

Lt-Col Tom Trevor

Formidable Commando and inventor

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL TOM ("BIG TOM") TREVOR, who has died aged 85, had an unusual military career, serving with the Welch Regiment, various British Commandos, the US Rangers, and a Malay Regiment.

In 1943, after commanding No 1 Commando in Tunisia, he received a letter of thanks from Eisenhower, commending the qualities his Commando had shown "on the most difficult mountainous terrain of the entire front".

Thomas Hoult Trevor was born on Oct 13 1911, and after Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, was commissioned into the Welch Regiment.

In April 1940, when German troops had invaded neutral Norway, Britain put a hastily-assembled force into the country to try to throw them out. The force included five independent companies, each of 300 men, unfortunately lacking special training. Trevor was second-in-command of No 2 Company.

The British were outnumbered, outgunned and outflanked, but fought tenaciously. After the campaign, the companies were converted into commandos, with the task of raiding across the Channel.

After serving with No 1 Commando, Trevor was given the command of No 6 Commando for the raid on Bayonne, but this never got ashore. He returned to No 1 Commando as CO for the Operation Torch landings in North Africa in November 1942.

The Commandos, with four attached troops from the American commandos, wore American helmets and carried American rifles to persuade the French that this was an all-American invasion and should not be resisted strenuously; the ploy was not entirely successful.

The Commandos captured Fort Sidi Ferruch and the Maison Blanche. Trevor's fluent French enabled him to turn some of his erstwhile enemies into Allies.

After Algiers, they moved into Tunisia, where they fought a gruelling three-month campaign which brought heavy losses in hard-won victories, but drew praise from all sides, including the Germans.

Trevor was awarded a military OBE.

At the end of 1943 Trevor became liaison officer with



Trevor: D-Day action

the US Rangers. On D-Day he was with them when they attacked the German gun emplacements at Pointe du Hoc, three miles west of Omaha Beach. This involved scaling a sheer 100ft cliff, and two days' bitter fighting in which they suffered 60 per cent casualties. Trevor was among the wounded, but earned the admiration of his American comrades.

After the War, Trevor served with the British Military Mission to Greece, but returned to the Welch Regiment for Korea. He then commanded the 4th battalion of the Federated Malayan Regiment, and served for a period as Military Attaché in Portugal.

On retiring, Trevor decided to forget his wars, and attended no reunions, other than the 50th anniversary of the formation of No 1 Commando, at the insistence of his old friends.

A keen sailor, Trevor founded a boat company on the Isle of Wight. He invented a "toggle rope" bridge, for which Commandos carried a rope with a toggle around their waists; these could be joined to form a rough type of bridge.

He also developed new methods of climbing cliffs, and with Evelyn Waugh (also a Commando), wrote a pamphlet on the subject.

Big Tom Trevor was 6ft 3in tall, and with physique to match he was a formidable figure in his heyday.

In the 1930s he acquired a set of rooms in Albany, which for a time he let to Aldous Huxley. From the 1950s he lived there himself, seldom venturing out of doors in later years, a pale, bearded figure clad in a favourite dressing gown.

He never married.