

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Shipmates, with Armistice Day shortly upon us we will be remembering many old friends who have "Crossed the Bar", a significant number in action. therefore it is timely to have received an article submitted by Les Seldon of B5 RNBSS outlining the wartime history of his section. It is too of interest he points out that units of Naval Beach Parties and Beach Signal Sections were involved in action prior to their official birth as RN Commandos and RNBSS

On 19th August 2002 it was the 60th Anniversary of the ill fated Dieppe Raid, the first attempt at an assault landing on the mainland of Europe in WW2

The ill planned landing was a frontal attack to take the port of Dieppe. Red Beach on the left, the port entrance area and white beach on the right, the Casino area. Supporting flanking assaults were made at Puits to the left of the port and at Pourville to the right. No.3 Army Commando were to land yet further to the left to knock out a large gun emplacement with No.4 Army Commando to carry out a similar action on the extreme right.

The Canadians were the principal frontal assault troops supported by significant numbers of other allied units.

Approximately two thousand men lost their lives in the nine hour duration of the raid, a significant number being from the RN Beach and Signal Parties. The official number of Naval personnel killed in action that day is Five Hundred and Fifty. There are still a dozen surviving including Les in the Association today.

Les goes on to describe the return of the survivors to the U.K. and their formation into Beach Signal Sections, in his case B 5. The section were sent to Moss Park in Glasgow for attachment to the 18th American Infantry Division who were later embarked on one of the group of merchant ships converted to carry assault landing craft then assembled at Greenock.

They sailed in convoy across the Atlantic, down the coast of America and back towards the Mediterranean arriving at the Straits of Gibraltar at dark. They steamed through the night towards North Africa arriving opposite Oran at dawn. B5 landed with "J" Party taking part in the capture of Aeronautic Arzeu, the French Fleet Air Arm Base.

Following this operation B5 embarked on the LST Ettrick to return to the U.K. only to be torpedoed and sunk in the Atlantic the first night after leaving Gibraltar. Fortunately all B5 personnel were picked up by a destroyer and returned to Gibraltar. We then took passage on a large convoy round the Cape and up to Suez. There we were attached to the Eighth Army together "G" party.

After a spell in Palestine with the 1st Division Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders we returned to Suez to embark on LST's for the landing at Cassibile in Sicily on 10th July 1943. After the fall of the island we took passage, this time in company with "N" R N Commando, across the Straits of Messina to land on the toe of Italy on 3rd September. Later in company with the American 5th Army we took part in the landing at Anzio again with "N" Party.

After six weeks of Stuka dive bombing, heavy shelling and mortar fire we were relieved and returned to Nisida (Naples). B5 then returned to the U.K. for the Normandy landings in which they were allocated specific tasks, one of which was the manning of the "Gooseberry" block ships at Courseulles. We were there for six weeks in difficult conditions, with no washing facilities and sleeping on a flooded mess deck.

I think we can claim that B5 was one of the most experienced sections

Les Seldon