

After training I joined the HMS Princess Beatrix in July 1941. In September 1941 we sailed to West Africa and carried out convoy duties etc and returned to UK March 1942. Then in July to Bayonne (see transcriber's note at end) then Dieppe On October 26 1942 we sailed to North Africa

and were involved in the following operations:-

☐ North Africa 7.11.42

☐ Pantellaria 10.6.43

☐ Sicilly 10.7.43

☐ Scarletta (Sicilly) 16.8.43

☐ Salerno ( Italy) 9.9.43

☐ Carrigigino (North of Naples) 31.12.43

☐ Anzio 22.1.44

☐ South of France 15.8.44

His diary continues.....

1942

Mon 26 October Weigh anchor at 2200 hrs proceed to sea

Tues 27 October At sea north of Ireland

Wed 28 Heading west

Thu 29 Heading west

Fri 30 Heading west

Sat 31 Heading south

Sun 1 November Depth charges dropped

Mon 2 Nov Ship sunk SE America

Tue 3 Nov E Boat scare

Wed 4 Nov Ship sunk from S Convoy

Thu 5 Nov Heading east

Fri 6 Nov Pass through Gib (Gibraltar) 2200 hrs

Sat 7 Nov Convoy split up 2000 hrs. 2330 hrs stop engines east of Wahran

Boats crews close up for lowering, delayed for 10 minutes as

French convoy is passing our bows heading towards south of France.

Sun 8 Nov 0030 hrs boats lowered and proceed to the beaches. Land at 0130 no

opposition return to other ships to re embark more troops and stores and so on for the next few days. No casualties but lose two boats.

11 Nov Weigh anchor 2200 hrs and sail to Algiers

12 Nov Arrive Algiers 1235 hrs

13 Nov Sail at 1800 hrs to Bone

14 Nov Arrive Bone 0700 hrs, sail again at 1100 hrs and arrive back at Algiers at midnight - attacked by bombers for 3 hours during the journey - no casualties.

15 Nov 2300 hrs sail to Bougie

16 Nov 0700 hrs arrive at Bougie, disembark troops and stores and sail again for Algiers

17 Nov 0700 hrs arrive at Algiers. 1100 hrs sail again for Bougie with more troops

18 Nov Arrive Bougie at midnight. 0330 hrs sail again for Algiers arrive at 1000 hrs - big raid but no hits.

19 Nov At Algiers

20 Nov At Algiers - raid

21 Nov At Algiers

22 Nov At Algiers

23 Nov Sailed at 2200 hrs for Bone with troops

24 Nov Arrived at Bone 1400 hrs. during the afternoon was attacked by four torpedo aircraft, one shot down, suffered no hits. More raids during the night.

25 Nov 0800 hrs sailed for Algiers

26 Nov 0300 hrs arrived Algiers, very rough sea, leave Algiers again at 2000 hrs for Bone with more troops

27 Nov Arrived at Bone at 1200 hrs, sailed again 1800 hrs all night raid

28 Nov Arrived Algiers OK at 0800 hrs

29 Nov To Bone again with more troops arrive 1030 hrs. Attacked by aircraft, shot one down.

30 Nov Left Bone under heavy air attack, shot one down, attacked again at 1800 hrs by torpedo bombers

01 Dec Reached Algiers 1130 hrs no casualties. Sail again with more troops at 1800 hrs

02 Dec Arrive Bone 1030 hrs sail again at 1400 hrs

03 Dec Arrive Algiers 0800 hrs

04 Dec - 09 Dec Algiers harbour

10 Dec Resume ferrying troops to Bone, Bougie etc and bringing back prisoners until end of April 1943

01 May 1943 Boats crews are left ashore at Didjelli for extensive training for a major operation. Live under canvas - almost like a holiday - but for the usual raid each night. Plenty of swimming and loafing quite a good time.

