

A VERY FINE SECOND WAR D-DAY LANDINGS D.S.M. AWARDED TO AN ABLE SEAMAN, WHO'S LANDING CRAFT CARRIED H.Q., 1ST SUFFOLK REGIMENT, PART OF SWORD BEACH'S INITIAL ASSAULT BRIGADE. CRASHING INTO THE BEACH DEFENCES, THE LANDING CRAFTS RAMPS WERE DAMAGED AND UNDER 'INTENSE ENEMY FIRE', THIS SEAMAN ENDEAVOURED TO REPAIR THEM.



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL, G.V.I.R. 'A.B. D. J. CAMPBELL. D/JX.285748'

D.S.M. London Gazette 14 November 1944: 'For gallantry, skill and undaunted devotion to duty shown during the landing of Allied Forces on the coast of Normandy in June 1944.'

The recommendation states: 'Dennis James Campbell, Able Seaman, H.M. L.C.I.(L) 130, 261st Landing Craft Flotilla, S.3 Assault Group. Did expose himself to intense enemy fire while endeavouring to secure damaged ramps to enable troops to disperse from concentrated enemy fire. Did use his own initiative in endeavouring to repair serious underwater damage regardless of his personal safety at all times a source of encouragement to his shipmates.'

LANDING CRAFT INFANTRY (LARGE) 130 ON D-DAY

On D-Day, LCI(L) 130 (Landing Craft Infantry Large), Serial 228 (1 SUFFOLK) carried Battalion Headquarters of the 1st Suffolk Regiment, including the battalion's 2nd in Command and Beach Groups to Sword Beach on 6 June 1944. 1st Suffolks formed part of 8th Brigade, who along with 2nd East Yorkshire and 1st South Lancashire Regiments were the Sword Beach assault Brigade, ie the first infantry to land on D-Day.

3 Division, which 8th Brigade formed a part, had the task of landing on the extreme Eastern flank of the seaborne landing on 'Queen' 'White' and 'Red' Beaches between Ouistreham on the left and Lion sur Mer on the right. 8 Brigade as the assault Brigade had the task of breaking through the coastal defences and establishing a firm beachhead through which 185 Brigade could dash to take the high ground north of Caen and a bridgehead over the River Orne if possible, with 9 Brigade, who would land later, following on the right.

The initial landing on Sword beach were by tanks of 13/18 Hussars, followed by the other two battalions of 8th Brigade and 4 Commando. 1st Suffolks landed, after, 15 minutes before Lord Lovat with 6 and 41 Commando and 45 minutes before 45 and 3 Commando, the beaches still under considerable enemy fire until after 0900

LCI(L)130 formed part of 261 LCI(L) Flotilla, itself part of 'E' Landing Craft Squadron of Assault Group S3. Three L.C.I.(L) of 261 L.C.I.(L) Flotilla parted company from Convoy S8 at the Lowering Position at H - 20 (0705) and picked up 18 LCA (Landing Craft Assault) from SS "EMPIRE BROADSWORD" and SS "EMPIRE BATTLEAXE".



LANDINGS ON SWORD BEACH

One of the crew of LCI(L)130 describes the landing.

"..I was there on D Day, aboard LCI(L) 130, this craft being flotilla leader of 261st LCI(L) flotilla. In fact, I was on flotilla staff under Lt/Cdr Wall... We did not sail until the evening of June 5th. I remember that night well; it was action stations all night but during darkness, it was uncannily quiet. When dawn broke, the sight was beyond belief; hundreds of craft, most with barrage balloons aloft and of course so many ships of all descriptions. Then the battle wagons opened fire, destroyers were

laying smoke screens and smaller assault craft were forming up waiting for the signal to go in- just where incidentally, could not be seen at this stage.

When we went through the smoke screen, it seemed ages before we could see anything but then – there it was, the French coast almost on top of us – or so it seemed, and then all hell broke loose. We beach approx. 0800 and immediately came under fire. A LCT was burning furiously about 100 yards off shore on our starboard side and then we lost our starboard ramp which held up the unloading of troops. There were many minor injuries, indeed I recall one soldier with a head wound which looked worse than it was, threatening anyone who might try to stop him going ashore with his mates, saying “I have trained long and hard for this and no ‘B’ is going to stop me now”.

The most serious casualty at this stage was the ship itself, having been holed below the waterline and through the crew messdeck. After the troops had got on the beach successfully, it took some time to get the craft off and to keep her afloat...”

