

**Trooper Charles Mager's
Part In The Greatest Seaborn
Invasion In The History Of
Mankind.**

CHARLES MAGER
1 TROOP
3 COMMANDO

The invasion had been planned and prepared for nearly four years and June 6th 1944 was the eventual date set for the massive assault on the northern shore of France.

The task for which I had trained since March of that year along with the rest of No1 Special Service Brigade, comprising of No's 3, 4, & 6 Army Commandos and 45 Royal Marine Commando was once ashore and clear of the enemy defences to move at speed to the relief of the 6TH Airborne Division who had landed by glider and parachute to capture vital bridges across the Caen Canal and the River Orne. It was essential that the bridges remained intact to enable our brigade to attack the enemy on high ground over-looking the invasion anchorage and to stop his artillery from shelling the beach head.

I was part of force "S" consisting of medium size infantry landing craft that held approx. 80 men- some men stayed on deck and the remainder below

deck. Our vessel L.C.I. No291 left Warsash on the River Hamble, Hampshire to cheers from all the Naval rating on land and nearby support ships. We spent an uncomfortable night off the Isle Of Wight and during our journey to the forming up point known as "Piccadilly" for some unknown reason. Perhaps it seemed like a "Circus" to me. We were soon underway and during the voyage had some cocoa and stale cheese sandwiches which, quite a number finished up over the side (It was a very rough crossing).

Queen Red Sector Sword Beach.

Just after 7am on the morning of the 6TH, we formed up in line abreast and waited for the signal to go in. By this time 3 large battleships and rocket launchers were softening up the enemy strong points to make it a little easier for our attack. Low flying bombers were strafing the rear defences so the noise was deafening. Soon we came under heavy fire from pill boxes that had escaped the naval bombardment. Two landing craft on our starboard side were hit and one sank with most of the men- the other caught fire from the high octane fuel which was used on this type of craft, so our casualties were quite heavy before we got ashore.

The 2 ramps on my vessel were still in tact and were quickly lowered into about four feet of water, with roughly 80lbs of rucksack on my back and holding my rifle free of the sea water , it was a difficult task to wade ashore and keep your head low down at the same time, once on firm sand and shingle we quickly made our way to the beach exit, a giant hole in the sea wall defences which had been made by the assault engineers who had landed just before us. Beyond the promenade we formed up in the damaged sea front houses and moved off along a white tape laid by the engineers-the area was heavily mined so it meant single file for the first mile and all the time being sniped at by hidden German infantry. My troop of 60 men had only sustained 11 casualties so we attacked pockets of resistance on our way to relieve the 6th Airborne Division at Benouville/ Pegasus Bridge, once at the bridge we crossed the second bridge over the River Orne and prepared our defence around 6th Airborne Division's H.Q. awaiting the inevitable counter-attacks, we had many during the 80 days we held the front line without being relieved.

Even now after 50 odd years "June 6th" its memories are still as vivid as that morning in 1944 that young men gave their lives in the cause of freedom and the liberation of the enslaved people of Europe.