01 Jun Ship arrives and picks us up again and sail to Sfax

03 Jun Arrive at Sfax

05 Jun Sailed to Sousse for a practice landing

07 Jun Return to Sfax

10 Jun Embark troops and sail to Pantellaria

11 Jun 1000 hrs arrive 10 miles off the island which is suffering from very heavy shelling and bombing. Boats are lowered and we proceed to the harbour but stand a mile out until the bombing ceases, then enter. Land our troops with no opposition. While returning to our ship we were dive bombed by the enemy but no hits were scored and our fighter planes soon chased them away. We hoisted our craft and sailed back to Sousse arriving at 2030 hrs.

12 Jun Proceeded to Sfax but after within a few miles of that port we turn round again and make for Bougie

14 Jun Arrive Bougie at 1400 hrs. Make two trips to Bejerta and Malta with troops then returned to Sfax for a weeks recreation meaning swimming, boat racing etc, by the way our ship won the boat races (as usual) 08 Jul Embark troops and sail for Sicily.

09 Jul Arrive Sicily at midnight amid heavy bombing and shelling by our air force and navy. Craft are lowered and we proceed to the beaches. Heavy swell running and most of the troops are very seasick. Searchlights are switched on as we near the shore but they fail to see us.

10 Jul At 0245 hrs we land the troops on the rocky beaches with little opposition from the enemy. We lose one of our craft and return to our ship with 11 casualties

11 Jul Arrive at ship 0800 hrs. At 1400 hrs sail with wounded and prisoners to Sousse

12 Jul Arrive at Sousse at 0800 hrs

15 Jul 0630 hrs leave for Malta arrive at 1800 hrs leave again at midnight for Siracusa (Sicilly)

16 Jul Arrive at Siracusa in the morning, embark troops and then proceed up the SE coast to Augusta arriving the same afternoon. We intend to leave again at night for a raid four miles behind enemy lines north of Catania but it was cancelled as the navy had shelled the above position enabling the eighth army to advance. During the night while lying in the harbour there were three heavy air attacks from the enemy. Our sister ship got a near miss and suffered heavy casualties four killed and a score or more wounded.

17 Jul Augusta

18 Jul Sail 1500 hrs arrive Malta 2100 hrs

19 Jul Malta - heavy raid

20 July Malta - raid

21 July Malta

22 July Malta - with the fleet, Rodney, Nelson etc etc

23 July to 06 Aug Malta

07 Aug Sailed at 0900 hrs for Augusta arriving at 1530 hrs

08 Aug Boat training for an expected operation in the near future.

Heavy air attack during the night but every thing OK

09 Aug Air attack during the morning and three more during the night - two shot down and no ships hit.

10 Aug Augusta

11 Aug Augusta

12 Aug Leave Augusta at 1400 hrs to pick up troops at Catania and land them behind enemy lines, after 1 hour at sea the operation is cancelled and we return to harbour

13 Aug Augusta - heavy night raid two enemy planes shot down no ships hit

14 Aug Augusta - quiet night

15 Aug Augusta - 3 air raids during the day - no hits. Sailed at 2100 hrs with commandos to land behind enemy lines 8 miles from Messina

16 Aug 0400hrs landed the commandos then proceeded down the coast and got picked up by our ship at 0800 hrs. Sailed back to Augusta arriving at 1600 hrs

17 Aug Augusta

18 Aug Augusta

19 Aug Sailed from Augusta at 1000 hrs leaving our landing craft behind.

20 Aug Arrived at Djidjeli at 1900 hrs and picked up some more landing craft and their crews. Sailed to Bejerta arriving at 2000 hrs

21 Aug Left Bejerta for Augusta

22 Aug Arrived at Augusta in the morning, landed the spare craft and their crews, Hoisted our own craft back on board then set sail for Tripoli

26 Aug Arrived at Tripoli where we took part in a large scale landing exercise which lasted for several days

06 Sep Embarked troops ( Queen's 56 London Division), sailed in convoy for an unknown destination but we are all guessing it will be an invasion of Naples.....

