



Military History Interest Group

U3A Dorking

Newsletter Number 54

January 2025

Barrie Friend

It is with great sadness that I record the death of Barrie Friend. He died peacefully in the nursing home where he had been these last few months. The u3a Dorking Military Interest Group owes its very existence to the leadership of Barrie. From a monthly attendance of less than ten members, during the pandemic his drive and enthusiasm ensured not just the survival of the Group, but he laid the groundwork for its development and growth. The last meeting on the 7 January had 33 members in attendance.

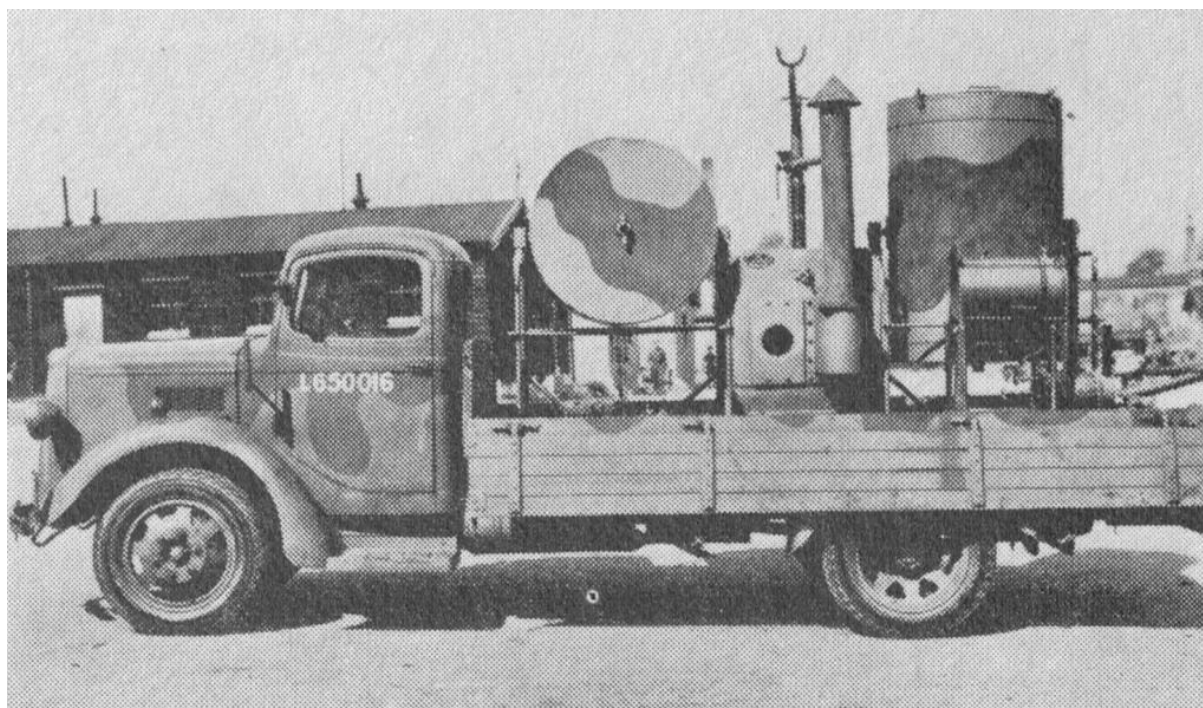
Barrie had an extraordinary depth of knowledge of military history which he was always willing to share. With great enthusiasm, he undertook extensive research, wrote many articles, led tours of battlefields, all the time encouraging others to share his engrossment in the subject he regarded so much. With a gentle smile, Barrie was a friendly, vibrant, positive, personable, enthusiastic, clever man who will be missed by so many of his “chums.”

Our deepest sympathies go to Barrie’s wife Marilyn who has over these past months devoted herself to his care.

Barrie’s funeral is on Friday 31st January at 11am The Leatherhead Crematorium, Randall’s Road KT22 0AG. Afterwards at The Grumpy Mole, Brockham RH3 7JS.

Contents

Berry Friend	1
Contents	2
Programme 2025	3
The Medenine Gun - Ian Chatfield	3
Officer Typewriter Military Bureaucracy – 10 minute slot	8
Supporting the Teeth	16
Combat ratio versus support	20
Divisional Composition teeth v tail	21
What constituted essential?	22
Supplies – consultation and decision making	23
Second World War mobile bath units	24
Laundry Units	28
Summary Divisional numbers	30
“Churchill’s D Day’ Dannatt and Packwood	31



New Zealand Army Ordnance Corps Bath unit

Programme for 2025

Date	Speaker	Subject Title
04/02/2025	Mike Smith	The American Revolution/American War of Independence
10 Mins	John Flower	The siege of Leningrad in WW2 or the Battle for Moscow 1941.
04/03/2025	James Chatfield	“Spies, lies and devices; espionage in the Cold War”.
01/04/2025	Liz Lockhart-Mure	Women's Auxillary Service (Burma)
06/05/2025	Jim Barnes	Concorde from success to demise Jim with George Blundell-Pound
03/06/2025	Simon Waterfield	D Day
01/07/2025	Peter Stevenson	Cuba vs CIA
05/08/2025	George Blundell-Pound	An Airline at War
02/09/2025	Alan Phelps	The Hurricane and Catalina flying boat?
07/10/2025	John Flower?	The Battle of Stalingrad
04/11/2025	Marion Woodville	Scapa Flow from a Diver
02/12/2025	Peter Stevenson	BBC Auntie World War Two Original circulation had this date wrong

The Medenine Gun

Ian Chatfield Surrey Infantry Museum presentation MHG 6 January 2025

This gun is a memorial and a tribute to the men who fought at the battle of Medenine, during March 1943. 131 (Queen's) Brigade as part of the 8th Army was based near the small Tunisian

town of Medenine. The position of the Brigade were 1/5th Bn The Queen's on the left, 1/7th Queen's in the centre and 1/6th Queen's on the right.¹



The Medenine Gun - Now situated at Leros Barracks, Canterbury



¹ <https://www.queensroyalsurreys.org.uk/monuments-and-memorials/the-medenine-gun.html>



The Medenine Gun (up until 2014 was sited at the entrance to Howe Barracks with The Queen's Regiment Memorial opposite. The Memorial records the names of those men who lost their lives on active service, serving with The Queen's Regiment. (Both have now been re-sited at Leros Barracks, Canterbury, Kent.)

The Medenine gun is a 6 lb. QF antitank gun that was issued to the 1/7th Bn. of the Queen's Royal Regiment in early August 1942. This was two weeks before the battalion along with the rest of the 44th (Home Counties) Division, was called forward to join the 8th Army who were defending the El Alamein defence line.

After the El Alamein Battle the 131 (Queen's) Infantry Brigade left the 44th Infantry Division and joined the 7th Armoured Division as lorried infantry. This was often the lead element of the 8th Army in the pursuit of the Axis Forces across North Africa. Fighting a determined enemy in several battles until reaching Medenine which was just short of the Mareth Defence line which had been built by the French to protect their empire in the early 1930's. By February 24th The Queen's having travelled 1400 miles, were dug in.

Field Marshall Erwin Rommel the overall commander of the Africa Corps was not only unwell but his army was short on supplies. This was due to the RN submarines and the RAF's Desert Airforce. Rommel was also faced with quite a problem with the British 1st Army and Divisions of the US army approaching from the west. He was now fighting on two fronts.

