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From Lt J B Russell(C/O NAN) to CO Armadillo , while NAN were stationed at Kabrit, post Husky & Messina, pre Anzio – Transcribed by Paul Seaton

HMS, Saunders

23rd October 1943

Sir,

1) I have the honour to submit the following remarks and suggestions with regard to the work of naval parties in a landing.

These are based on experience as a beach master on Bark West Roger Red and Bark South (56) beaches in Sicily, also as principal beach master on George sector at Reggio in Italy, and subsequently of advanced maintenance beaches at Sapri.

2) . Calling in of craft

The most difficult part of the beach side of a landing was always found to be the controlling of craft in the sector. LCM could only be controlled when of the loudhailer overcame the engine noises, as there wireless was distinctly poor. Also LCM and major landing craft were impatient to beach at the expense of military requirements. These are set out below as simple facts that all officers and coxwains should know for good co-operation:

1. Wheeled vehicles must be landed on a roadway to prevent them bogging down on the beach.
2. Tracked vehicles must never be landed on a wire roadway as the tracks ruin it.
3. All vehicles must have their engines running before beaching, so that the engine is ready for the stiff pull over at the beach.
4. Heavy armoured vehicles cannot be put on any beach as the exits may not be able to bear the weight of a 40 ton tank.
5. Squadrons of armour , or batteries of artillery split between LCTs must not land on different parts of the beach or they will have to use different exits, and will be unable to find their unit for some time.

Craft carrying stores must make certain that the beach knows the nature of their cargoes, as the army beach group will have a different place for handling small cases, large cases and crane lifts. Generally, they will have two separate beaches for stores and vehicles.

3. I therefore found that the only certain way to prevent craft beaching in the wrong place was to intercept them before they beached, and give orders to beach according to their cargo. Almost invariably, a craft that beaches without orders finds itself in the wrong place, and unable to haul off when is still unloaded. It then has to discharge to the disorganisation of the military. For the purpose of control an LCP(L.). "Eureka type" is most suitable, being more seaworthy than LCA and DWKS which are also too slow. LCI too large and slow to manoeuvre amongst LST heading to and from a beach.

4. The principal beach master should make his headquarters somewhere on the beach in the centre of the sector close to the staff. AMLO (Asst Military Landing Officer?) with his beach masters, the M. L. O (Mil. Landing Officer) and the brick commander on the telephone. By keeping constant radio-telephone communication between the principal beach master and control craft, it is simple to direct every craft to the correct beach every time, where necessary and the beach is warned by visual signal / radio telephone in early stages of craft arriving

5. In order to provide one craft continuously patrolling, two craft are necessary on the sector. Two craft are in any case necessary from first light until the early morning rush is beached. When a beach is controlled in this way, a great saving in manpower can be effected. George sector at Reggio was worked for a brigade at landing with a beach party of six officers and 25 ratings on three beaches. As it was an ideal beach, 12 ratings would have sufficed for the sector.

6. The only justification for the present size of the beach party is the number and weight of beach party stores that have to be carried ashore. Few of these, however, are necessary in the first stages of the assault, but it has always been the practice for them to be loaded with the main body at about H. plus 20 minutes. If each beach party had a control/dispatch boat in which these stores could be stored, the number of ratings required could be much reduced.

7. The basic need is that there should be a naval officer and communication party at each point where craft beach. This officer needs up to three ratings at a time for placing flags, tending the lines, keeping a lookout etc, together with three ratings as spare numbers to replace casualties, and cook.

8. The former numbers of beach parties were fixed before beach repair parties reached their present size. Another commitment which required large beach parties was the handling of quarter-lines. With the present numbers of a major landing craft in use, the number of LCM whose quarter lines have to be handled in heavy surf is slight -and that this is a duty which can be done by the Army personnel on the beach, who have always been most willing and helpful as long as the Navy is there to show them what to do.

