

A Day at the Beach

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On 19 August 1942 Operation Jubilee took place. Canadian and British troops landed at the French port of Dieppe. I could just imagine Blackadder's General Melchet thinking that there are too many Canadians in England, I have a cunning plan to get rid of some. Jubilee was basically a lesson in how not to do things. The suitability of the beach was assessed by looking at pre-war holiday snaps. Compared to pre-landing bombardment at Normandy, the garrison of Dieppe seemed to be left relatively unmolested.



It is hard to see what exactly about Dieppe that justified the 3500 soldiers killed, wounded and captured. Then again the Yanks did the same sort of thing a few decades later. They would fight for an inconsequential hill or valley. A few hours later they would load the survivors and bodybags into their Hueys and fly off, and Charlie would have his hill back. In 1942 there was pressure from the Soviets to open a Second Front, although the Brits were in no position to do so. There were gung-ho Canadian officers eager to prove a point, and like a lot of gung-ho officers, at the expense of other people.



Included in the landing force were 30 Churchill tanks, a few Dingo scout cars, jeeps, and a pair of Caterpillar dozers. These miscellaneous vehicles were to be towed ashore by the third Churchill in each LCT. The Churchills were of five

types, Mk I MkII and MkIII gun tanks, Three MkI tanks were fitted with the Oke flamethrower, and several MkIII were fitted with a carpet laying device. The tanks used for Op Jubilee were fitted for wading. This involved extended exhausts, and three extended trunks going up from the side and rear air intakes. The latter were held on by steel rods, connected to a release in the middle of the engine deck. Because these rods interfered with the turret stowage box, it was left off. The idea was that once out of the water the trunking would be jettisoned so the turret could have more traverse.

Dieppe was a raid, not an invasion, or the invasion. The difference is that in a raid, the idea is to nick something or do some damage and then bugger off, but for an invasion the idea is to stay. Losing the wading capability is fine after an invasion landing, but for Jubilee the idea was for the personnel to eventually bug out, and the tanks would be left behind. As it transpired, 29 tanks left their landing ships, a few drowned immediately, more were bogged on the beach. None of the Oke flamethrowers got into action. More tanks were immobilized by damage to their tracks. It appears that the Germans did not have any large caliber Pak guns, I cannot find any account of tanks being penetrated. A few more tanks made it off the beach, onto the seaside promenade. A few more were disabled there.



A while ago Dragon released a regular Churchill MkIII, but it had decals for two of the Dieppe tanks, which got me excited. Whoopee, I though, I will make this with the Dieppe mods. The Dieppe MkIII tanks were different to later MkIII because they had minimalist trackguards, not the full set eventually adopted. I began by chopping the trackguards, leaving only short sections at the rear,

and adjacent to the air intakes. The next bit was to make the wading trunks, basically open top boxes from sheet styrene. While I was part way through this, Dragon then released a Dieppe Churchill MkIII, with decals for 3 Dieppe tanks and some more features, such as the extended exhaust pipes. So I bought one, and found it had the minimal trackguards. I then had to find and replace the cut pieces on the other Mk III which will now end up as a Tunisia 1943 tank or something.

Back to the second tank, I transplanted my scratchbuilt wading trunks. Knowing this, Dragon then went out of their way to mess with my head, by releasing a second Dieppe Churchill kit, same as the



other one but with the wading trunks that they should have included in the first place. I bought this third Churchill, transferred the wading parts to the second tank, and then what I was left with was all the pieces

for a complete unmade first Dieppe Churchill kit. Dragon have done this to me a few times, so I hope that hell exists just for them. The second Churchill kit ended up finished using the markings for Betty. The decals are absolutely spot on, but they like to curl up, rendering them a write-off. Betty was one of the handful of tanks that got off the beach and drove along the promenade doing some damage, until she fell into a bunker where she stayed for the duration of the raid.



Twenty three of the 29 tanks landed were ultimately recovered and repaired by the Germans, so Betty spent her remaining days serving the Fatherland in some capacity. The Germans were surprised when they discovered the Churchills were a current model, not some old obsolete type, and were not impressed by any of its features. They were also left wondering what the raid had hoped to achieve.