With the help of intelligence from Ultra Montgomery knew exactly when the Axis forces commanded by Generals Giovanni Messe and General Heinz Ziegler would attack. They deployed two infantry divisions and three Panzer divisions which were both understrength, against the allied forces of two Infantry, one Armoured Division and an Armoured Brigade.

As the 8th Army had been in position for nearly two weeks, they had had time to establish a good defensive position and register target areas for likely avenues of attack. The enemy were guided to the "avenues" by dummy minefields including old food containers that looked like mine There was a shortage of real mines, but the deception worked.

On the 6 March the Axis attacked exactly as intelligence had anticipated. Except for a couple of places where they overran a platoon of the 1/5th Bn. of the Queen's and a couple of crews of antitank guns. the line held.

The attack lasted most of the day with probing attacks, but the infantry held. The 1/7th Queens had twenty-seven tanks in front of their position that had been knocked out by infantry and artillery perhaps for the first time in history this had happened.

When the factory that built the 6lb Antitank gun they purchased a replacement gun so that the Queen's Royal Regiment could keep Sergeant Andrew's gun as a memorial of what he and other members of the antitank platoon had done in North Africa.

The gun was returned by a RN destroyer when the battalion came home from Italy to prepare for D Day and until Stoughton Barracks in Guildford closed in 1959, it remained there. After a couple of further moves the gun is now in Leros Barracks in Canterbury the HQ of the 3rd Battalion the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment.

Battle report.

At about 0715 hours on six of March 43 a strong force of German tanks (Mk's 3, 4 and 4 Specials) appeared in the main track from the S.W. They were seen by the gun crew of no. 5 gun (Sergeant Andrews who knowing the A/Tk. layout to be mutually supporting allowed the

first 4 tanks to proceed along the track. Sergeant Andrews engaged the 5th tank (Mk. 3) and scored a direct hit with his first shot which stop the tank, he then put 4 more shots into the tank to ensure a “kill” and the crew then “bailed out”.

He then switched to the tank following a Mk. 4 and with about six shots put it out of action the crew also bailed out. The other tanks then turned South and made for a Wadi at approximate 618840. One of the leading tanks had meanwhile been engaged by no. 8 gun (Sergeant Vincent G.) and this tank and another then moved into a hull down position. Immediately opposite Sergeant Andrews gun and proceeded to fire on no. 5 gun and “A” Coy Sergeant Andrews took up the challenge and fired several shots at them causing one to move away. One presented only a small target. The parapet of Sergeant Andrews pit was smashed at this stage and he ordered the crew to take cover and continued to load and fire the gun himself.

Hits were scored on and around the turret and this eventually had the effect of moving the tank from its hull down position. The other tank appeared to be making for the main Wadi by “A” Coy and a hit was scored on this tank which afterwards retired behind cover and probably disabled. Sergeant Andrews had other small targets during the day and prevented the enemy from entering the main body into “A” Coy area. He fired several shots at the second tank he disabled during the morning in the hope of setting it on fire but was unsuccessful. In all he fired 65 rounds. 6 pounder 7 cwt A.F. shot during the day.

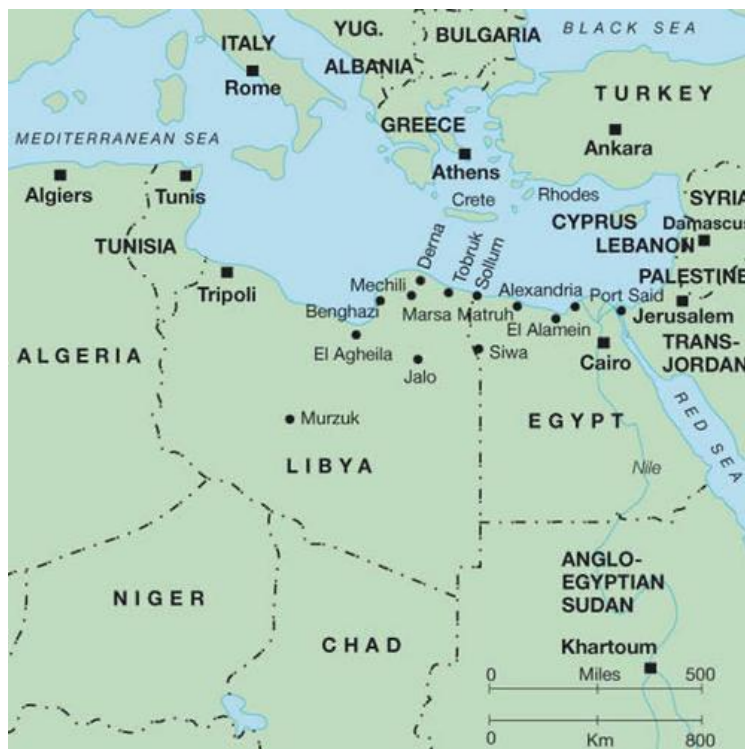
The remaining tanks having been driven South by the effective fire of Sergeant Andrews gun then entered the wadi (at approximate 620845 in which no. 7 gun (Sergeant Crangle) was sighted.

He engaged the first tank (Mk. 3) at about 500x and disabled it. Subsequently a force of 6 tanks. entered the wadi in a group from various directions and he engaged them at very short-range putting at least three of them out of action. One tank at this stage knocked out a 6-pounder gun of 1/6th Queen’s which was covering the South end of the Wadi.

Sergeant Crangle continued to engage the other tanks who fired on the gun with tank A.P. and S.A. fire which riddled the gun shield in over 20 places until a direct hit on the reciprocator put the gun out of action. Meanwhile the Bren gunner had been keeping the tank commanders. from obtaining observation from their turrets. After the gun had been knocked out Sergeant Crangle and his crew fixed bayonets and three tanks approached the protecting Infantry (a Pln. of “B” Coy 1/6th Queen’s) who taken prisoners. The tanks then “winkled out” Sergeant Crangle and his crew and took them prisoner at about 1500 hrs. At about 1900 hrs the enemy were endeavouring to recover their tanks in this Wadi about 500x from Sergeant Crangle’s gun site. Some were “brewed up” by the enemy and some had tracks blown off on the minefield.

Officer, Typewriter, Desert Military Bureaucracy

Robert Bartlett – Ten Minute Slot



The area of operations for the LRDG was the size of India.

Early Operations LRDG August - November 1941

Before an operation could be mounted orders flowed down to the men on the ground from,

1. LRDG HQ under orders from GHQ Middle East, HQ Western Desert Force (Later 8th Army)
2. Filter down to OC 'A' Squadron at Kufra, Cyrenaica. Squadron Commanders set down strategy for coming patrols with the OC of the patrol, normally a captain, developing and publishing a secret operation order – fully typed with numbered copies.
3. Consider below patrol from Operation Order 9. Captain Hunter Royal Scots Fusiliers, 1 November 1941 – recce Bir Hacheim Bir Gubi – detailed tactical response into operation order
4. Op Order signed off by LRDG A Squadron – Captain Steele NZEF

Specialists within the Group

Attached to the LRDG were a range of specialist troops all of which had to be volunteers , selected trained and cared for!

LRD Group November 1940 Group HQ with 2 squadrons each of three fighting patrols
Total 271 men.

Include Adjutant and QM Captain, IO and Topographical Captain, Transport Officer Lt.

