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4 Troop
No.3 Commando
No.1 S.S. Brigade
Rank L/Cpl 'D' Day

Fifty years ago, yet certain things stick in ones memory.

Southampton area being under canvas, in camps staffed by the American army's, white bread tasting like blotting paper.

Drinking beer from jam jars in the local pubs; 2 pound jar to a pint, 1 pound for a half.

Confined to camp for a week or more, intense briefing, trying to work out where the landing would be (we were not told the precise area).

Warsash 5th June, evening:- boarded landing craft (L.S.I. small). Steamed line ahead, ships as far as the eye could see, hooters sounding, cheering crews, felt proud to be there and with the Commando.

'D' Day, rough night at sea, rum ration comes up, had a sip and was promptly sick. French coast in sight: - Battleships everywhere blasting away, rocket launchers etc firing off. Incoming enemy shellfire off target, some of the lads shouting corrections, "up a 100 etc".

Landing craft line abreast, heading for the beach, tide well up, beach looks flat, just a few big houses along shoreline. We hit the beach, sailors push out the ramp, ours is crooked, have to go down it on our backsides.

Glad to be ashore, (some wounded from Infantry unit before us along the barbed wire). Through the wire, across the road, over a railway line, ground ahead flooded to waist deep (nothing about this in the briefing), enemy machine gun opens up tracers ricocheting off the water, no one hit.

Everyone soaked to the skin now, what with 48hrs. Ammo, rations, etc. and the water, we are loaded to the gunnels. Pushing on, sometimes at the double, we take a few prisoners, mostly East Europeans, lots of gunfire, mostly ours.

The Orne bridges are about 7 miles away and the Airborne lads will be holding out. Heralded by Lord Lovat's piper we make it to the bridges just a few minutes late, across the canal bridge into the dead ground between canal and river. Warnings from the Para's that the river bridge was under sniper fire. We cross the river without loss, further along the road the para's have captured a German canteen van and are dishing out black bread and Russian cigarettes.

Not much opposition so far, we are ordered to the high ground (what about the troop objective?). Digging in we have a grandstand view of the surrounding countryside. See a couple of Spitfires shooting down a J.U.88, then a V1 chased by two fighters.

Evening: - a roar of aircraft engines and a brigade of gliders unhook over our heads, the gliders landing in the fields below us.

Dark and it's the end of 'D' Day, the Commando has had some casualties, 4 Troop none at all, but D+1 was going to change all that.