

Holland trip for Angus men

Commandos return to scene of victory

Memories of the fateful night of October 31, 1944, when a band of several hundred commandos landed on Walcheren Island, spearhead of troops which were later to capture the Germans' last grip in Western Europe, will come flooding back for 150 officers and men on May 30.

A destroyer will carry the representatives of No. 4 Commando to the Dutch island of Flushing to attend the unveiling of a seven-foot bronze memorial depicting a Commando springing ashore. The party includes about 50 Scotsmen.

Capture of the island meant a lot to the Allied armies. The Germans were being swept back across Europe, but the advancing armies required the use of Antwerp for supplies. German batteries on Walcheren were blocking the shipping route.

The R.A.F. blasted breaches in the dykes, and the island was left something like a saucer, but the batteries remained on the "lip."

No. 4 Commando was chosen to make the first landing, and on the night of October 31-November 1 they left Belgium in assault landing craft.



Mr M. C. M'Dougall (above), teacher at Grove Academy, Broughty Ferry, and Forfarshire cricketer, who was a captain, continues the story:—

"It was decided to make a two-pronged attack. We were to clear one part of

Flushing, and hold it so that units of the 52nd Lowland Division could come through. A Marine Commando unit was to land the following morning at another part.

"We landed on a mole and the shore batteries fired machine-guns and anti-tank guns.

"We got the first part of the town cleared during the first day, and the next night the 52nd units landed and cleared the rest of the town. We also helped to clear the rest of the island."

Success of the venture is reflected in the fact that minesweepers were clearing the area the day after the landing, and shipping started moving through to Antwerp within a week to "feed" the Allied advance.

Mr M'Dougall joined the army at the beginning of 1940, and was commissioned in the Intelligence Corps in 1942 before joining the Commandos.

Born in Kent, Mr M'Dougall went to Kinross when a child, then moved to Edinburgh. He was educated at Heriot's, and in 1935 went to Edinburgh University and took an honours degree in German. He was studying in Germany when the war broke out.

BIG HITTER

For two years after the war he was assistant factor to his ex-C.O., Lord Lovat, at Beaulieu. He took up teaching in 1949, and came to Grove Academy as teacher of German and French.

Mr M'Dougall is well known as a "big hitter" at Forthill. He played for Heriot's while he was there and also for the F.P.s.

Mr M'Dougall has arranged for a bus to take the Scottish representatives, including himself, to the unveiling, from Glasgow to Chatham, where they board the destroyer.



Cpl. Blackie (left) and Mr Falconer.

Another No. 4 Commando who will be at the ceremony is Cpl. Robert S. Blackie, a police dog handler at R.A.F., Douglas Wood, near Monikie. He was driver to Lord Lovat at one time.

An Edinburgh man, he was in the army from 1935 to 1947, when he was demobbed, and later the same year joined the R.A.F.

Mr E. S. Falconer, St Orla, Glamis Road, Kirriemuir, is another Angus man to make the trip.

He is well known to football fans as the former Forfar Celtic half-back of their Forfarshire Cup winning side, and is now with Forfar Athletic. He is a plumber in Kirriemuir.

He still retains a parachutist's jumping jacket and a cigarette case as sentimental souvenirs reminding him of a German near-miss when he took part in the attack.

For the journey the Foreign Office is waiving passport regulations, and the Treasury is allowing each man £2 of Dutch currency.