Attached total 27

Royal Signals Lt., sergeant, 2 corporal operators, 1 installation mechanic, 14 operators

RAOC Armourer 1, RAMC MO 1, Nursing orderlies 6

Fitters RAOC 11, draughtsman RE 1, Driver mechanics 9, clerks RASC 2. Total 22

Navigators 12, Gun Numbers 12, Cooks 2, storemen 5, Drivers I.C. 115, General Duty 42

Total 189

February 1942 total LRDG **manpower 240** with additional cook, navigator, gun numbers 5, personnel for low grade cyphers 2, **officer's mess servant.**

What follows are copies of the Secret operation order typed in a tent at Siwa Oasis setting out a task for a part of the LRDG. (From the Bagnold Papers at held in the archives at Churchill College, Cambridge)

2. OBJECTS:

To reconnoitre the area to the SOUTH of BIR HACHIEH and BIR EL GUBI and ascertain:

- (a) Nature of enemy activity.
- (b) Number and type of vehicles.
- (c) Type of armament.

3. METHOD

Take 4 trucks as follows:

A PARTY: O.C. Capt. Hunter.
6 O.R.'s
2 30 cwts.

B PARTY: O.C. 2/Lt. Croucher
6 O.R.'s
2 30 cwts.

Two parties leave Siwa November 1 for JARABUB Continue together up the MASRAB EL GEBEL to track junction (Map Ref. 384328)

A Party A carry out recon in the area South of BIR HACHIEH

B Party Carry out recon in area south of BIR EL GUBI.

4. ADMINISTRATION.

Both parties will be rationed for 7 days; Water for 7 days; Gas for 400 miles. Usual armaments except that R. 8 will carry 1 A/T Rifle.
R. 10 & R. 4 will carry Sun compasses; ~~Many~~ Verrey Pistols, 6 red and 6 green cartridges; Signal flags.

5. COMMUNICATIONS:

W/T silence will be observed, but Sqdn. Station will maintain C.W. from 1600 hours on Nov. 2 Frequency: to Nov. 5 : 6340. K.C.
from 2400 hrs Nov 5/6 6420 k.c

2. OBJECTS:

To reconnoitre the area to the SOUTH of BIR HACHIEH and BIR EL GUBI and ascertain:

- (a) Nature of enemy activity.
- (b) Number and type of vehicles.
- (c) Type of armament.

3. METHOD

Take 4 trucks as follows:

A PARTY: O.C. Capt. Hunter.
6 O.R.'s
2 30 cwts.

B PARTY: O.C. 2/Lt. Croucher
6 O.R.'s
2 30 cwts.

Two parties leave Siwa November 1 for JARABUB Continue together up the MASRAB EL GEBEL to track junction (Map Ref. 384328)

A Party A carry out recon in the area South of BIR HACHIEH

B Party Carry out recon in area south of BIR EL GUBI.

4. ADMINISTRATION.

Both parties will be rationed for 7 days; Water for 7 days; Gas for 400 miles. Usual armaments except that R. 8 will carry 1 A/T Rifle.
R. 10 & R. 4 will carry Sun compasses; ~~Many~~ Verrey Pistols, 6 red and 6 green cartridges; Signal flags.

5. COMMUNICATIONS:

W/T silence will be observed, but Sqdn. Station will maintain C.W. from 1600 hours on Nov. 2 Frequency: to Nov. 5 : 6340. K.C.
from 2400 hrs Nov 5/6 6420 k.c

Call Signals: Patrol "A" Sq. H.Q.
FPO PRT
FBO PTL

L.R.D.G. 1 Stencil will be used

Key Sentences: "PRINCE FAROUK HOTEL"

Procedure: Commercial

Figure Key.	0:KP	5:JZ
	1:LA	6:IN
	2:PV	7:OO
	3:QY	8:HR
	4:EC	9:UE

H. Stanc

Major
2x "A" Sq. L.R.D.

- Copies to:
1. Oc. Patrol
 2. } Lt. Prinsengast
 3. } Lt. Prinsengast
 4. } Wm. King
 5. } Wm. King
 6. Fa.

N.B. Party must keep to WEST
of 42 grid line.

Preliminary Patrol Report.

4.11.41.

OBJECT.

The original object of the patrol was that two parties should be formed, one of which was to recon the area BIR HACHEIM and the other the area BIR EL GOBI. Soon after leaving GIARUBUB however one of the four trucks had mechanical trouble, and the fitter advised it should go home.

It was therefore deemed advisable that the patrol should remain one, and gain as much information about both places as it could.

2 EVENTS.

A latish start, about 0900 hrs was made on the first day, and camp was made without incident at HATIET EL ETLA.

Starting at 0830 next day the patrol reached a point S.W. of BIR HACHEIM and about 12 miles away by 1200 hrs. It was decided to lie up there until 1530 hrs, to take advantage of dusk if a quick getaway should be needed.

lie up there until 1900 hrs, to take advantage of the moonlight. A getaway should be needed.

Unfortunately the sun never came out and the course steered to BIR HACHEIM with the prismatic proved inaccurate. At about 1700 hrs we reached a large area marked out by flags, which it is presumed was the landing ground. This was reced, and though tracks were numerous there was only one fresh track of a tracked vehicle, and that looked like a light tank. There was no aeroplane on the aerodrome. It was getting dusk, so we proceeded S.E. down some M.C. tracks when we suddenly came on a party of five Italians and five M.C.s. We took the personnel and what equipment we could on the truck. We destroyed the M.C.s. One of the men was a wireless operator, and we took his wireless. We then made off and by a roundabout route, as we thought the operator had probably broadcasted a message.

At approx 0230 hrs we suddenly met some objects which appeared to be armoured cars, but possibly they were K.D.G. as we thought they were facing north. They were stationary. We then drove direct to GIARUBUB.

One prisoner and the papers from the Italian party are being flown to MERSA MATRUH, the others will follow by road.

(Sgnd) A.D. Hunter Capt.,
i/c Patrol (composite)
L.R.D.G.

+ About halfway between BIR HACHEIM and HATET EL ETIA.

SECRET.
Copy No.
Date 5/11/41.

"A" Squadron, L.R.D.G.

RECCE REPORT NO. 9.

i/c Recce Capt A.D.N. Hunter.
Patrol "R" and "T", composite half patrol.
of maps CYRENAICA 1/500,000
 sheets 14 and 15.

of L.R.D.G. Operation Instruction No. 9.

General A recce of the area around BIR HACHEIM was carried out between 1/11/41 and 4/11/41.

Object To reconnoitre the area South of BIR HACHEIM and BIR GUBI and ascertain :-

- (a) The nature of enemy activity.
- (b) The number and type of vehicles.
- (c) Type of armament.

METHOD. One party composed as follows left SIWA on 1.11.41
O.C. Capt Hunter.
 2/Lt C.H. Croucher.
 13 O.R.'s.
 4 30-cwt trucks

The original idea was that the party should split in half and two trucks under Capt Hunter recce BIR HACHEIM while two trucks under 2/Lt Croucher made a recce of BIR EL GUBBI. However, soon after leaving JIARUBUB the king pin of the back spring of one of the trucks broke, and it was thought advisable to send it home. It was decided to keep the three remaining trucks in one party to recce BIR HACHEIM and if no information could be obtained there to continue to BIR EL GUBI.

