

Green Beret Cafe, Neustadt, 1945



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GREEN BERET CAFÉ ON BALTIC COAST

Hounslow Residents Work as Y.M.C.A. Welfare Officers

They call 'Time gentlemen, please' over a microphone at the 'Green Beret' café in Neustadt, the German port on the Baltic coast, writes a Military Observer. It is the Commando Y.M.C.A. centre, formerly a German department store, but now giving away 45 gallons of tea daily to the troops.

When the Commandos arrived in the town they wanted a rest place where they could purchase a cup of tea and have a chat, so the Y.M.C.A. welfare officers, Mr. P.A. Radford of 362, Hanworth Road, Hounslow, and Mr. G.S. Simmonds of Ilford, decided to arrange one.

Both of these officers have been with their mobile canteen following the Commandos since the crossing of the Rhine to VE-Day. With the assistance of the Padre, Father R. Woods, of Longriggend, Lanarkshire, and of the Sacred Heart, Glasgow and L/Cpl. J.K. Emmerson of Pudsey, Leeds, they searched the town for a suitable site. They found the first floor of an empty departmental store and in 48 hours turned it into a high class and comfortable rest-place. S.S. troops were used to clean it out; German electricians wired it and cups, saucers, tables, carpets were brought from the German submarine school and radar station. A counter was rigged up, flooded with 1,000 watt arc light and every table in the 'Green Beret' has its own electric lamp. Table tennis, darts, chess, draughts and hosts of other games can be played, or the Commandos can listen to the wireless. For the more scholarly there is a room set aside for reading and writing, with paper and envelopes free.

"We have two shifts of girl workers - Polish D.P.s" Corporal Emmerson said. "They volunteered to help our lads, six of them, and all day they are serving tea and biscuits or selling chocolate or other sundries required by the soldiers. I suppose I am the canteen or restaurant manager, but I really need a microphone at 10 o'clock at night as the place gets so packed and they could not hear my voice shouting Time."

The 'Green Beret' has been visited by the Brigadier, who expressed his admiration at the fine effort to help the troops.

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LCpl. John Kenneth Emmerson mentioned in the article was known to everyone as Ken.
He served in Nos.2, 14, and 12 Commandos
and the 1st Special Service (Commando) Brigade HQ.
All images in this document provided by his son John.