9. The reduction of each beach party to three officers, one petty officer, one leading Seaman and 10 specially selected able Seaman would provide all that was required; equivalent Marine ranks would be equally suitable. As this reduction would free a number of trained beach party ratings, I suggest that they take over new mobile pontoons for the duties of mooring and maintaining the pontoon or working the self-propelled barge units into which the pontoon can be made. Previously, these have been manned by ordinary Seaman, not trained into beach work or field craft.

Operational Stores for Beach Parties

These stores allowance for beach parties appears to have been made up before the advent of beach repair parties. Blocks and tackles, marlin spikes, cold chisels, bulldog grips, etc were never used. Each party had also to carry 14 large 6 V accumulators of the least portable lead acid type. In practice, it was found most suitable to use cycle torches in the assault. Subsequently, the ideal beach light is the Admiralty pattern or oil riding light for small craft, or small hurricane light, burning behind a slit in a petrol tin. These are far superior to the accumulator operated in electric lamps on every point.

11. The provision of a bright petrol burning light of the mantle pattern when major landing craft have to make the coast after a long crossing is also desirable. It should always be possible to improvise a screen from aircraft.

12. In no operations were the transit signs or lights provided found it necessary.

Once a sector is developed, it becomes necessary to call in so many craft at a time (anything up to 6LST alone) that the transits would need to be moved continually. When restricted space made beaching tricky, it was always simpler to provide a transit by two "G." flags or torches. Beach parties also require Primus stoves to do the preparation of their own compositions, and an improvised tide gauge where tidal information is uncertain.

Quick Salvage of Craft

In operation Husky, some three dozen LCM were stranded early on D-Day and remained ashore several days longer than was necessary. By the end of this time, the engine rooms of many had been filled, and that they were obviously out of action for some time. Had it been realised that the tide would rise a foot between 0500 and 1100, many could have been got off by laying out their own kedges, and hauling off at high water. The remainder could probably have been towed off quickly by LCG or LCT (R), had craft been detailed for this purpose. Later on, these craft were saved by taking lines ashore from LCG by folbot, or DWKS, and towing or kedging them off.

It is also suggested that two DUKWS containing one ton trailer pumps with about 30 feet of suction hoses should be available in the early stages for pumping out or firefighting afloat. Trailer pumps are usually landed last for the beach brick, but would thus be useful and mobile from the start. In Husky, LCE were among the first

craft to be stranded-the dukws. are also better for laying out kedges.

RN Maintenance Centre

In Husky, most of the LC M. crews were under canvas for the first time and no central camp or rendezvous for [?? missing text off bottom of photocopied page] could be found anywhere on 3 miles of beach. Relief crews and crews of stranded craft might be anywhere in the same area-and much further afield after bombing. Several crews ran their LCM for several days without relief, nor were a number of ratings ever on any unit strengths for drawing rations. They were forced to beg, pilfer or loot, according to their conscience.

16. It is therefore advisable to bid for an R N. maintenance centre on the key plan before landing. If possible, this should be close to its own strip of beach, and a fuel dump for craft. It is suggested that a staff of one officer, and 12 beach commandos be provided to "hold the hands" of these unfortunate and marooned sailors, and to help them in the simple chores or preparing food and shelter. Also to organise the sanitation, active and passive defence of the area and, in close cooperation with flotilla to and Squadron officers, to arrange and organise the routines of relieving crews and fuelling craft.

Composition of Naval Parties Landing in a Sector

It is submitted that the following numbers are required, subject to alterations for conditions, also that the composite party required for a sector be known as a naval landing party-the term "beach commando" not being very highly regarded by Navy and Army alike.

SNOL----- PBM

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SNOL Signal Party |

Senior Beach Master

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Beach Signal Sect	Beach Repair	Beach Party (3)	Pontoon Party	RN Maintenance Centre
1 Lt , 5 ratings	2 Offs, 25 ratings	1 BM 2 ABM 12 rating	1 bosun RN 30 ratings	1 Officer 12 ratings

I have the honour to be sir, your obedient servant (signed)

J B Russell

Lt DSC RN