07 Sep At sea steaming northwards, we guessed right! It is Naples. Word has come that the enemy has spotted us and to prepare ourselves for a big attack on the convoy. But luck is with us and we see nothing of the enemy during either the day or the night.

08 Sep Everything going along OK. 1830 hrs we hear the great news of Italy's fall, there's great excitement aboard and we are expecting the operation to be cancelled and for us to return back to port, but we are told we will still have to make the landing. So we continue sailing up the west coast of Italy which is quite visible. At 2130 hrs jerry came over and tried his best for the next hour or so to sink a few of us but I'm thankful to say he had no luck.

09 Sep At 0130 hrs the troops enter our small craft and we then lowered them into the water. Then we proceeded to the beaches which were lit up by fires caused by our bombers and naval guns. As we drew nearer jerry let go with everything he had and we had some very near misses, but some of the other boats weren't as fortunate as us.

At 0340 hrs we were on the beaches and the troops were ashore in about a minute. Then we turned round and while making our way back to our ship jerry

bombers arrived and started bombing the beaches and our ships which were lying about twelve miles out from the beaches. Our ships suffered no hits but some of the smaller craft, I'm afraid to say, weren't as lucky. We got back to our ship as dawn was breaking, about 0600 hrs and were hoisted inboard just as the all clear went and the last of the bombers disappeared into the distance. We were attacked again while at breakfast but we gave them a very warm reception and they soon dropped their bombs and ran for home. At about 1000 hrs we formed up and sailed down the coast towards Bejerta.

10 Sep Arrived at Bejerta at 1500 hrs. At 1600 hrs we see the Italian fleet, 2 Battleships, 5 Cruisers, 5 Destroyers escorted by units of our fleet, 2 Battleships and 6 Destroyers, steaming past Bejerta heading for Malta, which made a great moment for us and cause great excitement on board. One of the Italian Destroyers came into harbour with casualties which they suffered during the great German air attack in which they lost one Battleship and damage to other ships.

11 Sep Embark troops and 70 tons of ammunition and stores and sail for Taranto

12 Sep At sea passing along the south of Sicilly. During the night we passed three Italian submarines and one Destroyer, all with their lights on, heading to Malta to surrender.

13 Sep Arrive Taranto at 1600 hrs disembark troops and stores by means of our small craft. Quite a nice city with hardly any damage. Sailed again the same night.

14 Sep Arrived at Augusta. There are six Italian submarines in the harbour.

15 Sep Augusta. Received mail.

16 Sep Sailed to S? Embarked 800 troops and sailed to Taranto

17 Sep Arrived at Taranto and set sail again to Catania.

18 Sep to 23 Sep At Catania

24 Sep Embark troops and sail for Taranto.

25 Sep Disembark troops and sail back to Catania

26 Sep Arrive Catania, embark more troops and at 1600 hrs leave for Taranto.

27 Sep Shore leave.....2 hours! At 1800 hrs leave for Brindisi.

28 Sep 0900 hrs arrive at Brindisi, leave again at 1300 hrs for Catania.

29 Sep Arrive at Catania then leave again for Augusta.

30 Sep Arrive at Augusta at 1230 hrs. At 1800 hrs sail again for Algiers.

01 Oct to 15 Oct At Algiers. We were due to sail to Augusta on 10 Oct but on the 09 Oct having taken on 100 tons of stores we were lying at anchor outside the harbour when we were rammed by a Merchant ship just after midnight causing great damage and ruined four of our small craft also loosened the davits. Fortunately no one was injured. So we are stuck while repairs are carried out.

16 Oct Left for Djidjelli at 1700 hrs

17 Oct Arrived Djidjelli at 0830 hrs

18 Oct Left for Berjerta at 1400 hrs

19 Oct Arrived at Berjerta at 0700 hrs. Weighed anchor again at 1200 hrs and sailed for Tripoli. At 1430 hrs we passed a convoy on their way to UK. Amongst them were two of our sister ships the Prince Albert and the Ulster Monarch.

