

On the day of the assault a heavy mist over the Dutch and Belgian airfields limited RAF support for the actual landings, although the skies over Walcheren itself were clear. No.4 Commando, under Lt-Colonel Dawson DSO, had a problem in finding a suitable place to get ashore. Dawson sent a small reconnaissance party (known as Keepforce) ashore in two LCPs. They were followed by Nos.1 and 2 troops who secured the beachhead with minimal casualties and soon began to take prisoners. The main body came in at 0630 hours, but, by this time, the Germans were totally alert and opened heavy fire with machine guns and 20mm cannon. Nevertheless the Marines got ashore with only two or three casualties, although, the LCA containing the heavier equipment including 3 inch mortars, hit a stake and sank some 20 yards off shore. The mortars were successfully salvaged.

The marines now fought their way through the the German strong-points. They were somewhat encumbered by the need to leave rearguards against infiltration. However, they were aided when the leading battalion of 155 Brigade began to land at 0830 hours despite having lost two LCAs to heavy fire from one of the coastal batteries. German prisoners were pressed into service unloading stores and supplies. A good proportion of the defenders of Walcheren were poor quality troops and many suffered from stomach complaints. Curiously the defence positions were well stocked with food and ammunition. By 1600 hours the Commandos had reached most of their objectives and they decided to consolidate as the day drew to a close.

Brigadier Leicester's plan for the attack on Westkapelle called for three troops of No.41 (RM) Commando, under Lt-Colonel E C E Palmer RM, to land on the north shoulder of the gap blown in the dyke with the objective of clearing the area between there and the village of Westkapelle. The remainder of the Commando, along with the two No.10 (IA) Commando troops, would then come ashore in Weasels and Buffalos launched from LCTs. Their mission would be to clear Westkapelle and then move north. No.48 (RM) Commando, under Lt-Colonel J. L. Moulton DSO, would use the same methods but come ashore south of the gap. From there they would advance on Zoutelande some two miles to the south. Finally No.47 (RM) Commando, under Lt-Colonel C.F. Phillips DSO, would land behind No.48 and drive on to meet up with No.4 Commando near Flushing.

The force sailed from Ostend at 0315 hours and by 0930 hours they were off the objective. The ships bombarded the German defences with everything at their disposal including the 15inch guns of HMS Warspite, the guns of LCGs, the rockets of rocket LCTs and a squadron of rocket-firing Typhoons. The German defences held fire until the assault craft made for the shore. Several landing craft were hit including a rocket LCT which received a direct hit. Thirty landing craft from the Close Support Squadron were lost and over 300 men were killed in the action.

No.41 overran a pillbox in their path and pushed onto Westkapelle where they were met by a battery of four 150mm guns. They were reduced with the help of some tanks and the Commando then moved north along the dyke. No.48 also came up against a battery of 150mm guns. The leading troop commander was killed and several men wounded in an attack on the position. Another attempt was met with intense mortar fire. Supporting fire

was called in from the field batteries in the Breskens area together with Typhoon attacks. Following this action another troop went in under cover of smoke and reached the centre of the battery putting it out of action.

The next day No.4 Commando, together with 5 King's Own Scottish Borderers, continued with the battle for Flushing. No.5 (French) Troop were involved in an action against a strongpoint nicknamed Dover. One section of the troop gained the roof of a cinema and opened fire on the strongpoint with their PIAT. The other sections moved along the street and through back gardens. As the troop was preparing for the final assault, Typhoons attacked the enemy position. That afternoon the Troop resumed their advance and reached the corner overlooking their objective. One house remained occupied by the Germans and as they made for the strongpoint they suffered several casualties from the fire of No.5 Troop. No.1 Section was now by the Anti-Tank wall and firing PIAT bombs into the embrasures of the strongpoint at very short range. Corporal Lafont was on the point of breaching the strongpoint with a made-up charge at the ready when the German defenders surrendered.

No.48 (RM) Commando pushed on at first light and took Zouteland, meeting only light opposition. No.47 took over the advance but soon came up against a strong fortified position with an anti-tank ditch and huge Dragon's Teeth. The weather had closed in and no air support was available so they attacked supported only by artillery. They came under heavy mortar fire and suffered several casualties. The other half of the Commando having moved along the dyke were confronted by another 150mm battery. Their approach was obstructed by pockets of resistance to the front of the battery which were not cleared until nightfall. The three Troops halted in front of the battery and repulsed a German counter-attack just after they had been replenished with much-needed food and ammunition.

Defensive stakes and mines embedded in the base of the dyke made it difficult for supply craft to land stores. By the third and fourth days the Commando were forced to 'endure' captured German rations. To the relief of all concerned supplies were parachuted in on the fifth day near Zouteland.

No.41 and No.10 Commandos reached Domburg on the morning of D+1 where they encountered strong resistance. That evening Brigadier Leicester ordered No.41, less one Troop, to assist No.47 in the south, leaving the Troops of No.10 and one of No.41 to finish mopping up Domburg. No.4 Commando was relieved by 155 Brigade and embarked on LVTs to assault two batteries, W3 and W4 situated north-west of Flushing. They had been fighting for 40 hours and needed a well earned rest. After landing in a gap in the dyke, about which little was known, Lt-Colonel Dawson asked Brigadier Leicester for a break of some 24 hours to rest his men. This was agreed but it was well after dark before the Commando was relieved by 155 brigade. In the event No.47 (RM) Commando overcame the opposition south of Zouteland later that day and linked up with No. 4 Commando. Meanwhile No.10 cleared Domburg with the Norwegians showing particular courage in the face of heavy opposition which cost them a number of casualties.

*Bron: <http://www.combinedops.com/Walcheren.htm>*