

Canada Navy Veterans Are Home on Furlough

Halifax, Oct. 27 (CP).—Their part played in the conquest of one continent and the groundwork laid for the liberation of another, five Royal Canadian Navy officers and 49 ratings of one of the first Canadian landing craft flotillas to land on Sicily's shores arrived here recently on their way home for brief leaves.

The flotilla cut its fighting teeth in North Africa and some of the men were at Dieppe. In Sicily they carried ashore units of Gen. Montgomery's British 8th Army that helped mop up that island and then swept into Italy.

But on their arrival here for their visit home—for many it was the first in two years or more—they were like a bunch of rollicking kids when school lets out for the summer.

Ask them what the actual landing was like and they'll just shrug: "Oh, it wasn't much of a show." Only when pressed will they tell about the first breath-taking dash through a rain of mortar shells and machine gun bullets that plowed the water about them on the run in.

In command of the flotilla, composed of both Canadian and British sailors, was Lieut. Jack C. Davis of Duncan, B.C. Other officers were Lieut. George Buckingham, Montreal; George Nuttall, Calgary, Alta.; George Allin, Edmonton, and Sub-Lieut. William J. Scarett of Hamilton, an engineering officer.

Trained for Weeks.

They had trained for weeks in mock operations off the English coast, then got their first chance when the invasion of North Africa began last November. The flotilla, then commanded by another officer, landed about 10 miles from Algiers; while others of the men had been in different attack forces that punched into the coastline up and down Algeria.

Back to England again they went, and took more training to correct their mistakes and polish their tactics. Then they set out again, this time their big "landing craft-infantry" vessel, mother ship for the squareheaded landing barges steaming around the southern tip of Africa and up the Suez.

There they drilled some more, getting their manoeuvres letter-perfect. Ready for the big adventure they left for Port Said and set sail for Sicily.

Coxswain Edward Miller of Hamilton was at the tiller of one of the craft that dodged through the hail of shrapnel to deliver its human cargo. He had to do some fast ducking to escape, Leading Stoker John Scambler of Winnipeg said, although Miller made light of it. Scambler told how Miller "kept steering his craft to the left, while mortar shells kept following him and plopping about four feet to his right." Finally he made a dash and hit the beach.

Made Rapid Landing.

The first assault group of 90 men suffered only two casualties, one man killed and one wounded, and met with only light opposition. Then the barges kept shuttling back and forth from the ship to shore, landing between 2,500 and 3,000 soldiers in 10 hours.

Coxswain on another landing craft was LS. Graham Edge of Montreal, who admitted he got quite a kick out of it.

AB. Harry Woof of Hamilton had been a coxswain during the North African landing, but was a Lewis-gunner in Sicily. "I didn't have much to get a crack at this time," he complained, "there weren't many enemy planes around."

A veteran of the Dieppe landing was Leading Stoker Tom Gillis of Windsor, Ont., other Canadians with the flotilla also at Dieppe, but who returned to Canada some time ago, were PO's Ivan Rileu of Hamilton, Harold Brown of Toronto and Leading Stoker Clayton Pearson of Sylebury, Sask.

Lieut. Nuttall, who spent a year and three months as an ordinary seaman before getting his commission, nearly had a crack at Dieppe himself. His group started for the French coast but was turned back when plans were changed.

Others in the group returning included OS. James Williams of Montreal, CPO. John Seary of Brownsburg, Que., Shipwright Bruno Matteau of Shawinigan Falls, Que., LS. George Laverne and AB. James

Morgan of Ottawa, PO. Ernest Constable of Windsor, Ont., AB. Bill Lee of Oshawa, ALS. William Tiner of Owen Sound, Stoker Lloyd Russel of Wadena, Sask., CPO. George Service of Vancouver, AB. Douglas Townson of Edmonton, and AB. Lloyd McLellan of Roseland, B.C.

News doesn't always keep up with the men who are making it, so some of the flotilla members returning here were unaware that Lt. Cmdr. Bartlett had been rescued from the sea and taken prisoner, until they were told. Lieut. George Nuttall of Calgary summed up their feelings.

"I'm glad he was saved," he said. "He's a swell guy, and besides he's going to have a lot of interesting yarns to write."

AS. Harry Woof of Hamilton hasn't seen his brother Joe in 16 months, although last July he was within 25 miles of him. Most of the intervening distance was filled with wild-eyed Italians though, so a meeting of a sociable nature just wasn't practical.

Woof was one of the Canadians who manned landing craft that took British troops ashore in Sicily when the invasion started. His brother is in the Canadian Medical Corps and his unit landed just on the other side of a spit of land from where Harry's flotilla was operating.

"I didn't know Joe was in that bunch at the time," he said, "but only learned afterward when he had a letter from him. I couldn't have seen him anyway, since we didn't hang around there, but left for Algiers. It's a funny feeling, though, to think how close we were."

149
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