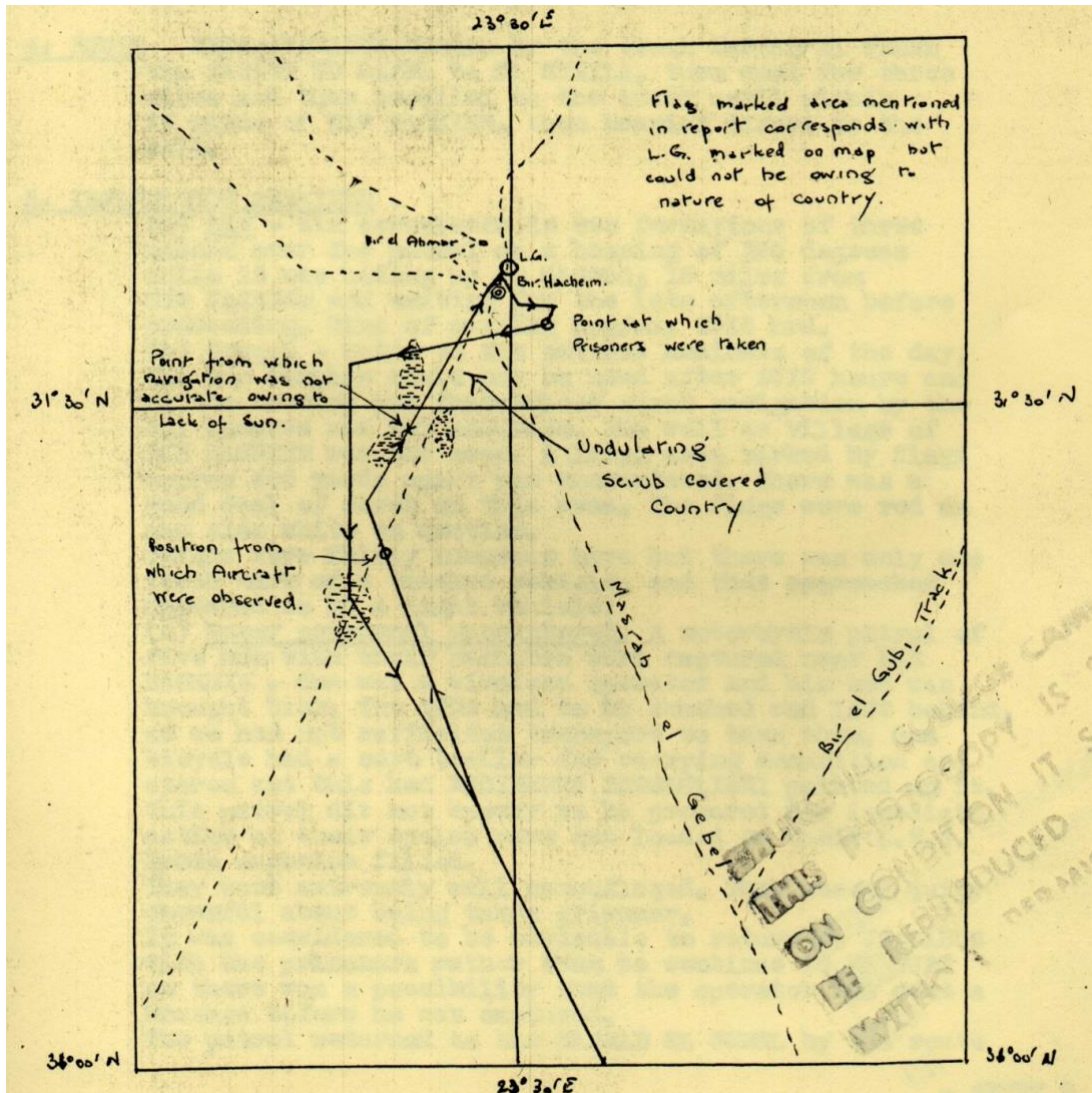
ROUTE SIWA JIARUBUB thence by the track MASRAB EL GEBEL via SANIET ED DAFFA to EL ETEILA, turn west for three miles and then parallel to the track until within 15 miles of BIR HACHEIM, then bearing direct to the well.

the attached sketch map, and continued to JIARABUB. At approx point 396259 at 0245 hrs three armoured cars were sighted about 200 yards from our trucks. They were stationary and we moved away from them without incident. It is thought that they might have been BRITISH as they appeared to be facing north but it was difficult to see in the dark.

DISPOSAL OF PRISONERS.

The N.C.O. of the captured party was sent by air from JIARABUB to 8th Army Headquarters. All documents also went by this route. The remaining prisoners (four) were taken to SIWA for onward transmission by road to 8th Army Headquarters. These have been interrogated - result of interrogation attached as Appendix A.

(Sd) D.G.STEELE Major
 "A" Sqn L.R.D.G.



In addition to the pre-patrol paperwork there was significant post patrol reporting

Preliminary patrol report – object of patrol and events by patrol commander

Full reconnaissance report by patrol commander

Report on interrogation of prisoners listing interrogators and details of prisoners

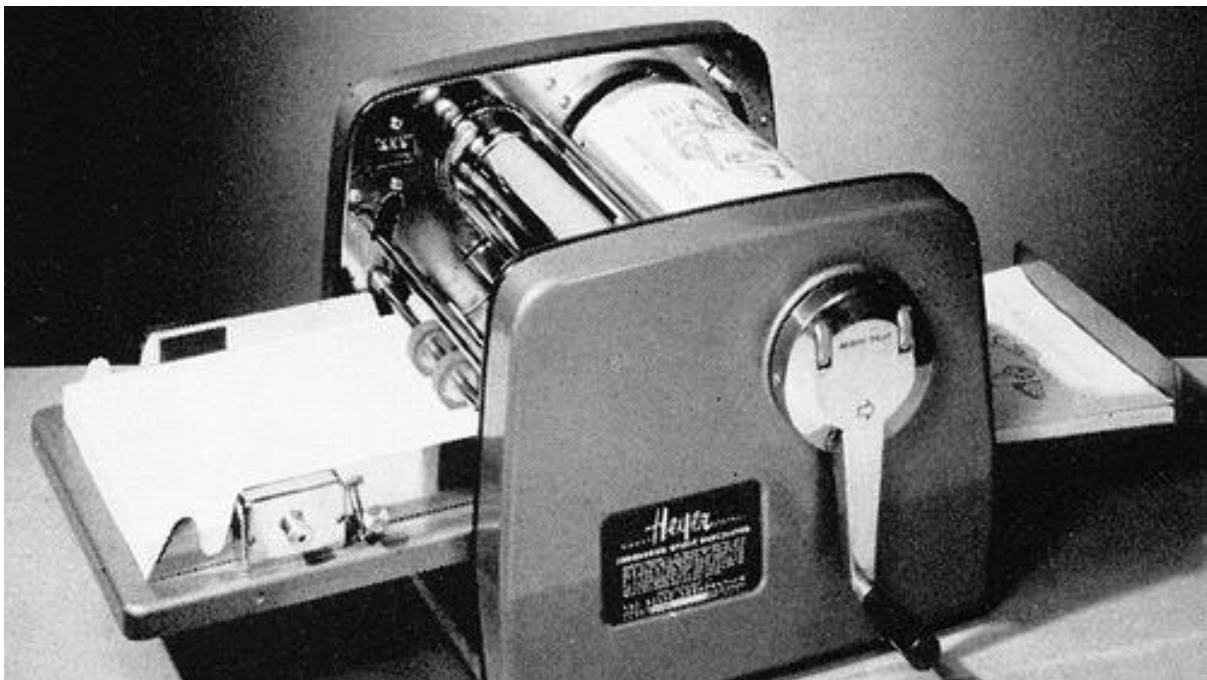
Sketch map of recce area to be added to map surveyors at HQ – Royal Engineers

Road Watch – list of vehicle types observed

War Diary.

No doubt reports re-supplying and reconditioning of fuel, ammunition, food, mechanical issues, tyres, water, clothing including sandals and headgear all before next patrol

The cyclostyle had been in use since before the First World War. It is likely that such a piece of equipment was part of the Adjutant's stores.