20 Oct Arrived at Tripoli at 1400 hrs.

21 Oct Hoisted inboard two landing craft.

22 Oct 1300 hrs proceeded to Malta.

23 Oct 0830 hrs arrived at Malta disembarked passengers, stores and mail. Two more of our ships, the Prince Charles and the Princess Astrid weighed anchor and proceeded to UK...lucky devils!

24 Oct At Malta

25 Oct New landing craft picked up.

26 Oct HMS Rodney and HMS Nelson weigh anchor and head for UK with our late Captain, who is going home sick (and so are we all being the last to stay out here!)

27 Oct to 30 Oct At Malta - paint ship. Whilst we are here the cruiser HMS Spartan arrives from the UK and occupies the berth ahead of us.

31 Oct Secure ship for sea.

01 Nov 0545 hrs sail with Vlotennan? , Oakley and Laforfy for Naples.

There is much talk on board about a job coming off ahead of the enemy on the beaches near Rome.

02 Nov 0830 hrs arrive at Naples. Leave again at 1715 hrs for Castellamare ten miles

from Naples and three miles from Pompeii.

03 Nov At anchor at Castellamare - one air raid warning.

04 Nov Enter harbour which is full of wreckage reputedly sunk by the Rodney

05 Nov Went ashore and saw the ancient ruins of Pompeii. Heavy air raid across the Bay of Naples. I saw three raiders shot down.

06 Nov Went ashore at Castellamare and bought some presents. During the night two more air raids.

07 Nov to 24 Nov At Castellamare. During our time here the seas have been very rough. On the 9th we had an air raid, on the 16th I had an inoculation and on the 17th my arm was very sore indeed! On the 19th another air raid and on the 20th there were three with the enemy being over Naples.

24 Nov Moved berth to North Naples

25 Nov N Naples

26 Nov Moved back to Castellamare - three heavy air raids and five warnings

27 Nov to 03 Dec Still at Castellamare. On the 29th we did some manoeuvres. The weather is still

bad with heavy rain, wind and high seas.

04 Dec At 1615 hrs sailed for Malta. On the way we passed Stromboli which was erupting - a terrific sight.

05 Dec Arrive Malta at 1115 hrs

06 Dec Store ship all day

07 Dec Ordinary seamen join ship. Twelve of my shipmates get drafted to Malta.

08 Dec 1130 hrs leave Malta

09 Dec 0730 hrs arrive at Naples

10 Dec At Naples

11 Dec Leave Naples at 0800 hrs for Castellamare where we pick up troops at 1000 hrs.

At 1200 hrs we depart for exercises and land the troops on the beaches at Salerno

12 Dec Arrive at Naples to join warship, cruiser and 10 destroyers then sail on towards Rome. Instead of landing troops the warships shelled the enemy positions north of Gaeta from 0130 until 0230 hrs



13 Dec 0800 hrs returned to Castellamare

14 Dec to 23 Dec Stuck at Castellamare and fed up as hell. Two air raid warnings on the 14th and

on the 23rd we did another exercise with the 9th Commandos beaching them at Nassida.

24 Dec We're at Baera near Castellamare and had a good concert aboard in the evening.

25 Dec At Baera - had plenty to eat but turned in early as everyone is fed up

26 Dec At Baera

27 Dec Picked up troops again and did some more exercises out in our boats for three hours - got drenched to the skin - what a life!

28 Dec Leave Baera for Naples. More exercises. Finished at 10 o'clock

29 Dec 0830 hrs boats pick up troops ashore (9th Commandos) busy all day pulling supplies and ammunition in our landing craft so this isn't going to be another exercise! Just heard we are landing the troops behind enemy lines tonight.

30 Dec Sail from Pozzuoli at 1800 hrs and arrived 2100 hrs 9 miles from Gaeta. Landing craft lowered to the water and proceeded to the beach two miles behind enemy lines. Put commandos ashore at 0030 hrs, an hour and a half adrift. No opposition. All troops landed successfully and landing craft return back to ship except three who are to re-embark prisoners and casualties. Wait until 0400 hrs then proceed under our own power to Pozzuoli. No prisoners or casualties embarked however. Arrived back at 0900 hrs and hoisted aboard. Heavy shelling of enemy positions by the guns of the fifth army while landing commandos and later by the navy.

