

Gordon Malachy Crawford McKenzie



A South African in 41RM Commando

Killed in action 1 November 1944

[written by his nephew Graham]

My uncle was a Lieutenant in the Royal Marine Commandos and was killed in action at Walcheren Island during Operation Infatuate. From June 1944 he had been attached to 41RM Commando which was part of 4 Special Service (Commando) Brigade.

Although I understand he has no grave as a result of the way he died in action, I have been pleased to find he is commemorated on memorials on Walcheren Island. His name is on the roll of honour for the 41 Royal Marine Commando in Moriakerk at Westkapelle and on the Memorial at Domburg.

My father had told me that my uncle's landing craft had been hit by a German shell which had killed him. I cannot confirm if that was correct, but it seems the rest of his troop made the landing.

In the book *Commando Despatch Rider, from D-Day to Deutschland 1944-1945* by Raymond Mitchell, the author writes the following about being near the foreshore at Westkapelle: 'It was in that area that Sergeant Musgrove, in command of his section of 'B' Troop after the officer, Lieutenant McKenzie, had been killed during the run-in, captured a German pillbox with a handful of men, for which he was awarded the Military Medal.'

Gordon Malachy Crawford McKenzie was born in East London, South Africa, and he is remembered there through having a small memorial at the grave of my grandfather and grandmother. His name also appears on the war memorial in East London. He was not married and had no children.

Gordon's father (my grandfather), William Crawford McKenzie, was from Glasgow and emigrated to South Africa. William met and married Agnes (née Coghlan) in South Africa and they had five children, two of which were sons: Gordon and Malcolm. Gordon's sisters were Sheila, Ailsa and Moira Jean (known as Jean).

My father, Malcolm, was the eldest son and Gordon was his younger brother. Apparently, Gordon was good at sport and was popular at school.

Gordon is standing third from the right and between his three sisters in the family photo. My father, Malcolm, is standing second from the left. The photo of Gordon above was possibly taken earlier in his training.



Both Malcolm and Gordon volunteered to fight during the Second World War. Gordon became a lieutenant in the South African Armoured Corps, part of the South African Union Defence Force. He was then attached/seconded to the Royal Marine Commandos in the UK. Gordon probably went through a selection process to join the Royal Marine Commandos. I do not have any details about Gordon's further training with the Royal Marine Commandos and preparation for Operation Infatuate. I am assuming this would be on his service records, but I do not know if these would be held in the UK or South Africa.

My father, Malcolm, had wanted to become a pilot in the Air Force, but my grandfather told him that Gordon was going to get himself killed in the war and that he did not want to lose both sons. Malcolm then decided to become an aircraft mechanic in the South African Air Force. He received training in South Africa before being sent to East Africa and survived the war. My grandfather was unfortunately correct in believing Gordon would not survive the war.

[Graham McKenzie, nephew.]