

Back to the Roots.

Dutch Commando Course on historic grounds.

In March 2012, 30 trainees started with the preliminary training for the Commando Course. In May, 25 of them started with the actual eight weeks course. After seven weeks, 10 survivors started the final exercise. This time it was not only about going to the depths of their physical abilities, but also about history. The last miles of the Commando Course were made in the Scottish Highlands.

On the morning of Saturday 23 June 2012, a C130 of the Dutch Royal Air Force flew the men to Inverness. A bus took them to Kinlochleven where they could enjoy the luxury of the Royal Marine Hostel for just one night. The evening was spent preparing their equipment, and a cabaret performance with the instructors as an audience. On the Sunday the final exercise started with a march through the Scottish Highlands. Not only were the horizontal meters counting now, but also the vertical ones. Sometimes under the leadership of the instructors, or as a four man patrol, they covered 200 kilometers in the course of the week through the rough but beautiful countryside. Apart from sunshine and the Scottish rain, everybody had to suffer attacks by a unconventional enemy: midges!

Because of the fact that the Dutch Commandos celebrated their 70th anniversary in March 2012, a visit to historical grounds was on the program. Along the same route as their forefathers did in 1942, they marched from Spean Bridge Railway Station to Achnacarry. The first part, to the Commando Memorial, went under the sound of the bagpipes. At the Memorial the Padre spoke a few words and a toast was made with the Regimental drink of the Dutch Commandos, the Ben Nevis Single Malt whisky. After a short rest at Achnacarry the trainees did a speed march along the Dark Mile. With the kind permission of the Locheil, physical training instructors of the Dutch Commandos had erected a Tarzan Course and various other rope courses in the grounds of Achnacarry. The instructors also put the trainees through the "Highland Games", which were executed in improvised kilts. The midges had the day of their lives!

The move back to Inverness by truck was unexpectedly interrupted by a march of 12 kilometers along Loch Ness. For the largest part of the distance the march was uphill. No Loch Ness monster was to be seen; only very tired trainees. The flight back to The Netherlands on Thursday evening was used to catch up on the loss of sleep built up during the week. In The Netherlands a 25 kilometers march with full equipment was waiting for them before they could march into their barracks in Roosendaal on the Friday morning, where they were cheered on by their families and the members of the Korps Commandotroepen. All this exactly 70 years to the day when the first Dutch Commandos completed their training at Achnacarry! In the afternoon they were presented with their Green Berets by Lieutenant General Mart de Kruif, Commanding Officer of the Royal Dutch Army. Soon the men will start their advanced training, which will also be very demanding.