31 Dec Pozzuoli

1944

01 Jan Pozzuoli. Weather rough. Received news from commandos that landing was very successful, many of the enemy were killed and 28 prisoners were taken. Our lads lost 9 and 21 were wounded. Colonel sends his thanks to us for landing his boys OK.

02 Jan to 06 Jan Still at Pozzuoli. On the 4th we heard about the raid behind enemy lines on the

radio but it was never mentioned if it was done by the commandos, just said that British troops crossed the river into enemy lines and had done quite an amount of damage.

07 Jan Leave landing craft and crews aboard our other ship and at midnight proceed to Djidjelli

08 Jan At sea

09 Jan Reached Djidjelli at 0700 hrs, picked up 8 landing craft and their crews and proceeded back to Naples at 1100 hrs.

10 Jan Arrive at Naples harbour at 1750 hrs but then go on to Pozzuoli.

11 Jan Return to Naples and drop off the landing craft and their crews then return to Pozzuoli and pick up our own craft again.

12 Jan At Pozzuoli. During the day American Rangers (commandos) came aboard and commence exercises. This continued into the night with plenty of firing. Then we took them to the beach and landed them finally returning to our ship with our small craft.

13 Jan More exercises with the Yanks. Rumour going round that there is another big job coming off very soon. There are scores of American landing craft arriving in Naples. Also 7 of our own big troop ships with their own landing craft hoisted on each side. Several British tank landing craft are entering the harbour to take on tanks, guns, motors etc. Convinced now that there is something in the wind which is causing much argument between us on board - where we are going to land, what day - and of course we all have a different view about that. My own guess is that the landing will take place about Sunday night (16 Jan) on the west coast of Italy round the area of Rome?

14 Jan Still at Pozzuoli (2 miles north of Naples) doing exercises with the Yankee troops during the morning and also in the evening. While waiting to be lowered into the water we can see plenty of gun flashes and tracer bullets, which of course are only blanks, but we have heard there will be land mines on the beaches and quite a noise with all the gun fire making it more realistic. So I think we are going to meet some real opposition when the job comes off but still it won't be the first time, we are getting quite used to it in fact.

15 and 16 Jan Large scale exercises from midnight until 0500 hrs next morning

17 and 18 Jan More exercises

19 Jan American rangers arrive on board with stores etc.

20 Jan Naples

21 Jan Sail from Naples in convoy at noon and arrive off the bay at Anzio at midnight.

Landing craft lowered to the water and proceed toward the beach - everything

Ok and quiet until 0130 hrs when our ships start shelling enemy positions port

and starboard of us where other landings are taking place by other troops and

commandos. There are terrific explosions going on in the town as we beach our

landing craft. Apart from getting wet up to their waists our troops get ashore OK

and meet some slight opposition in the form of machine gun and mortar fire.

We return to our ship and take on the rest of the troops with their stores,

ammunition etc. Then take them to the beach and land them ashore OK. There's

plenty of street fighting going on in the town as we make our way back to our

ship and get hoisted aboard. It's now about 0700 hrs Saturday 22 Jan.

22 Jan Weigh anchor and return to Naples passing scores of large tank landing craft

heading towards the beaches to unload their cargo of tanks, cars etc. Reach

Naples at 1700 hrs.

23 Jan At Naples. There are plenty of tanks, ammunition etc leaving here for the front.

Most of the big ships have returned now and we are all wondering what the next

step will be "Home" or "Rome"?

24 Jan At Naples. During the morning 5 cruisers enter the harbour on their return from

the front. Also 3 Italian warships - 1 destroyer, 1 cruiser and 1 patrol vessel.

One of our destroyers - the Jarvis - entered this afternoon with her bows

smashed believed to have been caused by her ramming a German 'U' Boat.