Was this a critical part of the equipment of an operation LRDG Squadron?

Supporting the Teeth!

Robert Bartlett AI from <https://chatgpt.com/>

Army formation Second World War

For some who attend the MHIG meetings the organisational terminology remains a mystery. The following may help!

Battalion x3 = Brigade x3 = Division

Infantry Division 1939 – 1940 Headquarters

Intelligence Corps, Headquarters

Three Infantry Brigades

Three Infantry Brigade Headquarter Ground Defence Platoons

Nine Infantry Battalions

Divisional Cavalry Regiment Headquarters

Divisional Royal Artillery three Field Regiments Anti-Tank Regiment

Headquarter Divisional Royal Engineers Field Park Company

Three Field Companies Divisional Signals

Machine Gun Battalion (attached from Corps Troops)

Headquarter Divisional Royal Army Service Corps

Divisional Ammunition Company

Divisional Petrol Company

Divisional Supply Column

Three Field Ambulances

Field Hygiene Section

Divisional Provost Company

Divisional Postal Unit

Mobile Bath Unit

Total All Ranks = 13,863

Infantry Corps

This is a tactical formation made up of two or three divisions and commanded by a lieutenant-general. Corps are normally identified by Roman numerals. During the First World War the British Army grew to encompass 22 army corps.

Army

An army is a formation consisting of two or more corps. They are commanded by a general or a field marshal. An army in the Second World War numbered about 150,000 soldiers. Eleven British armies were formed during the First World War. More than one army operating together is known as an army group

The "administrative support tail" of the British Army during the Second World War refers to the logistical and administrative infrastructure responsible for ensuring the effective operation of combat units. This support system was vital to the functioning of the armed forces and included the following key elements:

Logistics, Support and Supply Chains

1. Royal Army Service Corps (RASC)

The **RASC** was primarily concerned with the transport and supply side of military logistics. Its primary roles included:

- **Transport:** The RASC was responsible for the movement of troops, equipment, and supplies across the battlefield. This included the operation of transport vehicles (such as trucks and lorries) for both strategic and tactical supply lines.
- **Supply of Food and Water:** The corps ensured that frontline units received essential supplies, including food, water, fuel, and ammunition.
- **Postal Services:** The RASC ran the army's postal service, ensuring that mail could be delivered to and from the front lines.
- **Supply Chain Management:** The corps was responsible for setting up and maintaining the complex supply chains needed to keep the army operational in diverse theatres of war, including Europe, North Africa, and the Pacific.
- **Mechanical Transport:** In addition to transporting supplies, the RASC operated vehicle maintenance units that kept motorized transport running smoothly.

The RASC was very much a **logistical arm**, ensuring the smooth running of supply operations and the transportation of vital resources.

2. Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC)

The **RAOC** had a more specialized role related to the **supply, maintenance, and storage of military equipment**, particularly munitions and weapons. The RAOC's responsibilities included:

- **Weapons and Ammunition Supply:** The RAOC was responsible for the provision, maintenance, and storage of weapons and ammunition, ensuring that units were properly equipped with firearms, artillery, and other ordnance.

- **Maintenance and Repairs:** The RAOC managed the repair of weapons, vehicles, and equipment that required servicing and repair. This included everything from small arms to large artillery pieces and even vehicles.
- **Stores and Equipment Management:** The RAOC managed the military's inventories of supplies, ranging from small arms and explosives to technical equipment such as communications gear, medical supplies, and field engineering tools.
- **Depots and Distribution:** The RAOC oversaw large depots that stored and distributed equipment and supplies. They were also responsible for ensuring the correct stockpiling of ammunition and the safe handling of explosives.
- **Engineering Stores:** The RAOC also played a significant role in supporting engineering units, providing them with tools and equipment for construction, fortifications, and demolitions.

While the RASC was focused on the movement and provision of consumables (food, fuel, etc.), the RAOC was concerned with the more technical side of military logistics, ensuring that the army's weapons, ammunition, and other specialized equipment were in good working order and available when needed.

Key Differences in Roles:

- **RASC:** Focused on the **transportation of supplies** (including food, fuel, and vehicles) and running the logistics of supply chains.
- **RAOC:** Concentrated on the **maintenance, supply, and storage** of munitions, weapons, and specialized military equipment.

Both corps played indispensable roles in the success of military operations during WWII, but they had distinct areas of responsibility that, together, ensured that the British Army had the materials and equipment it needed to fight effectively.

3. **Royal Engineers:** Maintained infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and water supply systems. Cartography.
4. **Royal Pioneer Corps** used for light engineering tasks. Formed 1939. Pioneer units performed a wide variety of tasks in all theatres of war. They were used for full infantry, mine clearance, guarding bases, laying prefabricated track on beaches, and effecting various logistical operations. With the Royal Engineers they constructed airfields and roads and erected bridges; they constructed the Mulberry Harbour and laid the Pipe Line Under the Ocean (PLUTO).
5. **Reconnaissance Corps (RC)** was established in January 1941. Its units were tasked with gathering tactical information for infantry divisions, scouting ahead and screening the flanks of these formations as they advanced. The Corps was equipped with Bren Carriers, armoured cars, light tanks, jeeps and lorries. 1946 became Royal Armoured Corps.
6. **Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME):** Repaired and maintained vehicles, machinery, and equipment. Coordination of convoys and motor pools for troop and supply movement.

Medical and “Well Being” Support

Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC): Provided medical care, evacuation of casualties, and hospital services. Field hospitals and casualty clearing stations were set up close to combat zones to stabilize and treat the wounded. Field hospitals and casualty clearing stations were set up close to combat zones to stabilize and treat the wounded.

Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps During the Second World War (1939-45), QAIMNS women were called upon again, serving from Iceland to the Pacific. In 1939, nurses were sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force. After Hitler's soldiers invaded Holland, Belgium and France in May 1940, British troops withdrew, including members of the QAIMNS.

Royal Army Dental Corps

Royal Army Physical Training Corps established 1860 to maintain physical fitness

Royal Army Chaplains' Department Formed in 1796, this corps provides religious and pastoral support to soldiers. Its officers, all ordained priests, have taken part in most British Army deployments

4. Administrative Unit Royal Army Pay Corps

- a. Managed payroll, personnel records, and recruitment. During the Second World War members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service were drafted into the corps to assist its staff.

6. Specialized Support Services

Royal Corps of Signals: Ensured efficient communication between units, command centres, and support services.

Intelligence Corps. Formed in 1914. Responsible for collecting, analysing and disseminating military intelligence and for counterintelligence and security.

Army Catering Corps: Provided meals for troops, including those in forward areas.

Royal Engineers: Postal services ensured the delivery of mail to boost morale.

Small Arms School Corps Established 1853 provide instruction

Corps of Royal Military Police

Military Provost Staff Corps Established in 1901, this unit was responsible for running the British Army's prisons and detention centres.

Army Legal Corps In 1923, a Military Department was formed within the Office of the Judge Advocate General to train and advise officers in legal matters. It was still customary at this time for soldiers to be defended by regimental officers and they rarely received legal advice. The Second World War saw similar pressures from mass conscription. A separate branch of the Military Department was introduced during the conflict to deal with the prosecution of war crimes.

Auxiliary Territorial Service Formed in 1938, the Auxiliary Territorial Service tasked women with a range of vital roles during the Second World War. It was disbanded in 1949, when the remainder of its troops transferred to the newly formed Women's Royal Army Corps.

