
Military Professionals

Commandos

The Commandos were formed in June 1940 as a 'force that could carry out raids on German Occupied Europe'. Originally most of the men came from army units but eventually they were taken from all branches of the British Armed Forces.

The training was very physically demanding - cross country runs and assault courses.

In September 1943 the 47 Royal Marine Commandos came to Galloway to train.

They were billeted in various homes and in Gatehouse, the Frullani family, the MacInnes family and Mrs Ada Patterson at Annfield (now Whiteside) all had one or two commandos staying with them.

Leo McClymont remembers that Mrs Patterson's man was so large that he broke the bed that he was given.

Ladies who took in soldiers as lodgers were paid between 25/- and 30/- a week. They used the soldiers ration books - and the commandos were allowed extra meat rations. Best of all for the youngsters - the commandos set up rope bridges and other equipment which the local lads sneaked onto for some fun in the evening.

David 'Sam' Gray remembers the commandos having mock battles along the High Street. One day he found a commando lying prone in the pond beside his house at 21 High Street, with his gun pointing across the street. Sam, aged about 5, lay down beside him thinking it was all a big game.

The Gatehouse Commandos used the old 'Gaithouse' building in Ann Street as their headquarters and would regularly march up and down Ann Street.



David "Sam" Gray

American Army

Although the U.S.A. had helped Britain with food and armament supplies in the early years of the war they had remained formally neutral. This changed when the Japanese air force attacked the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii on 7th December 1941.

Once the American Army mobilised they crossed the Atlantic by boat. Many thousands landed in Northern Ireland to be transported to Britain and Europe. Several waves of these soldiers landed at Cairnryan, near Stranraer before making their way through Galloway in 1944.

For local children these were very exciting events.

Peggy Gillespie (née Kean) remembers the line of troops and equipment stretching from the Castle to the Cut and most striking of all were the number of black faces, somewhat of a rarity in Gatehouse.

Leo McClymont was impressed by the large powerful motorbikes. Some of the men performed tricks on their bikes as they made their way up the High Street.

Juliano Frullani remembered

'One morning, a soldier on a motorbike stopped in front of me and said: "Jump on". He took me up to the War Memorial and down to Fleet Street and back to the corner again. I was a hero for one day.

The troops handed out sweets to the watching children.

David 'Sam' Gray remembered that a soldier gave him some chewing gum - known locally as 'chuddy' but from then on it was called 'gum'.



Juliano Frullani in 1942

A canteen was set up for the American troops in the small building at the side of the Murray Arms.(the Old Gaithouse).

Alix Wolffe (née Graham) lived in Creetown during WWII and her family owned a donkey-drawn cart. One day when Alix was 12 or 13, the family were out in the cart and as they reached the A75 they were surprised to find the road full of military equipment and long lines of American soldiers, many with black faces, a rare sight in those days. The soldiers were a cheery bunch, singing, laughing and telling jokes. They were also very noisy and the Graham's donkey took fright and bolted which was a rather scary experience.