News received that one hospital ship - the St. David had been sunk by aerial

bombing also two other hospital ships have been hit and set on fire in the area

of the Anzio beaches where they were embarking wounded. We were awoken at

midnight and told to pack and proceed with our small craft into Naples harbour

while our ship went to Anzio to collect craft that had been left on the beach.

26 Jan We're having to live in our small boats in the harbour, food pretty grim no hot

water. We arrived during the night and one boat was hit.

27 Jan Same routine. Aircraft are leaving Naples airdrome all day long for the battle front.

28 Jan Our ship returns to Naples after three days of continuous bombing and 'E' Boat attacks. Everything OK aboard however. One US destroyer was hit suffering some casualties.

29 Jan Return to ship and set sail for Malta.

30 Jan to Feb 11 At Malta. On the second we received news of the sinking of the cruiser Meurtica? and the destroyer Inglefield. On the third we stored the ship and repaired our craft. The weather on the 5th was rough and very cold. On the 6th was Sunday routine.

12 Feb Proceed to Berjerta. Seas very rough.

13 Feb Arrive at Berjerta at 1400 hrs. Proceed to Jerryville?

14 Feb to 12 May At Jerryville? for a refit and repairs. Very dull, plenty of rain never went ashore during the whole stay here apart from going to the RAF camp for dart and ping pong matches

12 May After 3 dull months of repairing, painting etc. we set sail for Djidjelli.

13 May Arrive at Djidjelli, put some of the lads ashore then set sail again for Malta at 1030 hrs.

14, 15, 16 May At Malta. Store ship.....

Dates missing

23 Jun Leave harbour for Taranto at 1800 hrs and not Malta as we had expected. No escort.

24 Jun Arrived at Taranto at 0730 hrs and anchor in the outer harbour miles from shore. Leave was granted to us for a couple of hours but as I was on duty I couldn't go.

25 /26Jun At Taranto swimming over the side of the ship. Only a few lads went ashore, heard it's very still? there and most places are out of bounds - even the ice cream shops - the Italians are none too friendly with the British.

27 Jun At Taranto. More swimming. Lovely weather.

28 Jun Italian battleship Cesare arrives in harbour. We receive our clasp

for our North Africa Medal - small silver rosette.

29 Jun to Jul 2 Still at Taranto, terribly hot, more swimming.

03 Jul Convoy of troopships arrive to relieve the lads in the front line.

04 Jul Taranto. German POW's board troop ships bound for Blighty.

Weather blowing up.

05 Jul to 08 Jul Still in Taranto. Dozens of Italian warships in the harbour.

09 Jul Plenty of buzzes about going home. Hope it's true this time.

10 Jul to 14 Jul Still in Taranto. More swimming.

15 Jul All men who have done 21 months service out here are putting in requests for relief (including me).

16 Jul At Taranto.

17 Jul At Taranto. Merchant convoy leaves harbour.

18 Jul Same.

19 Jul 0600 hrs sail for Barletta on east coast of Italy and arrive at 1900 hrs.

20 Jul At Barletta. News that Ancona has been captured by the lads and there's rumours that we are taking troops up there.

21 Jul At Barletta. Ammunition ship on fire ahead of us. Two Italians seriously burnt. Fire put out after a time.

22 Jul Barletta. Troops come aboard, Africans and Indians. Leave at 2000 hrs for Ancona unescorted. Went to the rescue of an airman in the drink.

23 Jul Destroyer joins us at 0500 hrs. Minesweepers sweep ahead of us as we approach Ancona harbour. Drop anchor at 1100 hrs. Troops taken ashore by lighters and depart for Barletta at 1400 hrs.

24 Jul Arrive at Barletta at 0230 hrs. More troops waiting for us, Polish, Indian, Italian and Tommies come aboard. We leave harbour at 2200 hrs. for Ancona again. On the way we pass two British ships which had been sunk by mines the previous day.

25 Jul Arrive Ancona at 1030 hrs, disembark troops by lighter and depart again at 1815 hrs. There is great danger from 'E' boats and mines two of the former reported eight miles from us.