Royal Army Veterinary Corps During the Second World War members of the corps served in Palestine, Syria, East Africa, Greece, Italy and Burma. The animals they cared for ranged from horses and mules, in Europe and the Middle East, to elephants and bullocks, in the Far East. The Remount Service was merged with the RAVC in 1942. That same year, the corps was put in charge of managing the Army's dogs.

7. Challenges and Innovations increase support role:

- a. **Scale of Operations:** Supporting a global war effort required complex coordination across Europe, North Africa, and Asia.
- b. **Technological Adaptations:** Innovations like improved supply chain methods and portable infrastructure helped enhance efficiency.
- c. **Resource Constraints:** The need to optimize resources while dealing with enemy interference, such as supply route attacks.

The British Army's ability to maintain a robust administrative support tail was a key factor in sustaining prolonged campaigns and ensuring operational success during the Second World War.

Combat Ratios Versus Support

In the British Army during the Second World War, as in many other armies, the proportion of personnel assigned to combat (front-line troops) versus support and administrative roles (support echelons) reflected the complexity of modern warfare. The ratio of combat troops to support personnel varied depending on the campaign, theatre, and type of unit, but support personnel typically outnumbered combat troops by a significant margin.

1. Typical Ratios:

- In many British and Allied armies during the Second World War, the ratio of combat to support troops was approximately **1:2 to 1:3**, meaning for every soldier in a front-line role, there were two or three in support roles.
- For mechanized or heavily logistical forces, the support ratio could be even higher, sometimes reaching **1:4**.

2. Front-Line Combat Troops:

- Infantry, artillery crews, tank crews, reconnaissance units, and special forces formed the "teeth" of the army.
- These units directly engaged with the enemy and often made up about **30-40%** of the total personnel in a given formation.

3. Support Echelons:

- The remaining **60-70%** were in roles supporting combat effectiveness. These included logistics, medical services, maintenance, engineering, and administration. Divisional and Corps support units (e.g., Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Army Ordnance Corps) often had significantly more personnel than the combat units they supported.

Factors Influencing Proportions

Type of Operation:

In static warfare or defence (e.g., Normandy post-invasion), the ratio often leaned more heavily toward support personnel to sustain prolonged supply needs. In fast-moving campaigns (e.g., North Africa), mobile units required higher proportions of logistical and transport support.

Theatre of War: In **Europe**, extensive infrastructure meant supply chains could operate relatively efficiently, but personnel were still needed for depot management, transportation, and bridging. In more remote theatres like **Burma**, the logistical tail grew due to challenges like jungle terrain, lack of infrastructure, and the need for air supply.

Technological and Equipment Needs:

Mechanization significantly increased the need for maintenance and fuel supply, handled by REME and the RASC. Armoured and artillery-heavy units required large quantities of ammunition and the infrastructure to deliver and distribute it.

The distinction between "front-line" and "support" was not absolute, as support units often came under fire or were directly involved in maintaining operational tempo. This interdependence of combat and support personnel was a hallmark of the British Army's efficiency in modern, large-scale warfare.

Divisional Composition Teeth v Tail (British Army, WWII)

A British infantry division in World War II typically had about **17,000–20,000 personnel**:

1. Front-Line Troops ("Teeth"):

- **Infantry Battalions:** 10,000 personnel (approximately 55-60% of the division).
- **Artillery Regiments:** 2,500 personnel.
- **Reconnaissance and Engineer Units :** 1,000 personnel.

Total Combat Personnel: 13,500 (roughly 65-70% of divisional strength).

2. Support Troops ("Tail"):

- **Supply and Transport (RASC):** 1,200 personnel.
- **Medical Services (RAMC):** 800 personnel.
- **Signal Corps (Communications):** 600 personnel.
- **Administrative and Ordnance Support:** 2,000 personnel.

Total Support Personnel: 6,000–7,000 (roughly 30-35% of divisional strength).

Corps and Army-Level Support

At higher levels, the proportion of support troops increased significantly, as corps and army commands included specialized units responsible for logistics, transportation, and other essential services:

- These higher-echelon units often added **2-3 support personnel for every combat soldier** in the field.

British Army Totals (Global Theatre)

By 1945, the British Army fielded approximately **2.9 million personnel** across all theatres:

- About **1 million** were directly involved in front-line roles or combat operations.
- About **1.9 million** served in support and administrative capacities, including logistics, medical, and engineering services.

This gives a global ratio of roughly **1 combat soldier to 2 support troops**.

Notable Campaign-Specific Examples

1. **North Africa (1942-1943):**
 - The Eighth Army had around **230,000 troops**, of which about **70,000-80,000** were in combat roles (roughly 1:2.5 combat to support ratio).
2. **Northwest Europe (1944-1945):**
 - In the Normandy campaign, British and Canadian forces deployed approximately **1.1 million troops**:
 - **350,000** combat troops.
 - **750,000** in support roles.
 - Ratio: 1:2.1 combat to support.
3. **Burma Campaign:**
 - Logistical needs were even greater due to the remote jungle environment. The proportion of support troops could reach **1:3 or higher** due to the reliance on air supply, engineering efforts, and extended supply chains.

What constituted essential

During the Second World War, the determination of what constituted essential clothing, equipment, and materiel for British troops involved multiple agencies and departments within the British government and armed forces. The process was a collaborative effort, balancing operational needs, logistical feasibility, and material availability.

Key Authorities Involved

1. **War Office:**
 - The War Office was the central government body responsible for managing the British Army. It oversaw the general requirements for troops' clothing and equipment based on recommendations from commanders and staff.
2. **Army Council:**

- The Army Council, a high-level body within the War Office, was responsible for policy decisions, including the approval of standards for military equipment and uniforms.
- 3. **Quartermaster-General (QMG):**
 - The QMG's department within the War Office handled logistical planning, including the procurement and distribution of clothing and equipment.
 - The QMG worked closely with operational commands to ensure that troops had the necessary items for specific campaigns or environments.
- 4. **Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC):**
 - The RAOC played a crucial role in implementing decisions, procuring, storing, and distributing clothing and equipment to troops worldwide.
- 5. **Ministry of Supply:**
 - Created in 1939, this ministry coordinated the production and procurement of military equipment, including uniforms, boots, and other essentials.
 - It worked closely with manufacturers and managed rationing and material allocation.

Consultation and Decision-Making Process

1. **Input from Field Commands:**
 - Commanders in the field provided feedback on the performance and adequacy of issued clothing and equipment under various conditions.
 - For example, the North African campaign led to the development of lighter uniforms and desert boots, while winter operations in Europe emphasized insulated clothing.
2. **Research and Testing:**
 - New designs and materials were developed and tested by specialized military research units and manufacturers.
 - Trials were conducted to ensure durability, functionality, and comfort.
3. **Adaptation to Specific Needs:**
 - As the war progressed, specific needs arose based on the theatre of operations. Examples include:
 - Tropical uniforms for the Burma campaign.
 - Camouflaged clothing for snipers and reconnaissance units.
 - Waterproof clothing for amphibious operations, such as the D-Day landings.
4. **Feedback from Troops:**
 - Soldiers' feedback on the adequacy of their gear influenced revisions and updates.
 - Examples include adjustments to boots to prevent trench foot and modifications to webbing equipment for better weight distribution.

