGIANS

##### G1: Sergeant-major 1re classe, Belgian HQ Troop; Germany, June 1945

Following the liberation of Belgium more than 300 new volunteers allowed the formation of new Nos.9 & 10 Tps to join No.4, under a new HQ Troop. After VE-Day the Belgians took over the military government of the Neustadt area until July 1945. In February 1944 the Belgian forces with the British adopted some new rank insignia, and sergeant-major 1st class, originally identified by the staff-sergeant's crown above three chevrons, became equivalent to the British warrant officer 2nd class and received a forearm badge of a wreathed Belgian tricolour shield. From December 1944 all Special Service brigades were retitled Commando brigades; a new triangular patch showing a dagger in red on midnight-blue thereafter identified the whole Commando Group and was supposed to replace the Combined Operations patch (which had been very widely issued) in actual Commando combat units, although the dagger patch was very little seen before the end of the war. This soldier displays the ribbon of the Military Medal, perhaps awarded for gallantry during the costly fighting at Walcheren.

##### G2: Private, No.5 (Norwegian) Troop; Walcheren, November 1944

A photo shows Norwegian Commandos wading ashore after their landing craft was hit, wearing steel helmets and the 1942 canvas battle jerkin. The claimed advantages of this item over 37 Ptn webbing equipment were ease of access, speed of putting on and off, comfort, and some protection from e.g. barbed wire. It was also claimed that it drained quickly after soaking, but veterans disagreed, and criticized it for its wet weight. This man carries a 2in mortar in the sleeve at the right rear, its weight balanced by bombs in the left front pocket. The 'light respirator' is worn slung. By November 1944 Denison smocks were general issue in most Commandos; against the cold of Walcheren some men wore the sleeveless leather trench jerkin under this, since they did not carry greatcoats. During the later campaign on the Scheldt and Maas rivers the Belgian, Norwegian and Dutch Troops were issued snow camouflage suits at a scale of one per two men; the Bergen rucksack was by now almost universally worn, and canvas 'skeleton' vests – as Plates E3 & H2 – were widely used by Bren gun sections.

##### G3: Sniper, No.5 (Norwegian) Troop; Walcheren, November 1944

This composite figure illustrates a number of features, including the front of the 1942 battle jerkin. Throughout the Commandos the steel helmet was left off whenever possible in favour of the prized green beret; one photo shows a

December 1942: No.6 (Polish) Tp march past an inspecting officer. They demonstrate their usual immaculate turn-out, complete with scrubbed toggle ropes exactly fastened round their waists. The wireless operators carry No.46 sets. Unlike the other Troops, the Poles were frequently photographed wearing steel helmets. (Polish Museum 854)

Norwegian wearing his beret in this style, but others wore it conventionally with the silver 'H7' badge visible. Some Commandos in NW Europe wore the triangular yellow high-visibility air recognition panel with one corner taped round the neck and the panel bundled down inside the front of the smock, so that it could be pulled out rapidly and extended – by means of the thumb loops in the other corners – when there was particular danger of attack by Allied aircraft (a constant hazard for all Allied troops, and in those days normally accepted as an inevitable part of battle). This sniper, armed with the No.4T rifle, has sewn a strip of old Vickers MG belt to his left thigh with a few selected special rounds which he will be able to find quickly if needed – e.g. red-tipped tracer and blue-tipped incendiary.

#### H: THE POLES

##### H1: Porucznik, No.6 (Polish) Troop; Eastbourne, Sussex, 1943

This immaculate first lieutenant about to go on parade wears a British-made Service Dress jacket and trousers, with brown leather shoes, Sam Browne belt and gloves. Polish raised five-point silver rank stars are worn on the shoulder straps. The green beret is worn with the silver national eagle-and-shield badge, but without the rank badges normally worn below it by Polish officers of other units; it was the Polish fashion to pull the beret back as well as to the right, with the ends of the tightening ribbon hanging free. The 'POLAND' title is in officers' silver wire embroidery on scarlet, and is worn above the usual 'No 10 COMMANDO' title and round-cut Combined Operations patch. (The Poles had worn the white-on-midnight-blue 'COMMANDO' title for a few months in late 1942, with tombstone Combined Operations patches.) For Commandos the officers' pentagonal lapel patches and the diamond-shaped collar patches of enlisted ranks were deep green, piped at the upper two edges with darker green. These are specified in regulations issued by the C-in-C Polish Forces on 10 February 1943, but officers may be wearing them already in a photo taken at Caernarvon in 1942. Not visible in that photo is a green lanyard; the February 1943 orders specify a 'double' (plaited?) lanyard for officers and 'single' for other ranks. This first lieutenant displays the Polish parachute qualification badge of a silver diving eagle above his left pocket, together with the purple-and-white ribbon of the Polish Cross of Valour.

##### H2: Bren gun No.2, 1st (Polish) Independent Commando Company; Pescopennataro, Italy, winter 1943/44

The Poles reverted to this title from 1 December 1943, but to the British Army they were still No.6 (Polish) Tp, No.10 (IA) Commando. Deployed in the Italian mountains with the Belgian Troop, attached to 56th Inf Div's reconnaissance regiment, they were issued heavy white Royal Navy sweaters and snow camouflage suits, but the jackets arrived before the trousers. The brown canvas 'skeleton' assault vest was widely used by Polish troops in Italy. This Bren gun loader, carrying 12-magazine ammo cases which have just arrived by mule, has also acquired a German belt and Walther P38 pistol. Since the Polish commandos remained in Italy they never received Denison smocks as general issue.



Fairbourne, October 1942: a clear view of the silver Polish cap badge worn on the green beret, the white-on-red national title above the red-on-blue unit title, and the tombstone-shaped Combined Operations patch. See Plates A & H. (Polish Museum 668)

##### H3: Sierżant, Polish 2nd Motorized Commando Battalion; Italy, summer 1944

No.6 (Polish) Tp officially passed under the control of II Polish Corps in April 1944, but continued to be part of No.10 (IA) Cdo for another four months. On 3 August the Troop finally left the British order of battle, to become the nucleus for the new Polish 2nd Motorized Cdo Bn, which continued to fight in Italy. This sergeant is based on a photo of members of that unit parading before LtGen Anders. The green beret, national title, Combined Operations patch and Polish shoulder strap ranking are unchanged; but 'No 10' has been cut off the unit title, and 'COMMANDO' re-centred. The red, blue and white 'Narvik' lanyard was a commemorative distinction instituted for Poles who had fought at that battle in Norway with the French 1st Light Division in May 1940. In the field in summer 1944 the unit wore KD shirts and slacks with the green beret.

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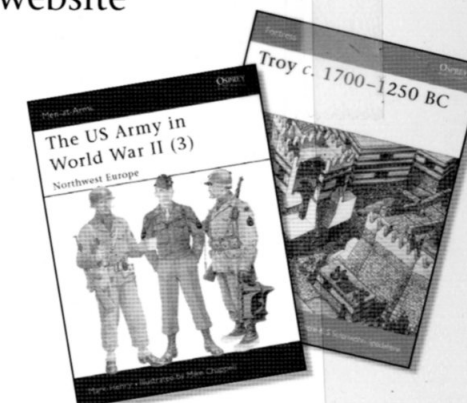
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