26 Jul Arrive Barletta 0145 hrs and anchor. At 0600 hrs we enter harbour

and berth alongside. The troops bring their stores aboard. At 1600 hrs troops embark and we leave harbour at 2200 hrs. Same old trip - getting a bit fed up with it.

27 Jul Arrive Ancona 1030 hrs, all troops disembark and at 1300 hrs we sail again for Barletta still unescorted. Minesweepers are still sweeping up and down the coast.

28 Jul Arrive Barletta 0120 hrs and anchor. Leave again 0900 hrs for Naples unescorted. Much to our surprise we pass plenty of landing craft on our way, guess there's something in the wind, another job very likely.

29 Jul Arrive Naples 1245 hrs - it seems we have guessed right for there's hundreds of ships, warships, landing craft, merchant ships and every other thing which goes towards making a big invasion. We are now wondering where it will be - most of us think southern France for that's about the most likely place.

30 Jul Naples. Captain goes ashore. More landing craft ships arrive, the Prince Albert and the Prince Henry. There are 5 hospital ships here and also some yankee troop ships.

31 Jul Naples. More ships arrive, the British cruiser Aurano, an Italian cruiser, the Prince David. Nearly all the merchant ships leave for different ports up and down the coast waiting for the big day. The weather is getting pretty rough, here's hoping it will calm down by the time the job comes off which we think won't be very long now.

01 Aug Sail to Salerno bay about ten miles from Naples with Prince Albert and Prince David for exercises. Arrive at 1600 hrs, lower landing craft and do exercises for a couple of hours. Seas not too rough.

02 Aug Salerno bay. Exercises during afternoon and night. Two LCA's being towed by American PT boats. For 15 miles we tow rubber dinghies behind our small craft. Each dinghy holds 10 men.

03 Aug More exercises in Salerno bay during the afternoon and also after dark from 2100 hrs to 0300 hrs on 04 Aug.

04 Aug More exercises during forenoon. Return to Naples 1330 hrs arrive 1600 hrs to

see the Prince Bedouin has arrived.

05 Aug Naples. Usual routine - clean all craft. Rumours now going round that the job is not coming off for quite a while yet.

06 Aug Naples. Usual routine. Lots of rumours about forthcoming operation but nothing known for definite.

07 Aug Leave Naples for Gangliano (Anzio) for large scale night manoeuvres starting at 2030 hrs until 0930 hrs 08 Aug.

08 Aug Manoeuvres completed at 0930 hrs. Ship returns to Naples arriving at 1200 hrs. Leave two landing craft and six lads ashore and take on two bigger landing craft with their crews. (it won't be long now!).

09 Aug Sail to Salerno bay with Prince Albert and Prince David for more exercises.

10 Aug Salerno bay. Pick up French commandos for more exercises.

11 Aug More manoeuvres.

12 Aug Sail in convoy accompanied by the Princes David, Henry, Albert, and Bedouin, 5 American destroyers with landing craft on, the American cruiser Augusta, British cruiser Dido, British destroyers and 12 American Patrol boats.

13 Aug Arrive at Corsica for large scale exercise with troops.

14 Aug Convoy sails. We are on our way at last. Everyone is excited and keyed up. We are told it's the south of France and our force is leaving first at 1330 hrs tomorrow to capture all the guns so as to clear the way for the big force (comprising hundreds of ships) which is making their landing at 0800 hrs.

15 to 25 Aug The landing!