Key Items Determined as Essential

- **Uniforms:**
 - Battle Dress (introduced in 1937): A practical woollen uniform for temperate climates.
 - Specialized uniforms for different climates (e.g., khaki drill for hot weather, insulated suits for cold conditions).
- **Boots and Footwear:**
 - Sturdy leather boots were essential, with variations for different terrains and climates.
- **Personal Equipment:**
 - Webbing sets (pouches and belts) for carrying ammunition, tools, and rations.
 - Helmets for head protection (e.g., the Mark II steel helmet).
- **Shelter and Bedding:**
 - Ground sheets, sleeping bags, and bivouacs for field use.
- **Specialized Equipment:**
 - Gas masks, entrenching tools, and waterproof gear were deemed essential in various theatres.

Challenges in Decision-Making

- **Material Shortages:**
 - Rationing of resources such as wool, leather, and rubber influenced the design and availability of equipment.
- **Balancing Needs Across Theaters:**
 - The diverse climates and operational demands of the war made it challenging to standardize equipment for all troops.
- **Evolving Technology:**
 - The rapid development of weapons and tactics often required adjustments to existing equipment (e.g., webbing redesigned for carrying additional ammunition).

This collaborative and adaptive process ensured that British troops were reasonably well-equipped, even under the immense logistical pressures of a global war. Would you like details about specific items, such as the design of uniforms or equipment innovations?

Second World War mobile bath units – somebody must do it!

ChatGPT

Mobile bath units were an essential part of maintaining hygiene and morale for soldiers during the Second World War. These units were portable facilities designed to provide soldiers with opportunities to bathe, often under challenging conditions in combat zones. Here's an overview of their usage and significance:

Design and Operation

1. **Portability:** Mobile bath units were typically truck-mounted or set up in tents. They could be transported quickly to forward operating areas.
2. **Components:** Units often included water heaters, portable showers, and waste disposal systems. Some utilized field stoves or boilers to heat water.
3. **Water Supply:** Water was sourced from nearby rivers, lakes, or transported in large tankers. Purification systems were sometimes included.
4. **Setup:** Units could accommodate multiple soldiers at once, using makeshift cubicles for privacy and efficiency.

Importance

1. **Health and Hygiene:** Regular bathing reduced the risk of skin infections, lice infestations, and diseases like trench foot.
2. **Morale Boost:** A warm shower was a significant morale booster for troops enduring harsh conditions.
3. **Sanitation in the Field:** These units often worked in tandem with laundry services, allowing soldiers to clean both themselves and their uniforms.

Allied and Axis Usage

- The **Allied forces**, particularly the British, Americans, and Soviets, utilized mobile bath units extensively, often incorporating them into logistical operations.
- **German forces** also deployed similar units, emphasizing hygiene to combat lice and prevent typhus outbreaks.

Challenges

- **Logistical Constraints:** Moving bath units close to the front lines was challenging, especially in rugged terrain or under enemy fire.
- **Water Scarcity:** Ensuring a sufficient water supply was a constant logistical hurdle.
- **Weather Conditions:** Freezing temperatures could complicate operations, requiring additional equipment to prevent water from freezing.

Historical Impact

The deployment of mobile bath units showcased the importance of logistics and soldier welfare during wartime. They contributed significantly to the overall combat readiness of troops by addressing physical and psychological needs.

ChatGPT

During the Second World War, the responsibility for mobile bath units in the British Army fell primarily under the **Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC)** and, later in the war, the **Royal Army Service Corps (RASC)** in collaboration with other logistical and support units. Here's how these responsibilities were managed:

Role of the RAOC

- **Organization and Operation:** The RAOC played a central role in logistics, which included the establishment and maintenance of hygiene facilities such as mobile bath units.
- **Personnel:** Bath units were staffed by soldiers trained in operating the necessary equipment, maintaining water supplies, and ensuring efficient throughput for large numbers of troops.

Collaboration with Other Units

- **Royal Engineers (RE):** Often assisted in sourcing and setting up water supplies, including purification systems and plumbing for bath units.
- **Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC):** Provided oversight to ensure sanitation and health standards were maintained, particularly in preventing disease outbreaks.
- **Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS):** In some cases, members of the ATS supported logistics and administrative tasks related to bath units, especially in rear areas.

Operational Context

- **Deployment:** Mobile bath units were often attached to field hospitals, rest areas, or supply depots. They could also be sent closer to the front lines when operational conditions allowed.
- **Coordination:** The units were part of a broader network of logistical support that included field kitchens, laundry units, and medical facilities.

Legacy

The British Army's efficient management of hygiene through dedicated bath units contributed significantly to maintaining soldier health and morale. The coordination between RAOC, RASC, and supporting units demonstrated the importance of integrated logistics in modern warfare.

ChatGPT

The British Army's bath units during the Second World War were an essential part of maintaining hygiene and morale, particularly for troops stationed in challenging environments such as the North African desert, Italian campaign, and the Western European theatre. Here are some specific details about their operation:

1. Mobile Bath Units in the North African Campaign

- **Challenges:**
 - Water scarcity in the desert made it difficult to operate bath units. Engineers often drilled wells or transported water over long distances.
 - The hot and dusty environment heightened the need for personal hygiene to prevent skin infections and diseases.
- **Operation:**
 - The RAOC operated mobile bath units using truck-mounted systems. Soldiers could wash and clean their uniforms in a single visit.
 - Water recycling systems were sometimes employed to conserve water.

2. Italian Campaign

- **Terrain and Weather:**
 - The hilly and wet terrain of Italy presented logistical challenges for setting up bath units.
 - During winter, mobile bath units were adapted with heated water systems to provide warm showers.
- **Coordination:**
 - Units often worked with the Royal Engineers to establish water supplies from rivers and streams.
 - Efforts were made to rotate units regularly through rest areas where bath facilities were set up.

3. Western Europe – Post D-Day Operations

- **Scale of Operations:**
 - After the D-Day landings, the British Army's logistical operations expanded significantly to support advancing troops. Mobile bath units followed the troops across France, Belgium, and into Germany.
- **Integration with Other Services:**
 - Bath units often operated alongside **laundry units**, enabling soldiers to clean their clothes while washing themselves.
 - Some units were located in liberated towns where static facilities could be temporarily set up using existing infrastructure.

4. Women's Auxiliary Bath Units

- **Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS):**
 - Female personnel from the ATS operated bath units for women serving in the ATS or other auxiliary services. These units were primarily stationed in rear areas but played an important role in maintaining hygiene for female soldiers.

5. Equipment and Setup

- **Standard Equipment:**
 - Mobile boilers, water tanks, and showerheads were mounted on lorries or trailers.
 - Field kitchens and tents were sometimes co-located to provide hot meals and shelter after bathing.
- **Capacity:**
 - A single bath unit could serve hundreds of troops per day, with soldiers rotating through in shifts.

Laundry Units

ChatGPT

Laundry units in the British Army during the Second World War were an integral part of maintaining soldier hygiene and operational efficiency. These units were responsible for cleaning uniforms, bedding, and other essential items, particularly in areas where troops faced challenging conditions. Below is a detailed overview of their organization, operation, and significance.

1. Organization and Responsibility

- **Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC):**
 - Laundry units were primarily under the RAOC, which was responsible for logistics, including the maintenance of clothing and textiles.
- **Royal Army Service Corps (RASC):**
 - Provided transportation and logistical support for laundry units, ensuring they had access to water, fuel, and other resources.
- **Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS):**
 - ATS personnel operated and staffed some laundry units, particularly those servicing hospitals or rear-area camps.

