

Transcript of Albert Potterton Audio Clip

D-Day to me was – I can remember it very, very vividly. I was – we were eventually on the south coast. We were at Herne Bay and then we were told we were going to report to Southampton. When we got to Southampton the whole of the place was a buzz. With all types of invasion equipment, troops by the thousands or millions if you like. All types, all our British forces, also the Empire forces as well and a tremendous number of the Americans and people like that. I can remember that we were suddenly detailed off. We went out to the River Hamble and we found our mother ship there which was carrying the invasion crafts that we would land and our approach to that, well, we were actually already informed that we were gonna go to a place in France. We didn't know exactly where it was at that time and we boarded our ships and I think it was round about the 2nd or 3rd of June. We thought we were going to shoot off immediately but apparently as everybody knows now, the weather deteriorated so badly. Now, I think it was the worst storm I can ever remember and it was very, very bad for the invasion craft because the calmer the water the better the invasion because you – you have control of the craft. You're not bouncing about too much. They were all flat-bottom boats so we were very, very uncomfortable.

Each landing craft had something like thirty-five or thirty-six commandos, in our case, onboard and I happened to be a corporal in charge of one and then I lost my sergeant for some reason or other and so I was in charge of the section that was actually landing on D-Day. It turned out to be a trip – well it was going to be, obviously, Normandy at that time. We knew then. We were actually – our raid was going to be on a place called Port-en-Bessin which happened to be the end of the pipeline from Southampton to the Continent which eventually would have been – feed the services with all the petroleum they need. We were also going to the – the linkup between the Americans from Omaha beaches there and we were gonna climb the cliffs exactly the same as the Americans did and there they were unfortunately were badly slaughtered. Fortunately for our sake, our colonel – Colonel Phillips of the 47th Royal Marine Commando, decided that we would land, which happened to be called Juno Beach I think it was. I'm vague actually because of the beaches were – weren't named at that stage, obviously.

Just prior to that, while, because of this very, very rough weather, we lost a lot of the landing craft in the landing and because the excessive waves that were there the boats were being lifted up and dropped on to these teller mines which were attached to the structure work, yes, that was there. So quite a number of crafts was lost and one can remem – I can remember – if I just go back a little bit. When we were leaving Southampton, I can remember the captain calling over the tannoy system, 'We're now entering mined waters' and that really put the fear up with us because we realised that we had such a long crossing to do and eventually we were onboard ship. We were delayed because of the weather so we were in this precarious sort of position so we had the fear of the – of the floating mines. We knew we were gonna face the enemy very, very soon and so we were all very, very uncertain, trying to keep up our cheerfulness which was very much lacking at time [laughs].