See: https://thedaystory.com/ElasticSearch/?si_elastic_detail=PORMG%20:%20202014/58/268&highlight_term=

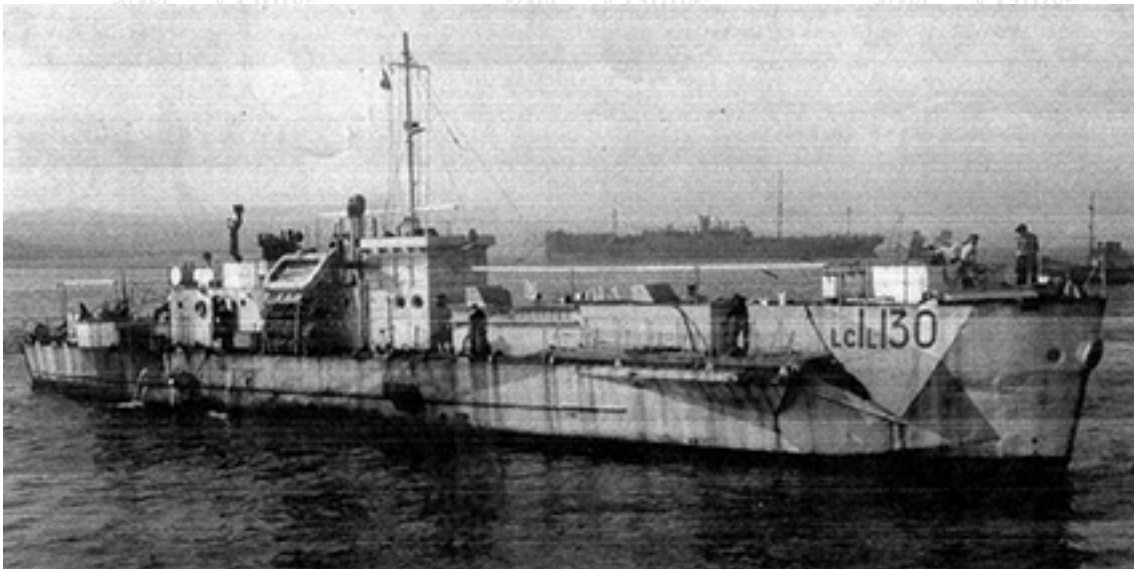
As described above, when LCI(L) hit the beach, the starboard ramp was damaged. Actually both ramps had hit beach obstacles when they were lowered and were put out of action. It was for his actions in trying to fix these ramps, exposed to intense enemy fire, that Able Seaman Campbell was awarded the D.S.M. His recommendation also tells how he endeavoured to repair serious underwater damage. Presumably this meant he had got off the landing craft onto the beach and was working underwater, again under fire!



TROOPS ON LCI(L) PREPARING TO LAND

A leading Signalman from one of 261st Flotilla's other landing craft; LCI(L)131, would record the following:

"H Hour minus five approaching Sword Beach quite noisy, sporadic gun fire, Germans aware of our presence, our destroyers shells screaming overhead, Germans open fire on flotilla, bullets and 88mm shells flying everywhere, strong smell of cordite in the air. Approach beach at about five knots, drop kedge anchor, crew lower ramps manually into the sea, many more landing craft to port and starboard unloading troops and tanks, our troops disembark, noise terrible shells and bullets everywhere splashing around in the sea, finally hit above the waterline by several 88mm shells, one of which penetrated the armour plating on the bridge. Offensive shell thrown overboard; several others remain in the deckhead. One member of LCI's crew ordinary Seaman Butler walked ashore with line to assist the troops, last seen astride and anti-invasion girder on beach where we left him. Quite a few members of the crew or troops wounded or killed.. Many small (and large) landing craft were overturned or broadside onto the beach..."



LCI(L)130

More details of the Sword Beach landing can be found here:

https://www.combinedops.com/LCT_PAGE.htm

Also just published in May 2024, 'Sword Beach the untold story of D-Day's forgotten victory' by Stephen Fisher. This fine book mentions LCI(L)130 a number of times

Able Seaman Dennis James Campbell was a native of Glasgow, Scotland. His full service is as yet unknown but he would likely have seen earlier and later landing craft service during the Second War



Condition GVF, mounted on original investiture pin. Sold with Sold with copied recommendation. See Noonans, Lot 1721, 25 September 2008 for a similar award, though to a LCI(L) that landed over 2 hours later

A fine D.S.M. to a Able Seaman who showed great gallantry under fire when landing troops of the initial assault waves on Sword Beach