2. Deployment and Operation

- **Types of Units:**
 - **Mobile Laundry Units:** Truck-mounted facilities that could be transported close to the front lines or set up in forward operating bases.
 - **Static Laundry Units:** Larger, more permanent facilities in base camps or supply depots.
- **Operation:**
 - Laundry units used portable washing machines, boilers, drying equipment, and ironing facilities.
 - Water sources were typically rivers, wells, or transported in water tankers by the RASC.

- Laundry was tagged and processed systematically to ensure proper return to individual soldiers or units.
- **Capacity:**
 - A mobile laundry unit could process several hundred uniforms per day, depending on the size and resources available.

3. Challenges

- **Logistical Constraints:**
 - Access to clean water and fuel was a constant challenge, particularly in arid regions like North Africa or during rapid advances in Europe.
- **Contamination Risks:**
 - Ensuring the effective cleaning of clothing contaminated with lice, disease, or chemical agents was critical. Some laundry units were equipped with disinfection chambers.
- **Weather and Terrain:**
 - Harsh weather conditions, such as rain in Italy or freezing temperatures in northern Europe, impacted operations.

4. Significance

- **Health and Hygiene:**
 - Regular laundering reduced the spread of diseases such as typhus, which was often carried by lice.
- **Morale:**
 - Clean uniforms and bedding significantly boosted soldier morale, especially during long deployments.
- **Operational Efficiency:**
 - By ensuring soldiers had clean and serviceable clothing, laundry units contributed to combat readiness.

5. Deployment in Campaigns

- **North Africa:**
 - Laundry units often operated in tandem with bath units, using mobile setups to serve troops in remote desert locations.
- **Italy:**
 - The wet and muddy conditions of the Italian campaign made regular laundering crucial. Static facilities were set up in more permanent camps.
- **Northwest Europe:**
 - Following the D-Day landings, mobile laundry units moved with advancing forces, establishing facilities in liberated towns or near field hospitals.

6. Integration with Other Services

- **Bath Units:**
 - Laundry and bath units often operated together, allowing soldiers to wash both themselves and their uniforms in one visit.
- **Decontamination Units:**
 - In areas with a risk of chemical warfare, laundry units included decontamination processes to neutralize potential hazards.

Example of Equipment Used

- **Mobile Laundry Machines:**
 - Drum washers powered by portable generators or connected to vehicle engines.
 - Drying racks or heated tumblers.
- **Water Heating Systems:**
 - Boilers that could be fuelled by wood, coal, or petrol.

Historical Legacy

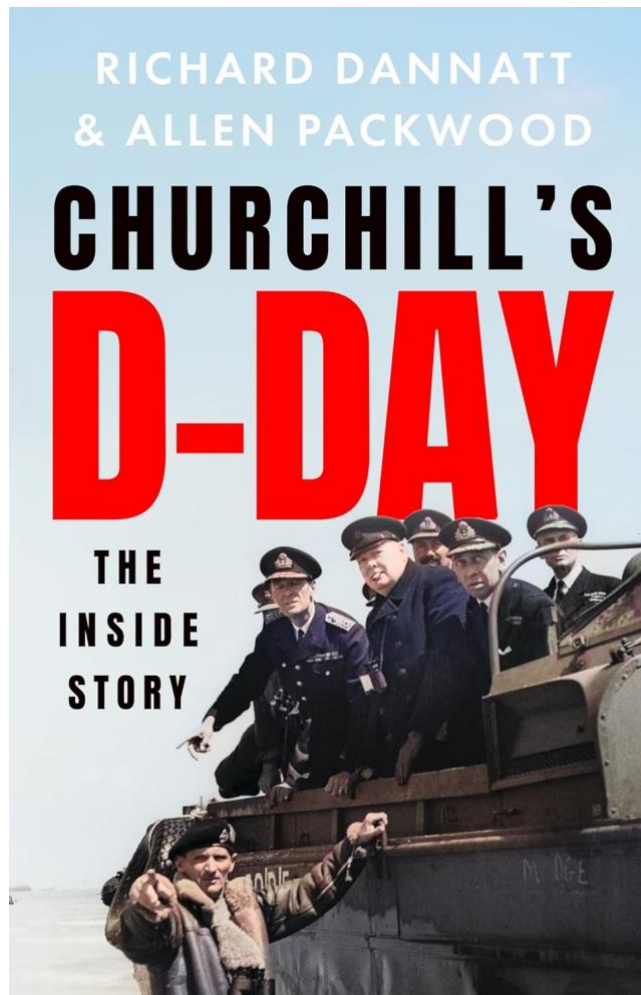
Laundry units demonstrated the critical role of logistics and soldier welfare in modern warfare. Their efficient operation minimized disease, maintained hygiene, and ensured that soldiers were better equipped to endure the rigors of combat.

Would you like specific examples of laundry units in action, their technical setup, or personal accounts from soldiers?

Summary Table

Level	Combat Troops	Support Troops	Ratio (Combat: Support)
Infantry Division	13,500	6,500	1:0.5
Corps/Army-Level Units	Varies	Increased	1:2–1:3
Global Totals (1945)	1 million	1.9 million	1:2

These figures illustrate how modern warfare's complexity required extensive support infrastructure to sustain combat effectiveness.



Available from all good bookshops

Waterstones

Marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day, this deeply insightful work from the author of *Victory to Defeat* chronicles the conception, planning and strategy of the pivotal military operation from Winston Churchill's viewpoint.

2024 marks both the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Churchill himself. This book brings together General Lord Dannatt, one of Britain's most respected contemporary military leaders, and former head of the British Army, with Allen Packwood, one of the world's foremost Churchill experts, the archivist responsible for the holdings at the landmark Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge. Together they take us through the decision-making for the planning and execution of D-Day.

Reproducing key documents and letters from the Churchill Papers and other collections, this book plunges us back in time and lets us witness events unfolding. It tells the inside story of the conception, planning and execution of the D-Day landings in a unique but authoritative way.

Operation Overlord, the liberation of France, which brought the Second World War to its final stages, began just after dawn on 6 June 1944. At the time, it was the largest

amphibious operation ever staged, and the road to victory led directly from the beaches to Berlin. Churchill was instrumental in its planning and execution. This book reveals Churchill's thinking and places his decisions in the wider historical context, showing he was instrumental in securing the success of D-Day, by making sure it occurred in the right way and at the right time.

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton

ISBN: 9781399727839

Number of pages: 368

MEDIA REVIEWS

A superb primer - and one of impeccable historical accuracy - on the events around D-Day. - Telegraph

Churchill's D-Day represents a remarkable and timely collaboration between General Lord Dannatt, the former Chief of the General Staff and Head of the British Army, and Allen Packwood, one of the most renowned experts on Churchill. Importantly with 2024 marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings they have brought together some remarkable material which adds much new light to the greatest Combined Operation of all time. Churchill was obviously deeply involved and heavily invested in the D-Day Operations from its conception through to its planning and execution. This is a fascinating book which re-examines events that liberated and thus shaped the future of Europe. - Lord Soames, Winston Churchill's grandson

As a subject of historical study, D-Day appears nearly close to being exhausted, save for the endless stream of inaccurate, stylised, but highly questionable movies and TV series that shows no sign of abating. It is invigorating, therefore, that Dannatt and Packwood have brought blockbuster flair to an enormously broad subject. The result is an engrossing delight, and it is immensely satisfying to know just how much more there is to explore about the motivation, circumstances, and challenges faced by someone as titanic and well known as Churchill on an even better-known day. Dannatt and Packwood have produced an account of Churchill's D-Day worthy of both the Great Man and the colossal event . . . Readers will greedily want more in the future from this superb writing partnership. - International Churchill Society