Proceeding without incident towards the French coast the moon is down and it's pitch dark. At 2130 hrs we start getting ready, put on some clean underwear and heavy clothes as it will be pretty cold during the night. Also take sandwiches and cans of tea. At 2200 hrs we enter our craft and lower them level with the ship's deck. The troops enter and everything is set. At 2230 hrs all the ships stop engines and the Captain wishes us good luck. We are lowered into the water and after a few minutes of forming up we are on our way speeding towards the beaches which are about 15 miles away. Should take us about 3 hours to reach them. Soon our ships are lost in the darkness and we are alone except for two American patrol boats which are leading us in. The sea is very smooth for a change and there are only one or two soldiers in our boat who are seasick. After we have been travelling for about an hour and a half the American craft, about

20 of them with their French commandos aboard leave us British landing craft, about 40, and branch off towards the Ile du Levant which is their particular point to capture. We carry on to the mainland. At 0030 hrs we slow down and proceed to crawl towards the beach. The tension is terrific - everyone of us are wondering if there's jerry waiting for us. We soon find out because he starts shooting up Very lights and takes a few pot shots at us with a machine gun. Still we all keep straight on and hope for the best.

There now appear to be one or more pages missing. The notes continue:

He then told us that we were going to pick up a draft (or craft) and take them to Malta tomorrow. Then pick up some troops, RAF and sailors and then sail for UK promising us that we would arrive within the next fortnight. After hearing the good news we almost went mad, there were cheers and smiles everywhere. We could hardly believe it was true.

25 Aug Naples. Our two craft and crews come aboard and the other two larger ones go off to Naples. We set sail at 1800 hrs with loud cheers from all.

26 Aug Arrive at Malta at 0700 hrs pick up 300 passengers, sailors, soldiers and RAF, sail again at 1800 hrs for Berjerta.

27 Aug Arrive Berjerta 0700 hrs pick up another dozen passengers and sail for Algiers at 1800 hrs.

28 Aug Arrive Algiers 0700 hrs pick up 200 bags of mail and a few more passengers. Sail out for Gibraltar at 1200 hrs with loud cheers from all on board and also each ship we passed as we had done so many times in the past.

29 Aug Arrive Gibraltar at 1200 hrs. Ship takes on fuel and a boat goes ashore for fruit, bananas and melons. Sail for UK at 2100 hrs with no escort.

30 Aug At sea, pretty good weather.

31 Aug At sea, getting a bit rough.

01 Sep At sea. Rain all day, very rough, nearly everyone is seasick. At 1600 hrs sight land (Ireland) expect to get in tomorrow at Greenock at 1600 hrs.



Transcriber's note re Bayonne: On 5th April 1942 the Allies made a landing attempt at Bayonne in which Charlie was involved. However, after a barge had penetrated the river Adour with difficulty the operation was aborted. During WW2 Bayonne was occupied by the 3rd SS Panzer Division Totenkopf until August 1944. (Source Wikipedia) Further research in Wikipedia has revealed some statistics for Operation Dragoon commencing midnight 14 August 1944 and landing 15 August 1944. 850 ships other vessels and landing craft took part, HMS Beatrix being a part of the convoy landing French and British troops at Cape Negre and near to Hyeres. Some 175,000 to 200,000 allied troops were involved.

Allied casualties recorded as 12,000, German casualties 7,000, German wounded 20,000, Germans taken as POW's 130,000. It was during this operation that Charlie Wilkinson received his MID (mentioned in dipatches). The operation was the 2nd largest amphibious landing attack after the 6th June 1944 but has been largely overlooked in history.

From the Wikipedia article on HMS Beatrix we learned that the landings were referred to as the "Midnight Squadron" due to their preference for carrying out landings in the dark to avoid detection by defence installations. On 13 November 1942 they left Algiers for Bône at 2300 hrs. On their return they were repeatedly attacked by German aircraft but made port without damage. In May 1943 the ship received a special commendation from allied army commanders.

In July 1943 they carried out another night operation (Operation Husky) to land troops at Scarletti as part of the invasion of Sicily. The ship was at that time based at Naples. There were further landings on 22 January 1944 at Anzio, after which they returned to Tunisia for an engine overhaul.

The ship returned to Scotland and the Clyde 2nd September 1944 During her 2 years in the Mediterranean theatre she had travelled 42,755 miles and carried out 8 major landing operations without a loss.

End of notes.

After a time in the Clyde the ship was transferred to Ireland to clear mines.